

Family Involvement in School Transition:
Chinese Migrant Families' Experiences of Children
Transitioning from Early Childhood Education to Primary
School in New Zealand

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Abstract

Children's transition from early childhood education (ECE) to primary school is a complex phenomenon. School transition not only influences children in the first months of primary schooling it also has long-lasting impacts. The extent to which children feel successful in the transition process may influence how children approach their future educational transitions. School transition has been widely researched in New Zealand and internationally. However, no New Zealand research has investigated the school transition experiences of Chinese migrant families. This doctoral study fills an important research gap and provides empirical evidence regarding Chinese migrant families' school transition in New Zealand. A qualitative interpretive research methodology was employed to unpack the complexity of the transition experiences of Chinese migrant families in New Zealand through interviews with ten Chinese migrant parents. Thematic analysis was utilised to identify key themes that emerged from the research data. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, and the four principles of *Te Whāriki*, the New Zealand national early childhood curriculum, were employed as the theoretical framework to underpin data analysis. Scrutinising participant narratives of their perspectives and experiences of school transition in New Zealand, this study found participants' perspectives on school transition were dynamic in nature. Chinese parents in this study typically valued the process of children's school transition but had unique concerns and expectations towards transition. School transition was experienced differently by the Chinese parents in this study, in terms of the parenting practices that they engaged in to support school transition, the transition practices delivered by ECE centre and schools, and the challenges they encountered. Participants' perspectives and experiences regarding school transition were influenced by multiple contextual elements, including perceived personalities and characteristics of children, parental educational beliefs, parents' past experiences, parent-teacher communication, connection between ECE and school, family environments, financial status, parents' social networks, and the broader educational, social, cultural, and political contexts of both China and New Zealand. This research highlights the need for individualised approaches that take account of families' perspectives, concerns, and expectations, to support Chinese migrant families' school transition in New Zealand.

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

25.03.2023

Signature

Date

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Overview

Children's transition from early childhood education (ECE) to primary school is emphasised in New Zealand's early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017a), and the school curriculum, *New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007). Both curricula require educators to support school transition by affirming children's culture and identity by building on children's funds of knowledge. Peters (2010) calls for more New Zealand research to investigate the transition experiences of children and families whose cultural backgrounds are different from the mainstream culture.

New Zealand is a culturally diverse country with more than 160 ethnic groups (Statistics New Zealand, 2019a). Chinese is one of the largest migrant groups in New Zealand. The latest census shows that the number of Chinese migrants in New Zealand increased dramatically from 171,411 in 2013 to 247,770 in 2018 (Statistics New Zealand, 2019b). The majority of Chinese migrants (69.1 percent) live in Auckland which is identified as the most ethnically diverse region in New Zealand (Auckland Council, 2022). At the 2018 census, 28 percent of Auckland residents identified with the Asian group under which the largest sub-group was Chinese. As evident in *Figure New Zealand* (2021), by the end of September 2021, the percentage of Asian migrant children who have attended ECE in the six months prior to school entry is 98.3, slightly higher than their European counterparts (98.2). The large number of Chinese migrants living in New Zealand and the high prior participation rate of Asian children mean that many Chinese migrant families and children experience the transition from ECE to primary school.

This research investigates ten Chinese migrant families' perspectives and experiences regarding their children's transition from ECE to primary school in Auckland, New Zealand, with the aim of understanding the complex contextual elements that may have influenced their perspectives and experiences. Through analysing Chinese migrant parents' own interpretations of their perspectives and

experiences, this study unpacks the complexity and unpredictability of this cultural group's school transition in New Zealand.

This introductory chapter starts with discussions on the significance of and rationale for conducting this research. An overview of the context of transition from ECE to school in New Zealand is then provided. Followed by an introduction to the key research questions and the theoretical framework of this research. These last two sections include the researcher's position statement and outline the structure of this thesis.

1.2 Significance and Rationale of this Study

Over past decades, much political attention has focussed on children's early learning and their transitions from ECE to primary school (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2017). The significance of children's transitions from ECE to primary school has been highlighted in both New Zealand (Education Review Office, 2015; Ministry of Education, 2017a; Peters, 2010; White et al., 2021) and international (Ahtola et al., 2011; Ballam et al., 2017; Chan, 2012; Dockett & Perry, 2008; Dockett & Perry, 2017; Fabian & Dunlop, 2007) research, policy, and practices.

In 2017 the New Zealand's Ministry of Education updated the national early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017a). It now explicitly emphasises the significance of supporting children's transitions from ECE to primary school. The original edition of *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996) made links between the ECE curriculum and the New Zealand curriculum for schools, however, it did not provide guidance for transition practices. The updated ECE curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2017a), on the other hand, requires ECE and primary school teachers to affirm children's identity and culture, and build on their funds of knowledge, so as to support children's continuous learning in times of school transition.

Transition from ECE to primary school is recognised as an influential step for children's learning (Ballam et al., 2017; Doucet & Tudge, 2007; Peters, 2010; Peters et al., 2015). Children's transition to school offers both opportunities and challenges as families and children respond to the changes involved in the process of school transition (Dockett et al., 2012; Hirst et al., 2011; Perry et al., 2014; Peters, 2010).

Children's transition to primary school not only impacts on children in the first months of starting primary school, but also has long-lasting influences because "the extent to which they feel successful in the first transition is likely to influence subsequent experiences" (Fabian & Dunlop, 2007, p. 2). Quality transition experiences are considered beneficial for children's improved academic performance and positive social and emotional competencies (Caspe et al., 2015).

In an extensive review of literature on school transition, Peters (2010) stated that "almost any child is at risk of making a poor or less successful transition if their individual characteristics are incompatible with features of the environment they encounter" (p. 2). Poor or less successful transitions, according to Denham (2006) and Ladd et al. (2006), have been shown to lead to a child not having a friend and to peer group rejection, loneliness, and underachievement. According to Peters (2010), children from language and cultural minority backgrounds are more vulnerable in times of transitions if the school contexts do not cater for their individual needs. For example, Chinese migrant families in New Zealand have their own cultural ways of understanding education, and transition may mean that they have unique concerns and expectations regarding their children's school transition (Peters, 2010). Language barriers, as shown by empirical research (Chan, 2014; Guo, 2010; Peters, 2010; Wu, 2009), can hinder the communication between Chinese families and schools regarding their concerns of and expectations for children's school transition. A lack of communication can negatively influence educators' understanding of Chinese families and children and create difficulties in providing the responsive support that is crucial for ensuring positive school transitions (Peters, 2010).

Chinese migrant families' experiences of children participating in education in western countries have been widely investigated (see for instance, Chan, 2014; Guo, 2010; Huang, 2013; Li, 2004; Ma, 2017; Wu, 2009; Zhang, 2009; Zhang, 2012; Zhou et al., 2020). These studies highlight that no matter which country they settle, Chinese migrant parents emphasise children's academic learning and are highly involved at home to support children's learning. Such a value is consistent with the traditional Chinese culture belief which prioritises children's academic performance and places the responsibility of supporting children's learning on the entire family (Chen & Uttal, 1988; Yu & Suen, 2005; Zhu & Chang, 2019). Moreover, in the Chinese tradition

teachers are viewed as authority figures that should not be questioned nor interrupted (Chan, 2011; Guo & Dalli, 2012; Sy, 2006). Because of these cultural beliefs about teachers' roles, Chinese migrant parents are found to be unwilling to participate in institutions (Chan, 2011; Guo, 2006). In New Zealand, though, family involvement in ECE and schools is encouraged and valued because it helps to build parent-teacher partnerships and enables educators to better understand parents' aspirations for children (Ministry of Education, 2007, 2017a).

The parenting practices of Chinese migrant parents in western countries is influenced by both the Chinese and western culture (Li, 2004; Ma, 2017; Zhou et al., 2020). New Zealand research (Guo, 2012; Guo, 2010; Huang, 2013; Wu, 2009; Zhang, 2012) reveals that many Chinese migrant parents adjust their educational beliefs and practicing practices to better support their children's learning in the host country. The implication of this finding is that Chinese migrant families' transition from ECE to primary school in New Zealand is likely to be a complex and dynamic cultural process. When investigating Chinese migrant families' experiences of education and school transition, it is then important to understand that Chinese migrants do not belong to a homogeneous group and that their cultural beliefs and parenting practices are fluid and dynamic, rather than universal (Arends-Tóth & Van de Vijver, 2004; Berry, 1997, 2005; Chan, 2011).

Given the dynamic educational beliefs and parenting practices of Chinese migrant parents in New Zealand and the significance of school transition for children's social, emotional, and academic competencies, it is important to understand this cultural group's perspectives and experiences regarding children's school transition. In New Zealand, no research has investigated how Chinese migrant children and families experience school transition. This doctoral study aims to contribute to the field of knowledge about children's school transitions by adding Chinese migrant families' experiences and understanding of their children's school transitions in New Zealand. It aims to inform teachers (both ECE and primary school) understanding of Chinese families' perspectives and experiences of school transitions so as to enable teachers to work responsively and collaboratively in the process of children's school transitions.

Language Considerations

Throughout the thesis, the phrase ‘school transition’ or simply the word ‘transition’ refers to the process of a child moving from ECE to primary school unless otherwise stated.

In this study, Chinese migrant refers to culture rather than ethnicity. According to Chan (2011), ethnicity is related more with one’s racial affinity while culture refers to a shared set of beliefs, values, customs, and practices. The term culture is used in this thesis because this study aims to investigate the contextual elements, including the cultural influences that impact on Chinese migrant families’ school transition in New Zealand. I am aware that Chinese migrants consist of different ethnic groups, such as Mainland Chinese, Hong Kong-Chinese, Taiwanese, and Singaporean-Chinese, and each has its unique ways of knowing and being (Chan, 2011, 2014). This study’s participants are all from Mainland China. In this thesis I explore the heterogeneity within this specific Chinese group, analysing the different ways of understanding and experiencing school transition in New Zealand.

1.3 The New Zealand Context

Almost all children in New Zealand attend an ECE service before starting primary school. There is a range of ECE services available in New Zealand, including teacher-led, whānau-led, and parent-led services (Ministry of Education, 2017a). All these services are expected to use *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017a), the New Zealand early childhood curriculum, as a basis to design their local curriculums in collaboration with children, families, and communities. In order to understand transition in New Zealand, it is important to look at *Te Whāriki* as it influences parents’ and children’s experiences in ECE, and the transition practices organised by ECE providers. It is also worth exploring the Māori concepts of *Te Whare Tapa Whā* (Durie, 1998) and *Te Wheke* (Pere, 1991) because they have contributed towards the development of *Te Whāriki* through their emphases on identity, language, and culture, and their holistic approach towards human development (Ministry of Education, 2017a).

New Zealand Early Childhood Curriculum

Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 2017a), which is written in both English and Māori, emphasises New Zealand’s bicultural foundation and multicultural presence, and encourages children to learn in their own ways based on their unique cultural

backgrounds with support provided by adults who know them well. Grounded in sociocultural and bioecological systems theories, *Te Whāriki* suggests that “children learn and develop best when their culture, knowledge, and community are affirmed and when the people in their lives help them to make connections across settings” (Ministry of Education, 2017a, p. 20). Children’s identities as learners are enhanced when educational environments value their home languages and cultures, and when teachers recognise their cultural ways of knowing and being (Ball, 2012; Ministry of Education, 2017a). The Ministry of Education (2017b) emphasises that culturally responsive practices implemented in educational settings fosters children’s sense of belonging giving them confidence to engage in new experiences. *Te Whāriki* recognises that “all children are different and their learning trajectories are influenced by social and cultural context” (Ministry of Education, 2017a, p. 13). By considering children’s social and cultural backgrounds, teachers support individualised learning and transition experiences.

Te Whāriki provides a separate section discussing children’s transitions from ECE to primary school. It emphasises the significance of shared responsibilities of teachers from both settings in supporting children’s positive transition experiences. Teachers from both settings are advised to recognise the connections between *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017a) and *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007). The table below shows the connections between the strands of *Te Whāriki* and the key competencies of *The New Zealand Curriculum*.

Table 1. *Connections Between Te Whāriki and The New Zealand Curriculum*

<i>Te Whāriki</i>	<i>The New Zealand Curriculum</i>
Mana Atua (wellbeing)	Managing self
Mana Whenua (belonging)	Participating and contributing
Mana Tangata (contribution)	Relating to others
Mana Reo (communication)	Using language, symbols, and texts
Mana Aotūroa (exploration)	Thinking

The connection between *Te Whāriki* and *The New Zealand Curriculum* is also evident in their similar vision for children. *Te Whāriki* expresses the vision that “all children grow up in New Zealand as competent and confident learners, strong in their identity, language, and culture” (Ministry of Education, 2017a, p. 2). *The New Zealand Curriculum* describes a similar vision that children in New Zealand will be “confident, connected, actively involved, and lifelong learners” (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 8). Based on this vision, the two curriculum documents support a similar approach to learning. According to *Te Whāriki* and *The New Zealand Curriculum*, children’s learning is embedded in social and cultural contexts and can be advanced when they are able to integrate new experiences with what they already understand. This means that the two curricula acknowledge the crucial impacts that children’s surrounding environments have on their learning. Furthermore, both ECE and primary school teachers are expected to build on the knowledge that children have developed through their past experiences by working together with children and their families. According to Carr et al. (2013), recognition of the connections between *Te Whāriki* and *The New Zealand Curriculum* enables teachers to design and implement curricula based on an understanding of the teaching practices carried out in the other setting, so as to ensure that children experience a continuity in learning when they move from ECE to primary school.

Te Whāriki acknowledges that children in New Zealand are growing up in a “diverse society” (Ministry of Education, 2017a, p. 7) wherein various cultural groups of people live. Early childhood teachers are expected to build on the knowledge and experiences that children and their families bring to institutions by working in partnerships with parents. Effective teacher-parent partnerships offer teachers opportunities to develop an understanding of children’s unique social and cultural backgrounds and learning dispositions, so as to design responsive practices to support children’s learning and school transitions.

According to *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017a) the diverse social and cultural backgrounds of children and families should be taken into consideration in order to support their individualised learning journey and development of identity, language, and culture. Although the curriculum acknowledges that New Zealand is a multicultural society, it makes no particular reference to multicultural perspectives

other than Māori, Pākehā, and Pasifika. Cultures that are not of these three are generally referred to as 'other cultures'. Chinese cultural beliefs are not specifically accounted for in *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017a). This absence may limit ECE teachers' understanding of the unique cultural backgrounds of Chinese children and families, which may in turn impact on the communication, interactions, and relationships between teachers and Chinese children/families that influence children's learning and school transition. The inclusion of only the cultural perspectives of Māori, Pākehā, and Pasifika, together with the multicultural nature of the society, brings about consideration of the politics of representation. Does *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017a) serve as an inclusive educational curriculum to promote learning of children from all backgrounds, or is it a political creation to propagate so-called equality? This doctoral research does not focus on these questions, however, it may serve to provoke some thinking about them.

Empirical studies in New Zealand reveal that Chinese migrant parents' cultural beliefs about ECE in general, and about parent-teacher partnerships and parental involvement in particular, tend to be different from those of ECE teachers and *Te Whāriki* (Guo, 2010; Wu, 2009; Yang, 2011; Zhang, 2012). These studies found that Chinese migrant parents highly value children's education but are unwilling to communicate with teachers due to culture differences and language barriers. On the one hand, Chinese parents identify with their role as advocate for the education of their children, on the other hand they see barriers to the effectiveness of that advocacy. Chinese migrant parents' contribution to transition may be minimal or silenced when parents feel unwilling or unsupported to communicate with teachers. These studies also point to a new direction for future research, which is to investigate how culturally responsive practices are designed and implemented to support cultural minority families' school transitions, and how the cultural perspectives of these families are heard and valued by ECE and schools.

The number of Asian teachers working in New Zealand's institutions increased from 2510 in 2010 to 3732 in 2021 (Education Counts, n.d.). It is unclear whether this increase has contributed to the communication between teachers and Chinese migrant parents, which is significant for children's learning and school transition (OECD, 2017; Peters, 2010). With the importance of culture and the role of the family and of

transition all being clear within *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017a), this doctoral study provides empirical evidence regarding Chinese migrant families' experiences of parent-teacher communication in times of children's school transition. Moreover, this research examines how cultural elements play a role in influencing the communication between Chinese migrant parents and educators.

Māori Perspectives on Education and Transition

As a bicultural curriculum, the cultural beliefs of Māori inform the essence of *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017a). A leading Māori theorist emphasises that a person's education "is based on his or her experiences and understandings" (Pere, 1991, p. 5). Learning is not limited within a framework of knowledge or a specific subject area, but rather related to all aspects of human development (Pere, 1994). Acquiring new knowledge is seen as enhancing and enriching since learning is "based on ways of finding out and knowing and how these ways relate to other things that are already known" (Pere, 1994, p. 51), with the support and guidance from more experienced others. The Māori tradition places the responsibility of parenting and supporting children's learning process on the entire family (including all extended families) (Pere, 1994). This tradition is similar to the traditional culture of China where the family takes the primary responsibility for children's early learning (Huang & Gove, 2012). In Māori culture, the learning environment is expected to promote children's feeling of belonging and acceptance, within which they develop consideration and respect for other people (Pere, 1994).

The Māori perspective on learning and educational environment is evident in *Te Whāriki* which requires ECE settings to affirm children's language, culture, and identity (Ministry of Education, 2017a). Within such an inclusive environment, teaching practices value and build on children's current knowledge and understandings. By doing so, ECE services foster children's sense of belonging and "a sense of responsibility for their own wellbeing and that of others" (Ministry of Education, 2017a, p. 27).

The Māori concepts of *Te Whare Tapa Whā* (Durie, 1998) and *Te Wheke* (Pere, 1991) have made significant contributions to *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017a)

through their emphases on identity, language, and culture, and their holistic approach to human development (Ministry of Education, n.d.-b).

Te Whare Tapa Whā (Durie, 1998) compares health and wellbeing to the four walls of a house. Each wall represents a dimension that is related to the total wellbeing of the individual: the spiritual side, the mental side, the physical side, and the family side. The four dimensions are equally important for one's development and if any one of these dimensions is weak, it affects the other dimensions and subsequently impacts on the development and wellbeing of the individual (Ellis & Collings, 1997). The concept of *Te Whare Tapa Whā*, when applied to education, emphasises that educational institutions need to cater for the different interrelated aspects of human development and actively involve family and community in educational practices. This model is acknowledged in the holistic development and family and community principles in *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017a). These two principles highlight that children learn and grow in a holistic manner, involving cognitive, physical, emotional, spiritual, social, and cultural dimensions, and that children's families and communities are integral to their learning and development (Ministry of Education, 2017a).

The concept of *Te Wheke*, the octopus, is to define family health of Māori, with the head representing the family, the eyes as total wellbeing for the individual and family, and each of the eight tentacles representing a particular aspect of health (Pere, 1991). The eight tentacles are: spirituality, the mind, physical wellbeing, extended family, life force in people and objects, unique identity of individual and family, traditional cultural heritage, and the open and healthy expression of emotion. This holistic approach to wellbeing has significant implications for education and school transition. It recognises that children are different due to their unique social, cultural, and historical backgrounds, and calls for targeted practices that cater for their individuality when supporting school transition. Both *Te Whare Tapa Whā* and *Te Wheke* resonate with the Confucian educational philosophy of '*yin cai shi jiao*' which guides educators to recognise children's individuality and distinctiveness. These concepts are relevant to this doctoral study because they lead to consideration of how Chinese migrant families' uniqueness influences, and is respected/integrated in, transition practices.

School Transition in New Zealand

In New Zealand, attending primary school is compulsory when children turn six. Traditionally, however, children start primary school as soon as they turn five. This means that children *generally* join already established groups when they start primary schools, and the size of new entrant classes grows throughout the year as new children come. This individualised school entry contrasts with the annual, biannual, or termly intakes that are commonly adopted by the overseas education systems (Peters et al., 2009b). Cohort entry means that primary schools and teachers can design transition programmes that help groups of children to settle in the new learning environment (Peters et al., 2009b). A large number of children starting school together may impede the delivery of responsive support because it might be difficult for teachers to attend to the individual needs of each child. Starting school on the child's birthday, on the other hand, is an opportunity for schools and teachers to provide individualised and responsive support to foster children's transitions (Neuman, 2002). Hayes et al. (2014) consider individualised school entry means new entrants can learn from more experienced peers who started school before them. Through observing and interacting with their peers, new entrants can learn the culture of primary school environment.

In 2017, the New Zealand Ministry of Education updated the Education Act to enable primary schools to introduce cohort entry. Schools need to consult with parents and carers of prospective and current students, their staff, and local ECE services before introducing cohort entry (Ministry of Education, 2017b). Up until May 2022, seven percent of primary schools in New Zealand utilised cohort entry (Education Review Office, 2022). This policy change may influence transition experiences of some children and families because it impacts on the way in which transition is supported.

May (2009) suggests that when children start primary school in New Zealand they often find themselves "in classes timetabled around the new learning areas, and undergoing assessments in relation to literacy and numeracy" (p. 255) that are not reflective of the learning dispositions that they have developed in ECE. May argues this situation is a result of the increasing political pressure on schools to assess and document children's learning. Empirical data collected by Peters (2000) indicates that children experience curriculum discontinuity in times of school transition. Children who participated in Peters (2000) study expressed that there is more work than

playtime in school, and that they have to do what they are asked to do (e.g., read books). Peters suggests that the difference of curriculum experiences between ECE and school may make children's initial adjustment to school challenging. This doctoral study examines how Chinese migrant families understand, experience, and deal with the changes involved in school transition, including the change of children's curriculum experiences.

1.4 The Current Study

This is the first study to investigate Chinese migrant families' perspectives and experiences regarding their children's school transition in New Zealand.

The key research question is:

What are the perspectives and experiences of Chinese migrant families regarding children's transitions from ECE to primary school in New Zealand?

The sub question is:

What contextual elements influence Chinese migrant families' perspectives and experiences regarding school transition?

Existing literature (Besi & Sakellariou, 2019; Bond et al., 2019; Dockett et al., 2017b; Fabian & Dunlop, 2007; OECD, 2017; Peters, 2010; Viskovic & Višnjić-Jevtić, 2020) shows that transition is influenced by complex sociocultural factors, such as cultural background, social class, and educational policy. For example, parents' social class may influence children's school transition because it impacts on the educational, economic, social, and cultural support that parents can provide children during times of transition. To address the research questions outlined above, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1994) and the four principles of *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017a) are employed as theoretical frameworks. They are chosen because they invite a recognition that transition is a complex process, and direct researchers to analyse how school transition is influenced by multiple elements, including parental beliefs, educational philosophies and practices, and the wider social, cultural, and historical contexts.

1.5 The Researcher's Background

I was born in late 1980s in a small village in north China. My childhood was joyful as I spent a lot of time playing in nature with my peers. We would climb mountains, catch fish in the river, and run around the village without the supervision of our parents. After I started primary school when I was six, although the teachers emphasised our academic performance, such as literacy and numeracy, we still had time and freedom to go outside to play and explore after we finished assigned homework, as well as over the weekend.

I finished my bachelor's degree in China in 2010, majoring in environmental engineering. Thereafter, I decided to go abroad for further education. I chose New Zealand because of the peaceful environment and cheaper cost compared with other western countries. Initially, I studied environmental science because this major is consistent with my qualification in China. Not long after I started my study in New Zealand, I found this subject was of little interest to me. Then I started to consider what my interests were and what major I should study. I also started to wonder why some Chinese students do not know their own interests and started to question if there was a problem with the education system in China where students' academic performance is prioritised while little attention is paid to their interests. Based on my knowledge and communication with other Chinese students in New Zealand, I found that most of them would prioritise job-seeking and migration over their own interests when choosing their majors for university education. I became increasingly interested in the field of education, especially the cultural influences on individuals' educational beliefs. I withdrew from the study of environmental science and started my study of ECE because I realised this is where a person's education begins.

My niece was born in 2008 and my family moved to a small city near our hometown in north China. Based on my observation of her childhood experience, I found she and her peers had quite limited time to play compared with my own childhood. Young couples in China highly value children's academic learning and some of them teach their children to read and count shortly after the child can talk. My niece experienced this too as my brother and sister-in-law would teach her to count from one to one hundred and ask her to recite ancient Chinese poetry after she turned two. She was sent to a public kindergarten when she was three. This kindergarten adopted

a traditional teaching approach in which children were asked to sit quietly while the teacher would lead and prescribe the teaching activities. My niece performed quite well in the kindergarten since her literacy and numeracy was good. However, shortly after she started primary school, she experienced emotional issues as she found that she had already learnt the knowledge being taught in primary school while in the kindergarten as well as at home. Thus, she felt bored in primary school and did not want to listen to the teachers.

The story of my niece led to my interest in school transition. As a member of the Chinese community in New Zealand, I started to wonder about Chinese migrant families' school transition experiences in New Zealand, given that the national education beliefs in China and New Zealand are different. My master's research (Zhong, 2016) investigated Chinese migrant parents' perception of the notion of parent-teacher partnerships in ECE in New Zealand. I found that the Chinese cultural tradition plays a role in shaping Chinese migrant parents' understanding of education, and that although the parents were residing in New Zealand, they still held high value for children's academic performance. I then wondered how Chinese migrant families would perceive and support school transition and how the culture and educational philosophy of China and New Zealand might impact on Chinese families' school transition. When I searched for literature on Chinese migrant families' perspectives and experiences of school transition in New Zealand, I found nothing. I decided to do this doctoral study to explore how Chinese families' school transition in New Zealand might be a bi-cultural process.

Sharing similar cultural and linguistic backgrounds with the study participants made me somewhat of an insider. The participants may have felt encouraged and comfortable to talk to me as I am one of them. The participants and I also have similar educational experiences (we all attended ECE, primary school, and middle school in China). This similarity means I can empathise with them and it may have encouraged them to share more and engage more deeply with me.

1.6 Structure of the Thesis

The overall structure of this thesis takes the form of nine chapters. The first chapter provides the background of this study, in terms of the significance and

rationale of conducting the current study and the New Zealand context of school transition.

Chapter two is concerned with theoretical perspectives on school transition. This chapter explores how rites of passage, border crossing and critical theory have been applied to investigate school transition. These theorisations help to understand the complexity of school transition. In this chapter, I provide detailed discussion on ecological systems theory and sociocultural theory and how they inform this study. These two theories are employed as a theoretical foundation for this research because they emphasise the importance of understanding contexts when studying school transition.

Chapter three discusses Chinese migrant families' educational beliefs and parenting practices. Drawing upon existing literature, this chapter analyses how Chinese migrant parents' place high value on children's academic performance and provide intense home-based involvement in children's learning which might be influenced by Confucianism and the historically prevailing assessment method of examination in China. Chinese migrants' individualised cultural parenting practices are also explored in chapter three. Discussions in this chapter point to the need for considerations of the complex contextual influences when studying Chinese migrant families' perspectives and experiences regarding children's school transition in New Zealand.

Chapter four reviews literature on school transition. Firstly, it explores how the concept of school transition is defined in existing literature; how children, parents, and teachers understand transition differently; and how successful transitions are described in existing literature. This is followed by discussion on how school transition has been described in relation to the concepts of readiness, change, continuous learning, and relationships. The last section in chapter four looks at the transition programmes and practices in New Zealand because they influence how school transition is experienced by children and families.

Chapter five introduces the research methodology, design, and process of this study. It explains and justifies the utilisation of the interpretive qualitative research approach taken in this study. I also discuss a change to the research design that

occurred due to the Covid pandemic. In the initial research design, I planned to involve children as participants and observe their transition experiences in both ECE and primary schools. This was not achieved because of the pandemic. While this study did not include children as participants, their views are explored by interviewing their parents – the importance of children’s voices is explored in section 5.5. Parents can provide rich information about children’s experiences (Peters & Kelly, 2015). In this chapter, I explore the significance of including children’s voices in transition research.

Chapter five also describes the research process, in terms of sampling and participant recruitment, data collection, and data analysis. Ten Chinese migrant parents were recruited utilising the snowball and purposive sampling methods. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect these ten participants’ perspectives and experiences regarding children’s school transition in New Zealand. The technique of qualitative content analysis was employed to analyse data. Key themes emerging from the data analysis were explored and theorised in relation to the four principles of *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017a) and the five ecological systems of Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Because this study involves human subjects as participants, ethical considerations involved in this study are also discussed in this chapter.

Chapters six, seven, and eight present and analyse the data collected from the participants. Chapter six provides background information about the participants, summarises their experiences of children’s school transition in New Zealand, and analyses their educational beliefs.

Chapter seven is concerned with the participants’ perspectives of their children’s school transitions in New Zealand. Transcribed data is analysed and discussed in relation to the theoretical frameworks to show how school transition is perceived differently by the participants, and how multiple contextual elements might influence their individualised concerns and expectations towards children’s school transition. This chapter also examines children’s views by exploring factors that contribute to their excitement about school transition.

Chapter eight reports and analyses the participants’ experiences of school transition, in relation to parenting practices at home, choosing schools, perceived

transition practices delivered by institutions, family-institution communication, the challenges they encountered, and the influences that the Covid-19 pandemic had on their experiences.

Chapter nine reports the key findings of this doctoral research. Tentative responses to the research questions are provided. The contributions of this research to new knowledge and theory are highlighted and pedagogical implications are suggested. This chapter also provides considerations of the limitations of this study and recommends directions for future research.

Chapter 2 Theorising Transition

2.1 Introduction

This doctoral research provides an understanding of the lived experiences of Chinese migrant families' school transition in New Zealand and also the ways in which transition can be theorised. School transition is seen as a pivotal process in children's lives and as such have been the object of a large body of research (Dockett, 2014; Dockett & Perry, 2009; Dockett & Perry, 2017; Dunlop & Fabian, 2007; Margetts, 2008; O'Kane, 2007; Peters, 2010; White et. al., 2021). School transition studies have previously drawn on multiple theories, for instance, *rites of passage* (Van Gennep, 1960), *border crossing* (Ackesjö, 2013), *critical theory* (Petriwskyj, 2013, 2014), *ecological systems theory* (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006), and *sociocultural theory* (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978).

This chapter explores how rites of passage, border crossing, and critical theory have been applied to investigate school transition. Rites of passage and border crossing invited investigation of identity shift involved in school transition (Ackesjö, 2013; Garpelin, 2014). Drawing on the notion of rites of passage, school transition is described as a dynamic process which includes three rites of passage (phases), the *preliminal rite*, the *liminal rite*, and the *postliminal rite* (Garpelin, 2014; O'Kane, 2007; Peters & Sandberg, 2017; Woodhead et al., 2008), these three rites will be discussed later. The metaphor of border crossing has been employed to suggest that school transition involves children and families encountering an unfamiliar learning environment. Critical theory has also been utilised to consider the social, economic, and political contexts of school transition and seek to address issues of diversity, inclusion, equity, and power (Ballam et al., 2017; Petriwskyj, 2013, 2014). The above three theoretical perspectives are not used in the current doctoral research because they do not particularly focus on investigation of the influence that children's wider social and cultural contexts have on their school transition, which is the focus of this doctoral study. However, it is important to understand these theories because they help to understand the complexity of school transition. The current study aims to unpack the complexity of Chinese migrant families' perspectives and experiences regarding children's school transition in New Zealand.

This chapter also provides detailed discussions on how ecological systems theory and sociocultural theory informs transition studies. These two theories provide the theoretical foundation for this research. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory and the *Process-Person-Context-Time* (PPCT) model are widely used in existing transition research because they offer theoretical concepts to explore the impacts that the contextual elements have on children's and families' transition experiences. From a sociocultural perspective, children's school transition is a process of changing participation in which children interact with people, places, and things that surround them (Rogoff, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978). This understanding of school transition emphasises the crucial role that adults and peers play in supporting children when they move from one community (ECE) to another (primary school).

2.2 Identity and Transitions

School transition has been described as a rite of passage. A rite of passage describes the ceremony or ritual associated when individuals' move from one context to another (Van Gennep, 1960). Transition from ECE to school has been conceptualised as a dynamic process which includes three rites of passage, the preliminal rite, the liminal rite, and the postliminal rite (Garpelin, 2014; O'Kane, 2007; Peters & Sandberg, 2017; Woodhead et al., 2008). The preliminal rite refers to the phase of separation in which children start to leave ECE (Woodhead et al., 2008). The liminal rite refers to the transition phase in which children have left the ECE centre but not yet been fully incorporated in the primary school (O'Kane, 2007; Peters & Sandberg, 2017). The postliminal rite refers to the incorporation phase in which children become integrated in the primary school (Garpelin, 2014). The notion of rite of passage invites recognition that children's transition from ECE to primary school is a process in which children experience change in contexts, social status, and identities. Based on this view of transition, Lam (2014) described transition as a "process of habituating to the new expectations of a new social status of a new world, as distinct from the old status in the old world" (p. 133). Such a view on transition highlights children's identity shift between the two education contexts. However, the rite of passage approach towards school transition does not particularly emphasises the influences that the wider social, cultural, and historical contexts may have on school transition, as ecological systems theory does (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). This will be discussed later in this chapter.

Children's transitions from ECE to school have been studied utilising the metaphors of 'border' and 'borderland' (Ackesjö, 2013; Ballam et al., 2017; Peters & Sandberg, 2017; Woodhead et al., 2008). The concept of border implies encounters with the unknown or unfamiliar (Ackesjö, 2013). This concept linked to children's school transition involves children and families encountering a new learning environment that they are not familiar with. In this sense, school transition is a border crossing involving meeting differences when entering an unfamiliar territory (Ackesjö, 2013). According to Ackesjö (2013), border crossing (school transition) can be understood as a process of identity reconstruction where children move from "*Being to Becoming* and then to a new form of *Being*" (p. 393). Children experience an identity shift from being experienced members of the ECE community, to newcomers of the primary school community, and then to members of the primary school community. To assist children to cross the borders, a borderland, or a meeting space for the two educational settings, enables shared understanding and responsibilities to be developed (Peters & Sandberg, 2017). This theory can be employed to explore the challenge and discontinuity children may encounter in school transition and how institutions collaboratively support children to deal with changes involved in school transition.

Rite of passage and border crossing are linked with identity shift associated with school transition (Ackesjö, 2013; Garpelin, 2014). Research investigating the impact that school transition has on children's identity aimed to understand how children experience the changes involved in transition (Ackesjö, 2013; Lam & Pollard, 2006). These studies tend to prioritise children's role in navigating their school transitions with a lighter focus on the influences that the context and other individuals (parents, teachers, and peers) may have had on children's transitions. The theoretical position adopted by Ackesjö (2013) was that "children pass through certain institutional borders" (p. 392) in the process of school transition, based on the assumption that "children themselves can influence, challenge, and stretch those borders" (p. 392). Similarly, Lam and Pollard (2006) argued that children are active agents in making sense of and adapting to the new environment in the dynamic and continuous school transition process. Ecological systems theory and sociocultural theory, on the other hand, promote investigation of the complexity of school transitions by underlining the

impacts that surrounding contexts have on transition, and this fits better with the purpose of this doctoral study. These two theories will be explored later in this chapter.

2.3 Critical Theory

Critical theory has also been applied to explore children's transition to school. Ballam et al., (2017) and Petriwskyj (2013, 2014) considered the social, economic, and political contexts of school transition and sought to address issues of diversity, inclusion, equity, and power. According to Petriwskyj (2014), critical theories represent "social behaviour as being organised around the group or community (e.g., local family community, community of learners in a school or centre) rather than the individual and conceptualise it as an ongoing conflict over power and resources" (p. 202). Wilder and Lillvist (2017a) proposed that critical theory invites reflection of "normative assumptions on child development and underlying cultural frames for curriculum and pedagogy, as well as teacher practice" (p. 61). This idea found agreement from Cannella (1997) who called for critical analysis of current discourses on child development arguing that development is a socially constructed notion, embedded within a particular social context, and based on a particular set of values. Petriwskyj (2014) suggested that critical theory offers a tool to identify ways in which current transition practices silence voices of children, families, and communities, and to invite more inclusive strategies to be adopted to support transition. A critical theory approach towards school transition requires consideration about the participation rights of the multiple parties involved (e.g., children, families, and teachers), and the power relations associated with the design and implementation of transition programmes and transition practices. This approach is relevant to the current research because it is important to investigate how the voices of Chinese migrant parents and children are included in institutional transition planning and practices. However, critical theory does not offer a framework of multiple contexts as the ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1994) does, and the aim of the current study is to investigate the contextual influences on Chinese migrant families' school transition.

2.4 Ecological Systems Theory

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory has been widely used by researchers to understand children's transition from ECE to primary school (see for instance,

Fabian & Dunlop, 2007; O'Kane, 2007; O'Toole, 2016; Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000). The ecological systems theory provides a comprehensive framework to explore the complexity of transition by considering how multiple contextual elements influence transition (Ballam et al., 2017; Fabian & Dunlop, 2007; Firth et al., 2009; Perry et al., 2014).

The ecological systems theory stemmed from Bronfenbrenner's doctoral research which focused on children's development within their peer groups. After completing his doctoral study in 1942, Bronfenbrenner's research "looked beyond individual development to take account of wider influencing factors and the context, or ecology, of development" (Nóirín et al., 2017, p. 3). His studies about lives of children and their families lead to recognition that development is influenced by the backgrounds of the family. Bronfenbrenner's cross-cultural study of children in Russia and America theorised how culture drives human development which contributed to his view that development is inseparable from context. In America during the 1960s "influential psychological studies developed their knowledge through researching the individual in isolation" (Nóirín et al., 2017, p. 5) and little attention was paid to the context in which development occurs. Bronfenbrenner critiqued this approach, arguing that these studies place children in strange situations with strange people that are not characteristic of the actual environments that they live and develop in, and thus were ecologically invalid (Nóirín et al., 2017). He believed that a new theory on human development was needed.

The ecological systems theory published by Bronfenbrenner in 1979 argued that the way in which a child develops is not only influenced by their immediate environment but also by the broader environment such as cultural, political, educational policies, and their interrelationships. The ecological systems model on human development has had a deep influence on the ECE sector (Nóirín et al., 2017). In New Zealand it has provided a theoretical foundation for the development and implementation of the New Zealand's national early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017a). The ecological systems theory has been updated by Bronfenbrenner and colleagues to become the bioecological systems theory in order to emphasise that one's biology is the primary environment for development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Ryan, 2001). (This update will be discussed in the

next section.) Bronfenbrenner (1994) considered that children's learning and development occur within the entire ecological system in which children live. An individual's ecological environment is the context of the system of relationships that surround them (Ryan, 2001). Thus, children's learning and development are located within the interacted "contexts and relationships of family, community, and wider local, national and global influences" (Ministry of Education, 2017a, p. 60).

The ecological systems theory acknowledges that the relationship between children and their environment is reciprocal, which means that children both influence and are influenced by their environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). In relation to school transition, the ecological systems theory directs attention to view transition as a holistic event, comprising an interacting set of systems of ECE, home, community, primary school, national policies, and time (Fabian & Dunlop, 2002; Fabian & Dunlop, 2007; Peters, 2003b, 2010; Woodhead et al., 2008). This holistic view reminds researchers and teachers to adopt an inclusive approach that considers the multiple contextual influences when trying to understand and support transition. For the current doctoral study, it is important to consider how Chinese migrant families' complex social and cultural contexts might influence their perspectives and experiences regarding their children's school transition in New Zealand.

Bronfenbrenner organised the ecology into five systems: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). The ecological model places the child at the centre as active agents in their own world, and their learning and development are shaped by experiences related to the five levels of environment (O'Kane, 2007; O'Toole, 2016).

Microsystem

The microsystem refers to the individuals, institutions, and groups that have direct influence on children's learning and development, including families, schools, neighbourhood, and peer groups (Nóirín et al., 2017; Ryan, 2001). It encompasses the immediate relationships and interactions that the child has with their surroundings (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). The concept of microsystem, when studying school transition, requires exploration of how the child's immediate relationships interact with their transition experiences. For example, the microsystem leads researchers to explore the

impact that parent-child relationship, teacher-child relationship, and peer relationship have on the child's school transition. It is also a theoretical tool to analyse how children shape their own transition experiences by interacting with the people, places, and things in the surrounding contexts. In this thesis, the microsystem provides a focus on the exploration of the impacts that parent-child interactions, parents' knowledge and beliefs, and children's relationships with people, places, and things have on the participants' school transition.

Mesosystem

The mesosystem is a system of microsystems, comprised of the connections and relationships between settings or organisations that relate to the developing person (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Nóirín et al., 2017). It includes, for example, interactions between families and teachers, and communication between ECE and primary school teachers (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). The mesosystem offers a theoretical tool to analyse how children's transition experiences influence and are influenced by the relationships and interactions between their microsystems, such as teacher-parent partnerships, the relationships between teachers from both settings, and the collaborative transition activities organised by ECE and schools. The mesosystem is crucial to this research because Chinese migrant children's transition experiences are influenced by parent-teacher relationship and the relationship between early childhood teachers and primary school teachers. The concept of mesosystem is employed to investigate how parent-teacher communication and interactions influence the participating families' school transition. In terms of the relationship between ECE and primary school, the concept of mesosystem is the space to explore how the institutions' policies and teachers' practices promote and/or impede the development of cross-sector connections.

Exosystem

The exosystem is the larger social system in which the child is not directly engaged, but which nonetheless influences the child's development as it interacts with their microsystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Nóirín et al., 2017). For instance, parents' workplace, families' social networks, and neighbourhood community contexts. As these factors have immediate influences on parents (microsystem), it may impact on the ways in which parents support children's learning at home. It may also influence

the interactions between parents and the settings that children have direct connection with (mesosystem), for example, the ECE services and primary schools (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Woodhead et al., 2008). When investigating children's transition from ECE to primary school, the exosystem is the space to examine how the adults' environment influences children's transition experiences as it impacts on their capacity to offer support (Ministry of Education, 2017a). This system is used to explore how Chinese migrant families' backgrounds and environment impact on their children's school transition.

One example of a focus on the exosystem when studying school transition in New Zealand is the exploration of how the community of learning interacts with children's transition experiences. In 2014, *Communities of Learning (CoL)* were introduced in New Zealand (Ministry of Education, n.d.-a). Each CoL consists of a number of early childhood centres and schools that are located in the same geographic area. The aim of forming CoL is to enable the sharing of teaching and leadership resources among education providers, and to support students' transition from one phase of education to the next (Gibbons & Farquhar, 2019). Communities of learning provide the platform for ECE and schools to work collaboratively to support children's transition from ECE to primary school (Ministry of Education, n.d.-a). However, Gibbons and Farquhar (2019) argued that CoL can "limit opportunities for different ways of thinking about educational experiences and educational aims" (p. 174), and noted that early childhood centres were far less involved in developing the CoL mission, aims, and practices. They critiqued the CoL programme because it focused on notions of achievement and measurement arguing that such a focus ran the risk of overlooking the distinct features of ECE sector. To address these critiques, the concept of exosystem can be employed to investigate the extent to which ECE centres are involved in the development of transition programmes within CoL.

Macrosystem

The macrosystem refers to the broader national, social, and cultural contexts in which the developing individual lives (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). It is comprised of cultural beliefs, values, customs, ideology, practices, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity (Ballam et al., 2017; Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Peters, 2003b). The macrosystem impacts on and is impacted by all three inner systems. For example, if the existing

cultural belief places the responsibilities of supporting school transition on teachers, this culture is less likely to support and foster teacher-parent partnership construction (mesosystem) (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1994). This will in turn influence the ways in which parents engage in children's learning in school (mesosystem) (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1994). Another example is that parents may work long hours (exosystem) due to the economic stresses (macrosystem) (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1994), and have little time to partner up with teachers (mesosystem). In this sense, the macrosystem may require analysis of how economic stresses bring about issues of inequity as they impact on parent-teacher collaboration which might influence children's school transition. In other words, economic burdens may limit parents' capacity to be involved in or energy for transition discussions with children and/or teachers. The overarching culture may also affect parental involvement at the microsystem level as the dominant cultural ways of understanding children's learning will, to a certain extent, inform parenting styles (microsystem) (Ryan, 2001). Parenting styles directly influence children's school transition experiences because they impact on the nature and content of parent-child interactions and relationships. When studying school transition, the macrosystem requires exploration of ways in which social and cultural factors play a role in shaping children's transition experiences. In this doctoral study, for example, the macrosystem leads to consideration of how Chinese and New Zealand cultural beliefs impact on Chinese migrant parents' perspectives on and experiences of school transition.

Chronosystem

The chronosystem adds a dimension of time to the analysis of an individual's environment, encompassing change or consistency experienced over time at both the individual level and contextual level (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). It acknowledges that temporal changes in the child's environment affect their learning and development. At the individual level, for instance, transitioning from ECE to primary school impacts on children's development as they encounter a new environment and culture (Fabian & Dunlop, 2007; O'Kane, 2007; OECD, 2017). At the contextual level, changes in the family context, for example, parents' divorce, the timing of a parent's death, or parents' employment, impact on children's learning (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Education Review Office, 2013; Nóirín et al., 2017). Children's transition from ECE to primary school is not only experienced at the individual level when they enter a new physical

and cultural institution, but also experienced at the relational and contextual level as they will inevitably encounter changes in friendships, child-teacher relationships, and educational philosophies and approaches (OECD, 2017; Peters, 2010). The chronosystem can be utilised as a tool to theorise how children and families experience changes in friendships, child-teacher relationships, parent-teacher partnerships, educational philosophies and approaches, policies, as well as paradigmatic trends and events in times of school transition (OECD, 2017; Peters, 2010). For example, the chronosystem promotes exploration of the influences that Covid-19 might have on children's school transition. The restrictions and lockdown caused by the pandemic may lead to fewer opportunities for face-to-face communication and interactions which can influence children's relationship building with peers and teachers.

An Ecological Perspective on Transition

Bronfenbrenner (1979) proposed that *ecological transitions* occur "whenever a person's positioning in the ecological environment is altered as a result of change of role or setting, or both" (p. 26). When children move from ECE to primary school, the child's positioning in the education setting changes. The child experiences a change of status in the learning community, from an experienced member in the ECE community to a newcomer in the primary school community. Woodhead et al. (2008) argued that changes in any one of the five systems can lead to changes in other systems, and that may influence children's learning and development. For instance, when children move from ECE to school, at the microsystem level, the nature of parent-child and teacher-child interactions might change as the educational practices in school can be different from that of ECE. This change may influence parent-teacher interactions and relationships which are part of the mesosystem.

Transition processes are embedded in children's ecological environment and enacted through a web of relationships and interactions (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; OECD, 2017). In practice, parents and teachers can benefit from being able to recognise and respond to the ecology of school transition inclusive of all the complex factors in it. For example, teachers' understanding of social and cultural backgrounds of families can support delivery of responsive transition practices that promote the sense of belonging of children and families that are crucial for school transition (OECD, 2017; Peters,

2010). Parents' and teachers' understanding of the unique cultural beliefs about school transition that each participant may hold could enable the two parties to empathise with one another and construct shared goals towards children's school transition.

Based on the ecological systems theory, Dockett et al. (2012) suggested that successful transition be seen as a joint endeavour for all involved where each participants' perspectives and experiences are valued as contributors to children's transitions experiences. They suggest that the time of transition can be seen as opportunities for constructing meaningful and responsive relationships among institutions and families. Parents and ECE teachers hold rich information about the child, and meaningful relationships are constructed when they share such information with each other, and with primary school teachers.

Relationships among institutions and families include relationships between parents and ECE teachers, relationships between ECE teachers and school teachers, and relationships between parents and school teachers. A range of studies (Besi & Sakellariou, 2019; Mātauranga, 2018; OECD, 2017) contend that relationships between parents and ECE teachers help the two parties to develop shared understanding about the child, which enabled responsive support to be provided. Relationships between parents and primary school teachers can also be developed by teachers actively asking parents for information about the child who is making a transition, and by parents communicating their concerns and expectations about their children to teachers (Hoffman & Sam, 2020; Kaplun et al., 2017). Thus, to explore the influence that institutions and families have on school transition, it is of value to understand the conditions that impact on teachers' and parents' capacity and willingness to engage in communication with each other. Both ECE and primary school need to encourage teachers to have professional conversations so that they can develop understanding about the curriculum and practices in each other's setting. This communication also enables school teachers to know more about the child and family making the transition, which can assist individualised support and transition activities that cater for the needs of children and families (Bond et al., 2019; Dockett & Perry, 2020).

The ecological systems theory emphasises that a child's immediate and surrounding environment impact on their learning and school transition experiences

over time (Dockett et al., 2011). Based on the ecological perspective on school transition, all parties involved in the transition process play a role in supporting the child's school transition (Perry & Dockett, 2018).

Limitations of Ecological Systems Theory

Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of human development has been critiqued by himself and other researchers (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Christensen, 2010; Derksen, 2010; Woodhead et al., 2008). For instance, Woodhead et al. (2008) questioned whether the ecological model is applicable to different cultural contexts. They believed that placing children at the centre "does not necessarily reflect the priorities of the systems and contexts, or the social constructs and power relations, in which they are located" (Dockett et al., 2014, p. 5). In other words, children might not be always prioritised in all microsystems (Ballam et al., 2017). According to Woodhead et al. (2008), the child is only one of the priorities within microsystems, such as family and institution. For instance, the child might not be prioritised in the family context in times of family breakdown and reconstitution. Moreover, Woodhead et al. (2008) argued that positioning the child at the centre does not recognise the power that adults have over children's lives.

Bronfenbrenner and his colleagues and other researchers recognised that the original ecological model fails to account for children's abilities to influence their development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Christensen, 2010, 2016; Derksen, 2010). According to Christensen (2010) and Derksen (2010), an individual's ability to influence their own development needs more attention in the ecological model of human development. The Ministry of Education (2017a) indicated that children are active agents in their learning, and they both influence and are influenced by the surrounding environment. Such critique has implications for transition research, as it cautions the researcher to examine how the child, as the person who directly goes through the transition process, influences the transition experiences of their own, families, teachers, and institutions.

Bronfenbrenner's later work (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) proposed that children's development takes place in the process of their interactions with the environment surrounding them. However, the power of such processes to impact on

children's development varies substantially due to the characteristics of the developing person and the different levels of environmental contexts (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). The next section discusses the updated ecological model which is known as the PPCT model.

2.5 The PPCT Model

Bronfenbrenner's later work (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) updated the ecological model on human development. The updated model emphasised that human development is influenced by four defining properties: process, person, context, and time (PPCT model). The PPCT model is an "evolving theoretical system for the scientific study of human development over time" (p. 797). where children's development takes place in the *process* of their interactions with the environment surrounding them. The power of such processes to impact on children's development varies substantially due to the characteristics of the developing *person*, the different levels of environmental *contexts* (microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem), and the *time* periods in which the interacting processes occur.

Process

The 'process' is the core element of this updated bioecological model, involving interactions and relationships that operate over time between the developing organism and environment. Such dynamic interactions and relationships are defined as proximal processes.

Especially in its early phases, but also throughout the life course, human development takes place through processes of progressively more complex reciprocal interaction between an active, evolving biopsychological human organism and the persons, objects, and symbols in its immediate external environment. To be effective, the interaction must occur on a fairly regular basis over extended periods of time. Such enduring forms of interaction in the immediate environment are referred to as proximal processes. (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006, p. 797)

Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) regarded proximal processes as the primary mechanisms of human development. Children's participation in processes of progressively more complex reciprocal interaction over time contributes to the development of their abilities, motivations, knowledge, and skills, which empower

them to increasingly become agents of their own learning and development. Tudge et al. (2009) explained the significance of proximal processes by suggesting that children make sense of their world, and understand their place in it by engaging in the processes of interaction and relationship building. The concept of proximal process has significant implications for school transition. In times of transition, children move from a familiar microsystem (ECE centre) to an unfamiliar microsystem (primary school): The people, teaching practices, and physical environment in primary school are new to the child and children may find it difficult to initiate interactions in a new environment. In this sense, encouraging children to make sense of the new learning environment and understand their place in the primary school community is significant for their school transition experiences. Primary school teachers can foster newcomers' engagement in progressively more complex interactions in school by designing activities that build on children's interests and previous learning experiences in ECE and home. To achieve this, primary school teachers are expected to actively communicate with parents and ECE teachers, so as to enrich their understanding of the children who are making school transition.

The form, power, content, and direction of the proximal processes effecting development vary systematically as a joint function of the characteristics of the developing person, the environment—both immediate and more remote—in which the processes are taking place, the nature of the developmental outcomes under consideration, and the social continuities and changes occurring over time through the life course and the historical period during which the person has lived. (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006, p. 798)

In other words, proximal processes do not impact on children's development in a standardised way due to the differences of the individual and contexts (both spatial and temporal) (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Tudge et al., 2009). The influence that contexts have on children's development has been discussed in 2.4. The way in which individuals' personal characteristics impact on their development will be considered in the next section.

Person

The 'person' refers to the individual characteristics of each person, and is both a producer and a product of human development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). A person is a producer who possesses personal characteristics brought into any social

situation that informs and influences the form, power, content, and direction of the proximal processes (Tudge et al., 2009). A person is also a product of human development because personal characteristics are continuously negotiated and reconstructed over time in the proximal processes due to the joint and interactive impacts of all the four key elements (process, person, context, and time) of the PPCT model (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) suggest there are three categories of personal characteristics: demand, resource, and force. Demand characteristics are those most visible features of a person, such as age, gender, skin colour, and physical appearance. They influence development by inviting or discouraging progressively more complex interactions. For example, parents may pay more attention to the younger child, and when this happens, the older child may have less opportunities to engage in interactions with parents.

In contrast, resource characteristics are less recognisable, involving mental, emotional, and material resources that the individual is equipped with, for example, abilities, experiences, knowledge, skills, access to education, and responsive caregivers (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Tudge et al., 2009). Resource characteristics influence the child's capacity to engage effectively in proximal processes that navigate human development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

Force characteristics refer to variations in disposition, motivation, temperament, persistence, and the like (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Tudge et al., 2009). Different force characteristics of individuals generate or disrupt the occurrence of proximal processes, and may contribute to differentiated developmental trajectories (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Tudge et al., 2009). For example, two children with similar resource characteristics may develop differently if one is highly motivated and persistent while the other is demotivated and less persistent (Tudge et al., 2009).

When studying school transition, the element of person in the PPCT model requires researchers to take account of the influence that children's individual characteristics have on school transition. The notion of person may also be extended to other individuals involved in transition. For example, the characteristics of parents

and teachers may also influence school transition, because they impact on the way in which they interact with each other and with children. When extending the element of person to other individuals, one needs to consider the background of these individuals, such as past education history, social and cultural origins, because these impact on individuals' characteristics.

Context

The context element refers to the five levels of the ecological environment: Microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem (as discussed in the previous section). It is within their ecological environment that the developing person experiences proximal processes over time. The interactions and relationships among the five levels of environment either directly or indirectly impact on human development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

Time

The fourth prominent element of PPCT model is that of time. Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) divided time into three successive levels: Microtime, mesotime, and macrotime. Microtime refers to specific activities or interactions that occurred during the ongoing proximal processes, for instance, children may be asked to spend a certain amount of time on weekdays doing their homework. Mesotime refers to the periodicity of these activities and interactions across broader time intervals, such as over the course of days, weeks, or years (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Macrotime refers to shifting expectations and events (such as pandemics) in the larger social and cultural contexts. It functions both within and across generations influenced by the proximal processes and outcomes of human development, over the lifespan (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; O'Toole, 2016).

The PPCT Model and Transition

The PPCT model provides a sound framework for investigating children's transition from ECE to primary school as the four elements can be employed to explore the complexity of school transition. When applied in full, this model promotes attention to view transition as a dynamic process of interactions among all parties involved, including the child, family and community, ECE, and primary school (Dockett et al., 2014). In addition, it acknowledges the crucial role of the characteristics and

resources that all individuals bring to transition and recognises that transition occurs within the social, cultural, and historical contexts of children and families.

The PPCT model has been employed to investigate and understand the complexity of children's transition from ECE to primary school (see for instance, O'Kane, 2007; O'Toole, 2016). O'Kane (2007) employed this model to understand children's transition from ECE to primary school in Ireland, and to provide suggestions about how to better support children. The process element was used to investigate how children's interactions with teachers, peers, and environment influenced their school transition. The 'person element was used to understand the participating children's experiences of school transition, and teachers' background information, such as teaching experiences and qualifications. The person element can also be used to explore how children's characteristics, social and cultural backgrounds, abilities, and even appearance impact on their school transition. The context element was utilised to gather information about the ECE centre and primary school, in terms of the geographical locations of the institutions, educational philosophies, and transition policies and programmes. The time element was evident in O'Kane's research process, as data was collected from children and their parents before the child started school and continued through the first year. The time element also involves recognition of specific events take place in the society and/or family in times of school transition.

O'Toole (2016) employed the PPCT model to explore the perspectives of children, parents, and teachers regarding school transition. She suggested that one must take into account each of the elements in the PPCT model and the way in which these elements interact, in order to understand children's school transition. This is to say, "the person him or herself, the relationships and interactions (process) he or she experiences, the context in which these interactions take place, and the time at which they take place both personally and socio-culturally" (O'Toole, 2016, p. 213) must be considered when trying to understand children's transition experiences. Similarly, O'Kane (2007) suggested that these four elements are inter-linked, and thus one cannot overlook the interaction among these elements when using the PPCT model. For example, when exploring adults' beliefs about school transition, it is important to recognise that their beliefs do not exist alone, they are influenced by individuals' social networks, past experiences, and the social, cultural, political, and historical context.

The PPCT model offers the potential to comprehensively explore children's transition in terms of the issues of change and continuity, the nature of experiences, the complexity of interactions and relationships, and the spatial and temporal contexts in which transition occurs (Ballam et al., 2017; Dockett et al., 2014). The PPCT model provides "a great deal of flexibility in researching transition to school" (Dockett et al., 2014, p. 4). According to Pianta (2010), the PPCT model offers a comprehensive framework because it emphasises that school transition takes place within the entire ecology of the child. To understand and better support children's transition, one needs to consider not only about the characteristics, knowledge, and skills of the child, but also other people who are involved and the various systems or contexts in which transition is experienced.

One criticism of the PPCT model is that the model overlooks the notion of resilience. Resilience means that "certain people have the capacity to overcome any obstacle and this capacity is shown through positive-thinking, goal orientation, educational aspirations, achievement motivation, persistence, hopefulness and optimism" (Christensen, 2016, p. 25). Christensen argued that the bioecological model only describes how children might be negatively influenced when exposed to adversity, and it fails to explain ways in which people overcome travesties and traumas and achieve success. This criticism reminds researchers to pay attention to children's individual abilities to overcome challenges even if there is not sufficient support provided by families and institutions in times of school transition.

Based on the ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1994) and the PPCT model (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006), school transition is a dynamic process that influences and is influenced by interactive systems and the characteristics of children. In this thesis, Bronfenbrenner's work guided the analysis of how the multiple contextual elements (e.g., social networks, family circumstances/structures, past experiences, and educational and cultural beliefs) influence Chinese migrant families' school transition in New Zealand.

Sociocultural theory, apart from emphasising the role of social and cultural contexts on influencing children's development and school transition, also leads to

consideration of how children's social interactions and participation in social-cultural activities might impact on their school transition experiences.

2.6 Sociocultural Theory

Sociocultural theory, which underlines the significance of social context and social interactions for children's development, has been employed to explore school transition (Ballam et al., 2017). From a sociocultural perspective, children's social interactions and participation in different sociocultural activities influence their development, and thus school transition can be understood as "collectively produced and shared with significant others" (Ballam et al., 2017, p. 6).

Sociocultural theory was first introduced by Vygotsky and his colleagues in Russia in 1920s (Rogoff, 2003; Rogoff et al., 1993; Vygotsky, 1978). The central idea of sociocultural theory is that learning is a product of social relationships (Vygotsky, 1978). This theory emphasises the role that social and cultural contexts play in human development. Sociocultural theory is grounded in the social constructivist paradigm that views knowledge as socially constructed and individually reconstructed and appropriated due to the variations in social and cultural contexts (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996; Wang et al., 2011). Vygotsky viewed children as active agents of their own learning and development, engaging with, and in some senses, affecting the environment surrounds them (O'Kane, 2007; Woodhead et al., 2008). According to Vygotsky (1978), children's individual development and their views of the world are embedded in historical, social, cultural, and institutional contexts. From a sociocultural perspective, children's transition from ECE to primary school is a process in which children interact with the social and cultural contexts so as to negotiate and co-construct their understanding of and roles in the two different cultural contexts (O'Kane, 2007; Woodhead et al., 2008). Sociocultural theory directs attentions to explore how adults and peers support children's interactions with the surrounding environment that influences school transition.

Learning and Development

Vygotsky conceptualised learning and development as the "transformation of socially shared activities into internalized processes" (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996, p.

192). Vygotsky (1978) believed that learning happens on two levels, the social level and individual level.

Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals. (Vygotsky, 1978, p.57)

For Vygotsky, learning is a process in which the child firstly interacts with the environment, and then internalises and assimilates these interactions to construct personal understanding and knowledge (O'Kane, 2007; Turuk, 2008). O'Kane (2007) interpreted sociocultural learning as a circular process, in which the knowledge developed through internalising previous interactions with social contexts will contribute to children's development of more sophisticated ways of understanding of and dealing with similar types of interactions or situations when they encounter them later.

Essentially, the sociocultural approach recognises learning and development as embedded within social and cultural contexts and enacted through processes of interaction and internalisation. When children move from ECE to school, the learning environment in the primary school is new to them. Supporting children to develop relationships after they start primary schools, according to sociocultural theory, will influence their learning. If children's opportunities to interact with the environment is limited, their learning might be impacted. Thus, in order to understand children's learning during transition, it is important to explore the social interactions that they engage in. From a sociocultural perspective, to foster children's learning in times of transition, it is crucial to encourage children to interact with the people and environment in primary school. Such interactions can then be internalised by children to enrich their understanding and knowledge (Turuk, 2008). In this sense, the process of transition from ECE to primary school can be understood as opportunities to advance children's learning.

Vygotsky's view that knowledge is actively constructed by children has been questioned. Some critics argue that "learning is not always a result of active

construction. Rather, learning can occur passively or osmotically” (Zhou & Brown, 2017, p. 36). Zhou and Brown (2017) contended that instead of interactions, children may learn certain skills more effectively through observation and practice. This point of view is supported by Rogoff (2008) who suggested that children’s learning also occurs when they are seemingly passive because they can develop an understanding of the context by observing the way in which more experienced others are functioning. For example, children who are about to make school transition may construct their understanding of transitioning by observing their older siblings’ experiences. Ameri (2020) doubted Vygotsky’s view that knowing is relative to the contexts surrounding children, because this view cannot explain the learning of gifted students or child prodigies who can “rise above social norms based on their ability to bring about personal understanding” (p. 1533). Another criticism is concerned with the generalisability of Vygotsky’s work to all cultures (Ameri, 2020; Zhou & Brown, 2017). Ameri (2020) proposed that learners from different social and cultural backgrounds may not be able to gain the same meaning from engagement in certain activities. The implication for transition research is that researchers need to understand the cultural beliefs held by families because these beliefs influence ways in which parents interact with children to support transition.

Zone of Proximal Development

One central concept of sociocultural theory is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), defined as the distance between “the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). The actual developmental level refers to things that the child can accomplish independently without any help from others, while the level of potential development is what the child can achieve with assistance from others (O’Kane, 2007; Wang et al., 2011). The ZPD suggests that children’s cognitive functions advance as they interact with more experienced adults and/or peers who provide the support needed for progression that cannot be achieved by children themselves (Vygotsky, 1978). The concept of ZPD helps to identify a child’s mental functions that are in the process of maturation, and to recognise the crucial role that adults and peers play in children’s learning and development (Turuk, 2008).

The ZPD concept implies that children's learning does not occur in isolation, rather, it is supported by others who build on children's current knowledge and understanding, which are constructed through children's internalisation of past experiences, to promote their learning and development. In relation to transition, the ZPD directs attention to view children's transition as a sociocultural process in which adults and peers can take a supporting role (Dockett & Perry, 2008; O'Kane, 2015). The implication is that teachers can help children to make transitions and advance their learning and development by building on children's past learning experiences. Primary school teachers can get to know the child by seeking information from the child, parents, and ECE teachers who have valuable information about the child's past experiences that lay the foundation for responsive teaching and transition practices in primary school. Primary schoolteachers can then design their teaching practices to meet the individual learning needs of each child. In the New Zealand context, primary school teachers can understand children's learning experiences in ECE by reading children's portfolios that record children's learning stories in ECE (Carr, 2001; Carr et al., 2009). In this sense, learning stories, if written in a way that shows children's social relationships, will provide context for primary school teachers to understand the ways in which children learn and what they know.

Scaffolding

The concept of scaffolding was first introduced by Jerome Bruner in the 1960s to describe the support that adults provide in order to facilitate children's development (Wood et al., 1976). According to Bruner, scaffolding is a process of support that adults offer children to enable them to accomplish things that would be beyond their current developmental level. O'Toole (2016) suggested that scaffolding is when adults function as mediators of learning by interacting with and creating contexts for children's learning within their ZPD, then gradually withdrawing support when children become more capable of navigating their own learning. Similarly, Hammond and Gibbons (2005) summarised two key features of scaffolding, extending understanding and temporary support. That is to say, the purpose of scaffolding is to extend children's understanding by adults providing support that is progressively adjusted as children become increasingly able to accomplish a task independently (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005).

Originally scaffolding described adults' roles in supporting children's learning. However, this generates two limitations when considering children as active agents navigating their own learning in their social and cultural contexts. Firstly, it represents a passive view of children and an instructional role of adults (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005). Secondly, its emphasis on the role of adults, overlooks the potential contribution of children's peers and siblings to their learning and development. To address these two limitations, scaffolding should be regarded as a process of bi-directional interactions between children and the 'significant others'. The notion of significant others was defined by Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) as the person with whom children interact "on a fairly regular basis over extended periods of time" (p. 798). Children extend their current level of knowledge and understanding through bi-directional interactions with others. Essentially, scaffolding is the process of children's significant others and children themselves co-construct changing participation in social and cultural activities, over time (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Rogoff, 2003; Young & Miller, 2004). The concept of scaffolding depicts the supportive and responsive roles that adults and peers can play in children's school transition processes.

Changing Participation

From a sociocultural perspective, children's school transition is a process in which children develop understanding of the two different cultural contexts of ECE and school through participating in socio-cultural activities (O'Kane, 2007; Woodhead et al., 2008). As their understanding advances, their engagement in activities is likely to become deeper. Thus, children may experience a process of changing participation in times of school transition.

Children's changing participation, according to Rogoff (2008), can be explored on three planes, *apprenticeship*, *guided participation*, and *participatory appropriation*. These three planes represent community, interpersonal, and personal levels of participation, respectively. The metaphor of apprenticeship directs attention to the active roles of newcomers of a community and the existing community members in arranging activities and enacting interactions to facilitate participation in culturally organised activities within the community to which they belong (Rogoff, 2008). Guided participation involves processes and systems of interpersonal interactions, and mutual involvement of community members who communicate and coordinate their

engagement to manage their own and other community members' roles in participating in socioculturally structured collective activities (Rogoff, 2008). Participatory appropriation refers to the personal process in which individuals, by participating in one activity, become prepared to be involved in similar activities they encounter later. Simply speaking, children's changing participation is a process of guided participation, in which children interact and communicate with more knowledgeable others who guide and co-construct children's participation in culturally valued activities (Dockett et al., 2014; Rogoff, 2003, 2008; Rogoff et al., 1993). Following the notion of changing participation, studying transition involves making sense of how a child's participation changes during the process of school transition and being sensitive to the complex impact of that participation on the child's development.

Consistent with Rogoff's plane of guided participation, Lave and Wenger (1991) introduced the idea of *situated learning* to describes a process of legitimate peripheral participation within which newcomers to a community experience identity shift from new entrants to becoming experienced members of a community of practice. Lave and Wenger (1991) suggest that this identity shift is important because it underlines that the person is a social participant who brings all their aspects of human experiences to make sense of the social and cultural surroundings. An identity shift is experienced by newcomers engaging in peripheral participation that enriches their understanding and awareness of the ways in which the community is organised and operated. This understanding and knowledge about the community, together with the guidance from the more experienced others, enables newcomers' participation from being peripheral towards being central to the functioning of community (Dockett et al., 2014; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Although children's experience of a shift in their identity is an important element in transition, identity theory is not the focus of this doctoral study as the aim is to explore the contextual elements that influence Chinese migrant families' school transition.

Sociocultural Perspective on Transition

From a sociocultural perspective, children's school transition is a process of changing participation in which children interact with people, places, and things surrounding them (Rogoff, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978). The sociocultural approach to children's transition emphasises the significance of social, cultural, and institutional

contexts for children's transition experiences, as well as the crucial roles that adults and peers play in communicating and interacting with children in order to guide their changing participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Perry et al., 2014; Rogoff, 2008; Rogoff et al., 1993). Transition is viewed as a co-constructed dynamic process experienced by children, families, and educators interacting with each other, and participating in activities and events taking place within children's bioecological environment (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Vygotsky, 1978). Furthermore, sociocultural theory informs the roles of significant others in transition processes as scaffolders who build on children's past experiences, and current understanding and knowledge to promote and advance children's learning and development within their ZPD (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Hammond & Gibbons, 2005; Vygotsky, 1978; Wood et al., 1976). Based on sociocultural theory, to fully understand children and families' transition experiences, it is crucial to consider the social, cultural, educational, and political contexts in which transition is experienced, as well as the influences that children's significant others might have on school transitions.

2.7 Summary

This chapter explored multiple theories that have been utilised to study school transition. This study employs the ecological systems theory as a theoretical framework guided by previous research (Ballam et al., 2017, Peters, 2010) that advocates for a diverse, cultural, holistic, and contextual understanding of transition. The ecological model of school transition offers a clear framework for studying the multiple contexts surrounding the growing child. Rite of passage, border crossing, and critical theory have distinct features that contribute to the theoretical frame of this study. Both the rite of passage approach and border crossing are suitable for focusing on children's shift of identity in times of school transition and the critical theory approach can be employed to address issues of power, diversity, and equity.

This study explores the contextual elements that influence perspectives and experiences of Chinese migrant families regarding their children's school transition in New Zealand. The ecological model fits well with this purpose. Sociocultural theory also provides theoretical foundation for this study because it supports consideration of the child's learning and the role of adults and peers in supporting transition, all of which contribute to family transition experiences. Using these two theories, this study

looks at transition as a social and cultural process experienced by multiple groups of people (children, family members, education practitioners) interacting with each other within the child's interactive ecological systems (microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, chronosystem), over time. This theorising of school transition requires researchers to explore how transition is understood by these parties and take account of the multiple contexts in which transition is experienced, in order to understand the complexity of school transition. Based on the ecological systems theory and sociocultural theory, transition is tentatively defined as a co-constructed dynamic process experienced by children, families, and educators interacting with each other, and participating in activities and events taking place within children's bioecological environment (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Dockett et al., 2014; Vygotsky, 1978).

Chapter 3 Chinese Migrant Families' Educational Beliefs

3.1 Introduction

As the purpose of this study is to understand Chinese migrant families' perspectives and experiences regarding children's school transition in New Zealand, it is of value to explore the role of family in school transition because it informs the analysis of how the participants engage in supporting their children's school transition. Moreover, it is important to discuss Chinese migrant families' educational beliefs and parental involvement because they influence how a child's school transition is perceived and supported. A broad range of literature (Dockett & Perry, 2021; Dockett et al., 2017b; Hanke et al., 2017; OECD, 2017; Peters, 2010) stressed that school transition not only involves the child, but also teachers and families. Although all parties involved in school transitions play a role, this chapter privileges the family because the aim of this study is to understand Chinese migrant families' school transition experiences.

This chapter starts with exploration of the role of family in school transition. In times of school transition, family is not only one of the many contexts of transition, but also an active participant of transition who experience transition alongside the child. Drawing on empirical studies of Chinese migrant families' involvement in children's education in western countries, this chapter discusses how the Chinese cultural tradition informs parents' educational beliefs and parenting practices. Influenced by Confucianism, Chinese migrant families typically place high value on children's education as it is seen as a powerful means of ensuring future success and upward social mobility (Chan, 2014; Guo, 2010; Li, 2001; Li, 2004). However, Chinese parents tend to be unwilling to be involved in school-based activities and parent-teacher relationships. The last section of this chapter analyses how Chinese migrant families' educational beliefs and practices are influenced by both Confucianism and mainstream educational ideas in western countries, such as New Zealand.

3.2 Family and School Transition

Family is itself a pedagogical community that impacts on children's learning and development prior to the commencement of primary school (Dockett et al., 2017a). At

home, parents often organise and engage children in socially and culturally valued activities to foster children's learning. Thus, the social, cultural, and linguistic environment at home impacts on children's learning and development. According to Dockett et al. (2017a), family is not merely one of the contexts within which school transition takes place, but is an active participant of school transition. A number of studies (Dockett et al., 2012; Hanke et al., 2017; Peters, 2010) suggested that parents take a dual role in the process of school transition. On the one hand, they engaged in parenting practices to support their children's transitions. On the other hand, they needed to cope with challenges and changes embedded in the school transition process (Hanke et al., 2017).

In times of school transition, parents experience a change in identity from parents of ECE children to parents of school pupils. The requirements and expectations of schools may influence their choices and actions about how to support their children in both school and home (Dockett et al., 2017a). While school transition involves multiple changes, "it is also the case that families incorporate these changes within the established patterns of acting and interaction" (Dockett et al., 2017a, p. 260) with their children and teachers. Specifically, parents make adjustments when their children move from ECE to primary school, in terms of daily routines and expectations towards children's learning and the new educational setting (Dockett et al., 2012). These adjustments demonstrate that school transition is a time when children are engaged in a number of different ecological systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1994). This requires an understanding of how children's changing contexts also impact on how parents regard their roles. For the child, transition may involve changes in behaviour and expectations of them as they engage with different social and cultural beliefs. Similarly, school transition impacts on parents as they navigate their own beliefs and expectations which may be different to that of the ECE and school. Thus, it is of benefit to understand the ways in which parents understand and adopt/reject these values and beliefs.

Griebel et al. (2017) investigated German parents' perspectives and experiences regarding their own transition in times of their children's school transitions. This study found that "feelings of self-assurance and well-being as parents of a schoolchild, feeling supported and informed by school, quality of contact with teacher, and

participation in school life” (p. 30) contribute to positive school transition experiences for the parents. The parents who participated in this study were actively involved in supporting their children’s school transition. These parents expected teachers to confirm that their involvement is beneficial for children’s learning and school transition. Based on this finding, Griebel et al. suggested ongoing family-school communication that supports families’ knowledge and certainty about their involvement in children’s learning needs to be conducted. This is particularly important for families who do not share the cultural and linguistic backgrounds with the mainstream society, such as Chinese migrant families in New Zealand. Griebel et al. (2017) underlined the importance of investigating not only how parents directly interact with children to support transition, but also how parent-teacher relationships might influence parent-child interactions and parents’ confidence about their parenting practices, when researching school transition.

For families who come from a migrant background, school transition is a time for them to seek to understand the mainstream educational and cultural practices (Dockett et al., 2017a). Peters (2010) suggests that parents who grew up or educated overseas may find it hard to understand the schools and school practices in New Zealand if education in their home country is very different from that of New Zealand. For instance, the mainstream view on child-teacher relationship and parent-teacher partnership in New Zealand may be quite different from the view held by Chinese migrant parents. This difference may cause confusion of Chinese parents in terms of how to support and to be involved in their children’s education and school transition in New Zealand. From an ecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1994), Chinese migrant parents’ views on education and school transition are influenced by the interplay of both Chinese and New Zealand beliefs, which in turn informs parental practices in terms of interacting with children and teachers to foster school transition.

For parents whose first language is not English, the problem encountered in times of school transition can remain unresolved if the difficulty is not communicated due to their limited dominant language proficiency. Peters (2010) suggested that for children and families who come from non-English speaking linguistic backgrounds, it is significant to have access to people who speak their home language. While it is unrealistic for every institution to have such bilingual or multilingual staff, ECE

centres/schools can collaborate with local communities and bilingual parents to seek language assistance. Such collaboration is promoted in New Zealand, as evident in the family and community principle of *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017a). This collaboration may contribute to better understanding of the mainstream educational beliefs and practices of parents whose English proficiency is limited, which helps to increase the level of parental involvement that benefits children's school transition experiences.

3.3 Parental Involvement of Chinese Migrant Families

Both New Zealand and international literature indicate that family involvement positively contributes towards children's experiences of transitioning from ECE to primary school (Hirst et al., 2011; Jeon et al., 2020; Lau, 2014; Lau & Power, 2018; Moores-Chadwick & Galloway, 2015; Peters, 2010). For example, Lau (2014) found that parental involvement in children's school transitions helped to improve parent-child relationship and the home learning environment, which in turn fostered "children's positive development and mastery of basic academic skills" (p. 404). The OECD (2017) stressed that parental involvement contributes to children's improved reading, literacy, and social and emotional skills.

In the transition process, parents are important partners of ECE and primary schools since they possess valuable knowledge regarding their children that can be shared with teachers (OECD, 2017). In order to understand the transition experiences of families, it is critical to explore the content of parent-teacher partnerships because it is through this content that the two parties share understanding of children and school transition (Ballam et al., 2017; Dockett et al., 2017a; Dunlop & Fabian, 2007). The sharing of information between teachers and parents enriches both parties' knowledge of children which in turns allows for adjustments to be made when they interact with children to support their school transition. For teachers, parent-teacher partnerships can equip them with sufficient knowledge to offer children responsive support in school transition processes to promote their engagement in learning and development of identity. Other studies (see for instance, Peters, 2010; Zhang, 2012) suggested that parental involvement promotes continuity between children's school life and home life. According to the OECD (2017), parental involvement facilitates

children's motivation for learning, which is shown to be an influential element in times of school transition (Peters, 2010; Yeboah, 2002).

Research on parental involvement of Asian families in their children's education in western countries revealed that Asian parents are typically not as involved in direct contact with schools as their non-Asian counterparts (Chan, 2014; Guo, 2006; Guo, 2010; Sy, 2006; Wu, 2009; Zhang, 2012). Literature on parental involvement describes it as a multifaceted concept (Sy, 2006; Tao et al., 2019; Waanders et al., 2007; Zhang, 2012; Zhou et al., 2020). Berthelsen and Walker (2008) defined parental involvement as "parental behaviour with, or on behalf of children, at home or at school, as well as the expectations that parents hold for children's future education" (p. 35). This perception of parental involvement recognises that parental involvement can be carried out in both home and schools, and that the interactions between families and schools are also part of parental involvement.

When investigating the influence that individuals' cultural origins have on school involvement, researchers (Berthelsen & Walker, 2008; Doucet & Tudge, 2007; Guo, 2006; Huang, 2013; Zhang, 2012) have argued that people from different cultural backgrounds hold disparate expectations, beliefs, and values with respect to children's schooling and family involvement. Sy (2006) found that Asian American parents' involvement focused on interactions with children at home rather than participating in activities organised by institutions. In New Zealand, a range of studies have investigated Chinese migrant families' experiences of and perspectives on children's early learning (see for instance, Chan, 2014; Guo, 2005, 2006; Guo & Dalli, 2012; Huang, 2013; Liao, 2007; Wu, 2009; Yang, 2011; Zhang, 2012). A prevailing finding that emerged from these studies was that Chinese migrant parents in New Zealand tend to prefer to engage in their children's learning in home settings, rather than participate in school-related activities. Similarly, transition research in China (Lau, 2014) indicated that the level of parental involvement in schools was lower than it was in the home. This suggests the need to consider cultural influences that impact on the ways in which parents engage themselves in supporting children's school transition in the contexts of family and institution.

Lau (2014) investigated Chinese parents' perceptions of parental involvement in times of children's transition from ECE to primary school in Shenzhen and Hong Kong. The 18 Chinese parents who participated in this study expressed a similar view on ECE and primary school. They considered that children's learning in ECE is less critical and less academic compared with learning in primary schools (Lau, 2014). The emphasis that Chinese educational belief places on children's academic performance might have led to those parents' view of the relative importance of the different education stages. The parents in Lau's study saw ECE as the time for children to learn to interact with different learning materials and different people (e.g., peers and teachers). On the contrary, starting primary school was perceived as an important milestone because it was the starting point of children's formal schooling and children's learning would be evaluated based on their academic performance (Lau, 2014). The different views that parents hold towards ECE and primary school may have led to the change in focus of parental involvement. Lau (2014) found that Chinese parents' involvement in their children's education became more academic-oriented after the child started primary school.

Lau's study also found that the level of parental involvement in educational settings may decrease as the child moves from ECE to primary school. The parents in the study felt that they were excluded from decision making in primary school, and that they had to follow the decisions made by the school authorities. They felt that there were not enough opportunities to communicate with the teachers, and that the parent-teacher meetings usually only involved 'one-way' communication in which they rarely had the chance to express their views. In the view of Lau et al. (2012), this type of communication was the result of Chinese cultural tradition in which teachers tend to "view themselves as more professional with respect to educational matters and expect parents to assist teachers in supporting children's education" (p. 147).

In New Zealand Chan (2014) and Wu (2009) have shown that Chinese migrant families typically perceive children's learning in ECE as inadequate and not educational. This perception, according to Wu (2009), was influenced by Chinese parents' insufficient understanding of the educational benefits of play that is employed as the main approach through which children in ECE learn in most western countries, including New Zealand. The Chinese cultural tradition regards play and learning as

distinct constructs (Ding, 2021; Huang, 2013; Wu, 2009; Yang, 2011). In the Chinese tradition, learning involves effort while play is seen as effortless (Wu, 2009). This cultural understanding of play and learning contributes to Chinese migrant parents' belief that children do not learn much in ECE in New Zealand. At home, they deploy their own resources to reinforce and extend what the children learned from ECE so as to compensate for the perceived limited learning opportunities (Chan, 2014; Wu, 2009). Chan (2014) argued that the home-based involvement of Chinese migrant families was commonly unrecognised by teachers, which may in turn limit teachers' understanding about Chinese migrant children's learning at home. In times of school transition, educators' limited understanding of home-based involvement of Chinese migrant parents can negatively influence the responsiveness of the transition practices delivered in institutions.

Similarly, several studies in Dockett et al. (2017a) indicated that "the majority of families are active participants in their children's education, sometimes in ways that are neither recognised nor valued by the culture of school" (p. 260). Thus, they call for a broader recognition of how families support their children's learning and school transition. According to Peters (2010), parents and families who did not involve themselves much in ECE and schools were often seen by teachers as not valuing their children's education while the reality can be quite different. This is particularly relevant to Chinese migrant families in western countries including New Zealand. A number of New Zealand studies found that although their involvement in educational institutions is limited, Chinese parents were highly involved in supporting children's learning at home (Chan, 2014; Guo, 2010; Huang, 2013; Wu, 2009; Zhang, 2012). A similar finding was evident in studies conducted in Canada (Zhou et al., 2020), America (Sy, 2006), and Australia (Ma, 2019), which found that although Chinese migrant parents' involvement in institutions was rare and passive, they were actively and intensively involved at home to assist children's learning.

A comparative study of parental involvement of Chinese migrant parents and English speaking non-Chinese parents in ECE in New Zealand conducted by Zhang (2012) indicated that the level of Chinese parents' involvement in ECE services was lower than their non-Chinese counterparts. Zhang's doctoral research compared the parental involvement in ECE services in New Zealand of 120 Chinese migrant parents

and 127 non-Chinese parents. This study was conducted because Zhang found that the dramatic increase of Chinese migrant children in ECE in New Zealand had “posed great challenge to early childhood education services” (p. 2) particularly in the maintenance of parent-teacher partnerships which was emphasised in ECE in New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 2017a). Analysing questionnaire responses and interview transcripts, Zhang found that Chinese migrant parents were less likely to be involved in communication with teachers, voluntary help, and decision making in ECE. However, this did not mean that Chinese migrant parents placed a low value on children’s education. A broad range of research (Chan, 2014; Guo, 2010; Li, 2001; Li, 2004) suggested that Chinese families, no matter in which country they were settling, highly valued children’s education, regarding it as a crucial means of ensuring future success and upward social mobility. The high value that Chinese parents place on children’s education was influenced by a range of cultural and philosophical macrosystem factors, including the influence of Confucianism, (discussed later in this chapter).

Chinese migrant parents’ reluctance to be involved in institution-based activities and parent-teacher relationship construction was believed to be influenced by Chinese culture (Ma, 2017; Sy, 2006). Chinese migrant parents have been found to believe that families and schools should take separate responsibilities for children’s learning, and that teachers are educational authority figures that should not be questioned (Chan, 2011; Guo & Dalli, 2012; Sy, 2006). This cultural belief suggests that Chinese parents may consider being involved in school as inappropriate and disrespectful as teachers are responsible for children’s learning in the educational setting (Sy, 2006). Such a belief contradicts the educational philosophy in New Zealand where parental involvement and teacher-parent partnerships are promoted (Ministry of Education, 2007, 2017a). This contradiction may contribute to Chinese parents’ reluctance to communicate and build partnerships with teachers during their children’s school transition processes, which can negatively affect children’s transition experiences.

These studies shed light on the need for further research to investigate Chinese migrant families’ involvement in their children’s learning so as to enable teachers to develop a comprehensive understanding about this cultural group. Such an understanding would enable teachers to carry out responsive practices that acknowledge cultural interests and needs, and empower Chinese families to be

actively engaged in children's learning and school transition processes (Guo, 2010; Peters, 2010). This doctoral study includes investigation of the ways in which Chinese migrant parents engage in interactions with children and teachers to support school transition in New Zealand. This section has focused on parental involvement of Chinese migrant families in children's education, the following section will discuss the cultural elements that may have influenced Chinese migrant families' perspectives and practices regarding children's education.

3.4 Macro Influences on Chinese Migrant Families

This doctoral study aims to explore the contextual elements, including the cultural factors, that may impact Chinese migrant families' school transition in New Zealand. This section discusses how Chinese migrant parents' educational beliefs and parenting practices might be influenced by Confucianism and the historically prevailing assessment method of examination in China.

Confucianism

People's beliefs and values about education, school transition and parental involvement are influenced by their social and cultural backgrounds (Berthelsen & Walker, 2008; Chan, 2014; Chen & Uttal, 1988; Doucet & Tudge, 2007). Many Asian countries, including China, Singapore, Korea, and Japan have been regarded as countries of collectivism as the society in these countries are deeply influenced by Confucian heritage culture (Phuong-Mai et al., 2005; Winfield et al., 2000). Families in these countries tend to emphasise a collective goal, and every family member is expected to share responsibilities and commit to this goal. The Chinese culture exhibits this characteristic of collectivism which influences family beliefs, values, and practices about children's learning and education (Huang & Gove, 2012). The emphases on group orientation and identification of Confucian culture heritage contribute to the collectivist society of China, where higher value is placed on collective interests than the individual (Yang et al., 2006).

To understand Chinese parents' cultural perspectives on education and school transition, it is important to develop an understanding of Confucianism. Confucianism is a holistic and relational philosophy that has shaped the social, cultural, political, and especially educational contexts of China for over two thousand years (Chan, 2014; Wu

& Singh, 2004). Luo et al. (2013) argued that Confucianism continues to play an active role in influencing contemporary Chinese society and Chinese parenting styles, through its emphases on family roles in and responsibilities for children's learning and development process. Specifically, Confucianism has a profound influence on the education field in China. It is an "inseparable foundation for Chinese families' beliefs and functions in education" (Huang & Gove, 2012, p. 12). That is to say, Chinese families' beliefs, values, and practices about education are, to a large extent, shaped by Confucianism (Guo, 2010; Huang & Gove, 2012; Wu, 2009).

Confucian culture stresses the significance of education, and prioritises children's academic excellence (Chan, 2014; Zhang, 2012). Education has always been highly valued in China as it is regarded as an extremely crucial means that contributes to personal advancement (Chen & Uttal, 1988). For most Chinese parents, children's education is a means of ensuring future success and upward social mobility (Chan, 2014). In accordance with this view on education, Zhang and Carrasquillo (1995) found that many Asian migrant parents viewed education as a ladder that led to better social status. A range of research (Guo, 2012, 2013; Huang & Gove, 2012; Ma, 2017; Zhou et al., 2020) has found that Chinese migrant parents have high expectations of their children's school performance and put immense pressure on children to achieve academic excellence by, for instance, direct teaching, checking homework, assigning extra supplementary work, hiring tutors, and sending children to after-school classes. Two Confucian notions, *xiao* (filial piety) and *guan* (discipline), have been widely identified as crucial elements that inform Chinese families' expectations and parental responsibilities towards children (Chan, 2014; Guo, 2010; Huang & Gove, 2012; Li, 2001; Li, 2004; Liao, 2007; Luo et al., 2013; Park & Chesla, 2007; Pearson & Rao, 2003; Wu, 2009).

In China, parents and other family members take the primary responsibility for children's learning. Chinese families typically view children's education as a family business and an interdependent process (Huang & Gove, 2012). Children's educational achievement is regarded as a family honour and a source of happiness (Li, 2001). For Chinese parents, children's educational achievement necessitates the joint efforts of the child and the family. Under the influence of Confucianism, filial piety (*xiao*) is believed by Chinese families as a significant and desirable virtue that the child should

possess (Huang & Gove, 2012). Filial piety is demonstrated by children's respect for and obedience towards parents' demands and expectations, as well as the unconditional care and support that children provide to parents when they become old (Chan, 2014; Huang & Gove, 2012). The child is expected to work hard to achieve the collective goals held by the family so as to bring pride, honour, glory, and happiness to all family members who are believed by Chinese culture as being responsible for disciplining (*guan*) the child and monitoring the activities that the child is engaged in (Chan, 2014; Zhang, 2012). In this sense, a child's school performance is considered to reflect the effort of the entire family (Chen & Uttal, 1988).

Although an emphasis is placed on academic performance, Confucian educational philosophy, in fact, exhibits a holistic approach towards human development, highlighting not only the academic achievement but also the moral values that one should possess (Sun, 2008). The ultimate goal of human development, according to Confucianism, is to achieve overall perfection which consists of five constant virtues of humanity, benevolence (*ren*), righteousness (*yi*), propriety (*li*), wisdom (*zhi*), and sincerity (*xin*) (Luo et al., 2013).

Ren requires one to "love the people" by concern for the wellbeing of others in one's community (Luo et al., 2013; Park & Chesla, 2007). Confucius believed that *ren* involves consideration of others, and not imposing upon others what you yourself do not want (Confucius, 1983). *Yi* is the sense of rightness, requiring one to display righteous actions and intentions (Cua, 2000; Luo et al., 2013). *Li* is a broad concept encompassing the boundary of appropriate behaviours in the social sense (Cua, 2000) as well as "ritual propriety, social order, effective modes of action, modes of education, and self-cultivation" (Park & Chesla, 2007, p. 301). *Zhi* refers to the acquisition of knowledge and the recognition and differentiation between good and bad (Luo et al., 2013; Zhang, 2002). *Xin* is interpreted as the state of mind, involving honesty and trustworthiness without deception or lies (Park & Chesla, 2007; Zhang, 2002). The five virtues of Confucianism do not solely underline education thought and academic performance, they also represent a broader approach towards education and human development.

The broader view of Confucianism clearly contradicts empirical evidence which shows that Chinese parents place an emphasis on children's academic performance (Chen & Uttal, 1988; Guo, 2006; Huang, 2013; Liao, 2007; Yang, 2011). This contradiction is possibly caused by the historically prevalent examination-based method of assessing learning in education in China (Chen & Uttal, 1988).

Examination-based Assessment in China

Examination has been a prevailing means utilised by both historical and contemporary China to measure individuals' educational performance. In contemporary China children may need to attend examinations as early as three years old if they are sent to private ECE services. For children who attend public ECE and schools, their first examination normally occurs in the first year of primary schooling. Primary schools in China normally organise monthly and/or termly examinations to evaluate children's learning. Traditionally, from 960 to 1905, China utilised an examination model called *keju* to assess individuals' learning. *Keju*, also known as the imperial examination system, was the sole means by which the imperial government of China recruited officials for the state and district bureaucracy (Chen & Uttal, 1988; Zhang, 2002). Once one passed the exam, he (females were not allowed to attend *keju*) was rewarded with high-power position, along with honour and glory for the entire family and ancestry (Yu & Suen, 2005). Contemporarily, the annual national college entrance examination (*gaokao*) was adopted by China as a prerequisite for entrance into higher education institutions. Yu and Suen (2005) argued that *gaokao* is, in some ways, a replication of *keju*.

Although the purposes of *keju* and *gaokao* are disparate, the two examination systems are similar in many aspects, including "central state-orchestrated administration, a standardized process, large-scaled testing, high-stake testing for the examinee, a hierarchical quota system and a high level of security for both test contents and test process" (Yu & Suen, 2005, p. 21). *Gaokao* was first introduced in 1952 and abolished during the period of Cultural Revolution (1966-1967). It was re-established one year after the Cultural Revolution in 1968 and is currently still in use. Students are admitted into different levels of tertiary education institutions based on the test scores they get in *gaokao* (Yu & Suen, 2005).

The prevailing culture of examination to evaluate one's learning may, to a certain extent, explain Chinese families' high expectations towards children's academic performance (Chen & Uttal, 1988). Similarly, Yu and Suen (2005) suggested that Chinese parents' high aspirations for children's educational attainment and achievement are consequences of the historically and contemporarily adopted exam-driven education system. The function of examination is a key part of the macrosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) and may influence Chinese migrant parents' perspectives and experiences regarding children's education and school transition. For instance, Chinese migrant parents may expect certain child and teacher behaviours, such as children put effort into studying academic knowledge and educators engaging in formal and adult-led teaching activities, as these behaviours are believed to help children to achieve academic excellence so that they can perform well in examinations.

These expectations are likely to influence the nature of parent-child interactions and the content of parent-teacher partnerships and communication. Entering primary school is perceived by many Chinese parents as the starting point of children's formal education because children's academic performance starts to be evaluated using examinations (Lau, 2014). The high value that parents place on children's academic performance may lead to increased academic focused parent-child interactions and relationships in times of school transition. A wide range of literature has confirmed that Chinese parents, no matter in which country they live, typically hold high expectations towards children's academic performance (Chan, 2014; Chen & Uttal, 1988; Guo, 2010; Li, 2001; Liao, 2007; Luo et al., 2013; Wu, 2009; Wu & Singh, 2004; Zhang, 2009; Zhang, 2012). When Chinese parents live in another country, their parenting beliefs and practices tend to change due to the influences of both the Chinese cultural tradition and the mainstream culture of the host country.

3.5 Cultural Parenting Practices of Chinese Migrant Families

Due to the influence of Chinese cultural tradition, Chinese families are generally eager to engage in children's learning because they view children's education as a family business and children's educational achievement is perceived as a family honour and a source of happiness (Ma, 2017; Zhou et al., 2020). Chinese parents' willingness to be involved in their children's education was evident in empirical studies conducted

in China (Lau, 2014; Lau et al., 2012) and western countries (Li, 2004; Zhang, 2012; Zhou et al., 2020). However, studies in New Zealand (see for instance, Guo, 2010; Wu, 2009; Zhang, 2012) have found that Chinese migrant parents' engagement in their children's learning in institutions was limited due to their minority status in the host country, limited English proficiency, and a lack of understanding of the educational philosophy adopted in the mainstream society.

These studies in New Zealand also found that Chinese migrants' parenting style has transformed from solely based on the traditional Chinese culture to combining both their original culture and the western culture (Ma, 2017). Similar findings about Chinese families' westernised parenting practices are found in studies conducted in the United States (Okagaki & Bojczyk, 2002) and Canada (Li, 2004; Zhou et al., 2020).

According to Park and Chesla (2007), due to migration and acculturation, Chinese migrant families were likely to adapt and modify their educational beliefs and parenting practices so as to offer their children better opportunities to succeed in the host country. Acculturation is defined as "the dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members" (Berry, 2005, p. 698). According to Berry (2005), in the process of acculturation, changes occur at both the group level (changes in social structures and institutions and in cultural practices) and the individual level (changes in personal beliefs and behaviours). For instance, Li (2004) found that Chinese migrant parents believed that a cultural integration was desirable as it enabled their children to succeed in the mainstream society of the host country. Parents who participated in Li's study appreciated western educational philosophy for promoting children's creativity and originality. However, they also critiqued its weak focus on academic knowledge and unlimited freedom. Similarly, Chinese migrant parents in New Zealand have been found to be critical of the pedagogy of utilising play to foster children's learning as they did not see the educational benefits of children's play (Guo, 2006; Huang, 2013; Yang, 2011; Zhang, 2012).

These studies tend to generalise Chinese migrants' educational beliefs (see for instance, Guo, 2010; Li, 2004; Zhang, 2012). Although these discourses acknowledge that Chinese migrant's educational beliefs and parenting practices are not only

influenced by Chinese cultural tradition, but also by the mainstream culture of the host country, they did not recognise that not all Chinese migrants acculturate in the same way, and to the same extent. However, these discourses, to a certain extent, illustrate that Chinese migrant parents' beliefs and practices regarding children's education are not universal. According to the literature and theory on acculturation, acculturation is an individualised process influenced by individuals' attitudes, cultural identities, language, social behaviours, and motivations (Arends-Tóth & Van de Vijver, 2004; Berry, 1997, 2005). Therefore, Chinese migrants may acculturate differently, and their cultural beliefs are subject to changes and are constantly reconstructed. Discourses on acculturation bring about consideration of different ways in which school transition might be understood and experienced by Chinese migrant families in New Zealand. This doctoral research investigates Chinese migrant families' perspectives and experiences regarding school transition, and explores the ecological elements that influence how school transition is perceived and experienced by the participating Chinese families.

3.6 Summary

This chapter has demonstrated that family plays a significant role in school transition. Family is not merely one of the contexts within which school transition takes place, but also an active participant of school transition. Family involvement positively contributes towards children's experiences of transitioning from ECE to primary school.

The educational beliefs and parenting practices of Chinese migrant families in western countries are constantly negotiated and reconstructed as they experience the dynamic process of acculturation. The implication for transition is that while it is crucial that transition support take account of the diverse social and cultural backgrounds of children and families, it is also important to avoid holding general assumptions for any particular group of people, and to recognise there is diversity within groups (Peters, 2010).

In the New Zealand context, Chinese migrant families are not a homogeneous group of people, each family may bring unique experiences, beliefs, values, concerns, and expectations to children's school transition. With their emphasis on academic

performance and dynamic experiences of acculturation, Chinese migrant families' experiences regarding their children's transition from ECE to primary school are likely to be a highly complex cultural process which has not been investigated in New Zealand. To fill this gap, this research will contribute to the field of knowledge of education that concerns children's school transitions by adding Chinese migrant families' experiences and understanding of children's school transitions in New Zealand.

Chapter 4 Understanding Transition

4.1 Introduction

With a growing recognition of the significance of children's early learning experiences and their contribution towards positive outcomes in later academic and social lives, the transition from ECE to primary school has received much attention from researchers, policy makers, education practitioners, parents, and others who have an interest in children's lives (Ballam et al., 2017; Dockett & Perry, 2007; Dockett & Perry, 2014; OECD, 2017; UNICEF, 2012a).

This chapter provides a critical review of literature regarding children's transition from ECE to primary school. The first section examines the notion of transitioning to school from ECE and explores how school transition is defined in existing literature. The different perspectives of participants in school transition (children, parents, teachers) will be introduced and analysed. This section then discusses how successful transitions are described in the literature. The second section unpacks and critiques the concept of readiness which is grounded in the maturation frame. The following three sections explore how school transition has been theorised in relation to the interrelated concepts of change, continuity/discontinuity, learning, and relationships. The last section examines the design, implementation, and impact of transition programmes and practices on children, with a focus on the New Zealand context.

4.2 Defining Transition

School transition involves "a range of interactions and processes overtime" (Perry et al., 2014, p. 3), and is experienced differently by different people in different contexts (Dockett & Perry, 2021). There is no agreement on the definition of school transition. A broad range of studies investigating children's transition from ECE to primary school have recognised that transition is a complex process, involving changes in expectations, relationships, emotions, and identities. A range of studies (Dockett, 2014; Dockett & Perry, 2009; Dockett & Perry, 2017; Dunlop & Fabian, 2007; Educational Transitions and Change (ETC) Research Group, 2011; Fabian & Dunlop, 2007; White et al., 2021) acknowledge that transition is a multifaceted phenomenon. There is probably no need to develop a universal definition for the concept of school

transition because being open to complex and dynamic definitions that reveal different dimensions of the phenomenon allows one to focus on the aspect/s being investigated. This doctoral study, for example, aims to explore the contextual dimension of school transition, so a dynamic definition of school transition allows for a working definition (see 2.7) to develop that is specific to this study and which keeps the focus of this study clear.

The term 'school transition' has been described and understood in a variety of ways based on the theoretical positions employed. At the simplest level, transition is the move from one educational context to another (Lombardi, 1992). However, this definition fails to recognise the complex nature of transition which involves interactions among different contexts. Dockett et al. (2017a), suggest that regarding transition as movement is problematic, because it implies that transition is a one-way sequential movement when children leave ECE and start primary school. A number of researchers (Brooker, 2008; Crafter & Maunder, 2012; Dockett, 2014; OECD, 2017; Wickett, 2016) have argued that transition is a complex process that involves not only the child, but also other key people (e.g., parents, teachers, ECE managers, and school principals), the context in which transition takes place; and a range of interactions among different parties.

School transition is defined by Kagan and Tarrant (2010) as the "assimilations and accommodations that children, families, preschools, and schools make to support children" (p. 3) as they navigate the movement between ECE settings and primary schools. This view reflects an ecological perspective of transition emphasising that a child's microsystems (family, ECE, and school) impact on transition experiences. This conception of transition has led to development of particular practices, including school visits, sharing of information between ECE and school, and parent meetings to support children and families in the process of transition (Kagan & Tarrant, 2010).

To explore the complexity of school transition, Margetts and Kienig (2013) proposed that school transition involves both vertical and horizontal changes. Vertical transitions are associated with changes in children's chronological age and stages of education, for example, children move from ECE to primary school. Horizontal transitions involve the frequent changes that children experience in their daily lives,

such as go to school from home, or go to after-school classes on a particular day (Kagan & Tarrant, 2010). The two types of transitions described means that children do not experience one single transition when they move from ECE to school, rather, there are other transitions that take place along with school transition. In order to understand children's transition experiences, it is important to consider the many transitions that children experience when they start school.

The entire network that surrounds the child, needs to be accounted for in order to understand their school transitions (Ahtola et al.,2011). The collective and contextual nature of school transition highlights the need to take account of the multiple contexts in which transition is experienced, when studying and supporting school transition. In response to this need, it is suggested that children do not experience changes by themselves, and that supporting transition is a shared responsibility for all involved (Dockett & Perry, 2021; O'Kane, 2015). Dockett and Perry (2009) and Dunlop and Fabian (2007) stressed that children are members of families and communities that are expected to support children's school transitions. Such an inclusive view on school transition leads to studies that investigate the perspectives held by different parties, including children, parents, and teachers.

Empirical research investigating the perspectives that children, parents, and teachers have on school transition has revealed that these parties hold different views (Besi & Sakellariou, 2019; Dockett & Perry, 2004a; Eskelä-Haapanen et al., 2017; Hellblom-Thibblin & Marwick, 2017; Kaplun et al., 2017; Lau, 2014; Peters, 2000, 2003a). The children who participated in Eskelä-Haapanen et al. (2017) study expressed that they want to maintain their existing friendships and build new friendships with their future classmates. The playground and lunchtimes seemed to cause concern for children who just start primary school (Peters, 2010). This concern is associated with not having friends (Peters, 2003a). Some children are found to be worried about meeting the school expectations and conforming to the roles (Dockett & Perry, 2002; Eskelä-Haapanen et al., 2017). The factors that teachers and parents emphasise when talking about school transitions are different from those of children. To explore parent and teacher perspectives on transition, Dockett and Perry (2004b) surveyed 355 parents and 166 teachers in Australia and found that teachers emphasised children's adjustment to school contexts while parents tended to focus on

children's learning of academics. Similar findings are evident in other research (Dockett & Perry, 2001, 2004a).

Not all parents, even in the same cultural context, value the same factors in the process of school transition. Research conducted by Dockett and Perry (2002) in Australia indicated that both teachers and parents are concerned with children's adjustment to the primary school environment. This was different to other studies in Australia (Dockett & Perry, 2001, 2004a, 2004b), which showed that parents tended to focus on children's academic knowledge. This difference implies that "families are not homogenous units" (Dockett et al., 2017a, p. 261). Thus, an individualised approach is needed when working with children and families in the process of school transition, because such an approach reminds teachers not to hold the same expectations for all children and families. This is particularly relevant to cultural minority families, such as Chinese migrant families in New Zealand. Previous studies (Guo, 2006, 2012; Huang, 2013; Wu, 2009; Zhang, 2012) found that Chinese migrant parents in New Zealand held different educational beliefs which lead to different parenting practices when supporting children's learning. These differences meant that Chinese parents' views on and experiences of school transition might be non-identical, and thus supporting and understanding their school transition necessitates consideration of the individuality and uniqueness of each child and family.

In Sweden, Ackesjö (2017) investigated parents' concerns and expectations about their children's transitions from ECE to primary school. The empirical evidence collected through questionnaires indicated that parents perceived school transition as a big challenge and a critical event, and they had mixed feelings about it. The parents in this study were simultaneously excited and worried about the higher demands, more formal approach to learning, and more discipline in primary schools.

Chan's (2012) exploration of expectations that children, teachers, and parents had towards school transitions in Hong Kong revealed divergent results: The parents and primary school teachers showed a high expectation in regard to children's academic performance, while the ECE teachers expected primary school teachers to recognise the individual needs and differences of children.

Families from refugee and migrant backgrounds are likely to experience difficulties in times of children's school transition. De Gioia (2017) investigated the perspectives of families from refugee and migrant backgrounds regarding children's transitions from ECE to primary schools in Australia. The families who participated in this study expressed feeling helpless in the mainstream culture and the English language. As a result, they were concerned about their roles in supporting their children's school transitions (De Gioia, 2017). Similar difficulties might be encountered by Chinese migrant families in New Zealand. The practical implication is that institutions can support Chinese families' school transition by providing language support where necessary and by enriching their understanding of the mainstream educational beliefs.

These findings have significant implications for future transition research. They suggest that researchers need to explore the impacts that children's different ecological systems have on their transitions, in order to develop a comprehensive understanding about their experiences. The perspectives of all key people involved (e.g., children, families, ECE teachers, ECE managers, schoolteachers, and school principals) in school transition need to be accounted for, because their beliefs and perspectives on education and transition influence how they support and interact with each other in times of school transition. For instance, adults who see children's academic learning as significant for school transition may focus on helping children with learning of literacy and numeracy (Dockett & Perry, 2002). Parents/teachers may encourage experiences that foster children's social skills if they believe building relationships are crucial for school transition.

The various perspectives held by different groups of people involved in transition make it challenging to define what a successful transition looks like. Peters (2010) reiterated that "the notion of 'successful transitions' must be revisited and evaluated within local contexts, taking into account the views of the multiple participants in the process" (p. 73). This is reasonable because existing research has shown that the different participant groups tend to hold different understandings and expectations regarding school transition (Dockett & Perry, 2004a, 2004b; Einarsdóttir, 2007a; Margetts, 2008; Peters, 2000). Hence, what is seen as successful by one party may not align with another. This view is supported by Ballam et al. (2017) who

recognised that “what is considered a successful transition might well differ between stakeholders in diverse contexts and cultures and across time” (p. 2). As transition is influenced by multiple contexts, successful transitions cannot be supported by the school alone. Families, early childhood services, and the child’s wider levels of ecological systems all play a role in influencing children’s school transitions (Peters, 2010).

The opinions of Greek teachers regarding elements related to children’s successful transitions from ECE to primary school was explored by Besi and Sakellariou (2019). Questionnaire responses from 1602 teachers suggested that elements associated with successful transitions include children’s social and emotional development, their relationships with peers and teachers, their ability to follow the rules of primary school, and their parents’ trust towards teachers. This approach towards successful transition seems to view successful transitions as related to children and parents while no particular interest is paid to the role that ECE services and schools play in supporting transition. Moreover, this approach does not recognise the contextual influences on school transition, such as families’ backgrounds, social, cultural, and political contexts.

In her extensive literature review, Peters (2010) introduced a broad approach towards positive school transitions, involving the individual, relational, and contextual aspects that contribute to successful transition experiences. She described that a successful transition involves the following seven aspects:

- belonging, wellbeing and feeling ‘suitable’ at school;
- recognition and acknowledgement of culture;
- respectful and reciprocal relationships;
- engagement in learning;
- learning dispositions and identity as a learner;
- positive teacher expectations;
- building on funds of knowledge from ECE and home (p. 22).

The broad approach towards successful transitions outlined by Peters (2010) promotes a holistic view on school transition, which involves children, families, institutions, and the multiple contexts embed school transition. These seven aspects of

successful transitions advocate for consideration of children's whole experiences which include children's learning at home and in institutions, when supporting transition. For example, the notions of wellbeing, belonging, relationships, learning dispositions, and culture are all key concepts being promoted in the ECE context in New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 2017a). The element of recognition and acknowledgement of culture encourages educators to develop an awareness of the different cultural values that children and families may bring to school transition so that they can foster children's sense of belonging and engagement in learning (Peters, 2010).

Existing literature has explored school transition in relation to a number of concepts, such as readiness (Arnold et al., 2007; Blair & Raver, 2015; Boethel, 2004; Crnic & Lamberty, 1994), change (Dockett & Einarsdóttir, 2017; Fabian, 2002; Griebel & Niesel, 2009), continuity/discontinuity (Boyle et al., 2018; Dockett & Perry, 2014; OECD, 2017), learning (Hanke et al., 2017; Hellblom-Thibblin & Marwick, 2017; Wilder & Lillvist, 2018), and relationships (Moore, 2001; Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004; Rogers et al., 2017). There are overlaps in these different theorisations of school transition because the notions of change, continuity/discontinuity, learning, and relationships are all integral to school transition, and are sometimes difficult to separate them from one another. The multiple ways in which school transition has been theorised demonstrate that school transition is complex in nature. The next four sections explore how transition has been described and understood in existing literature.

4.3 Unpacking and Critiquing Readiness

Discussions around children's transitions to primary school have been linked closely to children's readiness for school (Arnold et al., 2007; The Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, 2007). Woodhead et al. (2008) noted that the concept of readiness was first mentioned in educational literature in the 1920s. From the beginning, school readiness "has been considered primarily within a maturationist frame" (Snow, 2006, p. 9). The maturationist perspective on school readiness was that children are ready to go to school when they have reached a certain age and achieved an expected level of maturity (Allan, 2008; Snow, 2006).

The two dimensions of readiness are readiness for learning and readiness for school. Readiness for learning is often regarded as “the level of development at which the individual has the capacity to undertake the learning of specific material” (Woodhead et al., 2008, p. 6). Readiness for school is concerned with the cognitive and linguistic skills that children need to have before they start formal education (Snow, 2006; UNICEF, 2012a; Woodhead et al., 2008).

In the USA, the National Education Goals Panel (1991) put forward the goal that “by the year 2000, all children in America will start school ready to learn” (p. vi). Such a goal reflects both the dimensions of readiness (ready for learning and ready for schools). This goal was raised because the government noticed that U.S. students were performing poorly on international mathematics and science assessments, compared with students in other countries, and their average scores on most standardised tests were declining. The origin of this goal means that school transition might be influenced by global and local politics. For instance, if there is a global competition of children’s academic performance, school transition might be enacted in a way that emphasises children’s competencies in the subjects being tested. Thus, it is important to understand the global and local political context when studying school transition. The goal of children start school ready to learn aims to improve the overall education performance of U.S. students. In this sense, readiness is a social and political construction that draws upon the socially valued approaches to teaching curriculum subjects.

Kagan (1999) noticed that this goal has led to much academic work discussing the concept of school readiness which typically refers to the “state of child competencies at the time of school entry” (Snow, 2006, p. 9). Much attention in school readiness literature has been placed on a narrow range of skills that are expected to be achieved by children on school entry (Arnold et al., 2007; Crnic & Lamberty, 1994; Dockett & Perry, 2017). The readiness discourse brings about consideration of the dichotomy of children being ready for schools and schools being ready for children. Emphasising children’s preparedness for school neglects the active role that schools can play in supporting children on school entry. The recent New Zealand curriculum refresh emphasises that the school curriculum needs to be reflective of “diverse ways of being, understanding, knowing, and doing” (Ministry of Education, 2021, p. 3). This

curriculum refresh changes the focus of readiness from one requiring the child to be ready for schools to one emphasising schools' readiness for the child.

School readiness has been understood as related to children's age and maturity. Perceiving school readiness as related to children's chronological age, children are able to start primary school when they reach a designated age (Boethel, 2004; High, 2008; Lewit & Baker, 1995). This perspective is argued by Hultqvist and Dahlberg (2001) as positioning children as passively waiting for the future. Emphasising the impact of age on school readiness, they argue, supports a belief that children should be learning with identical timetables. Utilising age to determine children's school readiness is based on "the notion that children of the same age are at the same level of social and intellectual maturity" (Hunt et al., 2010, p. 33) and therefore should learn and be taught at the same pace. This view according to Cannella (1997) perpetuates a universal view of the child and loses sight of the child as a social creation constructed in a particular context and time by human beings.

Cannella argues that the readiness discourse assumes progressive, predetermined, and linear change, and tends to privilege adult functioning and control. Children are deemed to be ready for schools by parents/teachers when they reach a certain age without considering about children's own opinions. Bauer (2018) and Feld (2000) argued that the original purpose of age-based approach towards schooling is to control the youth. They suggested that this sense of control is still evident in the contemporary educational system through schools attempting to instil certain types of attitudes, values, and discipline in students (Bauer, 2018; Feld, 2000).

From a maturational perspective, children are ready for school when they have an agreed level of maturity (Blair & Raver, 2015; Crnic & Lamberty, 1994; Snow, 2006), meaning that children need to have specific skills and competencies before they start primary schools (Dockett & Perry, 2009; Lewit & Baker, 1995; Texas Early Learning Council, 2011; The Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, 2007). The nature of this perspective on readiness is sociocultural because it emphasises children's apprenticeship into particular valued skills. According to Dockett and Perry (2002), the maturational perspective of readiness theorises that children develop in a predetermined manner, in accordance with a sequence of developmental stages. Boyle

et al. (2018) argued that the maturational perspective tends to “mistake variability in development as a deficit” (p. 421). A range of research (Guo, 2010; Huang, 2013; Wu, 2009) found that some Chinese migrant parents in New Zealand believe that their children’s English proficiency is limited and may negatively influence their learning. This perceived deficit, according to ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006), might be influenced by multiple factors, such as parents’ English ability, language environment at home, popular assumptions about the privileging of language, and the national ECE curriculum in New Zealand. Without an understanding of these influences, Chinese children might be considered not ready for primary schools in which English is employed as the main language to deliver teaching practices.

Boyle et al. (2018), argues that starting school in accordance with individual children’s preparedness is problematic, especially for children who come from non-dominant groups, because it does not take into account the “cultural, relational, and contextual interactions and capacities” (p. 421). The notion of preparedness is seen by Boyle as a cultural and contextual construct. This implies that different groups of people (e.g., teachers and parents) may hold different perspectives on what is meant to be ready for school. It also means that what is considered as ‘ready’ in one cultural context might not be considered as such in another. To support children’s school transition, it is crucial to adopt an inclusive approach that takes account of the voices of different parties involved, and to develop a comprehensive understanding of children’s past experiences in different contexts, for instance, ECE, family, and community (Peters, 2010). The justification of adopting this inclusive approach is that it promotes equity in education and enables teachers to understand and build on children’s funds of knowledge from ECE and home, which is believed to be influential to positive school transitions (Peters, 2010).

The notion of funds of knowledge is defined by Moll et al. (1992) as the “historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being” (p. 133). Peters (2010) found that a successful transition is experienced when teachers and parents make connections between the different settings encountered by children in the process of transition. This finding suggests that the pedagogy of transition should

invite collaboration among all parties involved to recognise the funds of knowledge children have developed in order to strengthen and extend their learning (Bond et al., 2019; Dockett, 2018; Dockett & Perry, 2020, 2021; Hoffman & Sam, 2020; Peters, 2019; Peters & Woodhouse, 2021).

The discourse of school readiness gives rise to the development of readiness test models that are employed to determine whether children are ready for school. School readiness tests tend to focus on assessing children's abilities to function at primary school. Carlton and Winsler (1999) summarised that readiness tests can assess children's developmental milestones (e.g., the Gesell School Readiness Test) (Ilg et al., 1978), and/or measure children's academic knowledge (e.g., the Metropolitan Readiness Tests) (Nurss, 1995). For example, The Metropolitan Readiness Tests assesses children's reading and mathematics skills (Clancy & Pianta, 1993; Graue & Shepard, 1989; Janus & Offord, 2007). The Gesell School Readiness Test involves writing, drawing, visual and motor coordination, and children's verbal expressions. The adoption of standardised readiness assessment instruments has been questioned regarding their effectiveness in predicting children's school success as it ignores children's social and cultural contexts within which their early learning and development occur (Boethel, 2004; Carlton & Winsler, 1999).

According to Dockett (2014), perceiving readiness in relation to a set of predetermined skills overlooks the "diversity and strength of children's backgrounds and experiences" (p. 192). This narrow view may also restrict children's rights to participate in education because those who do not possess these required skills maybe delayed or excluded from schooling (Woodhead & Moss, 2007).

Discussions on school readiness tend to narrow the function of ECE down to preparing children for primary school (Dockett & Einarsdóttir, 2017). This may lead to schoolification of ECE which happens when early childhood services adopt similar structures, curriculum, and practices to schools, with the aim of making children to be ready for school (Dockett & Einarsdóttir, 2017; OECD, 2017). Dockett and Einarsdóttir argue that a school-like approach in ECE is problematic because it tends to place an emphasis on children's academic development while overlooks that children develop in a holistic way (see also Ministry of Education, 2017a; OECD, 2017).

Studies on school readiness do not account for children's perspectives and "rarely highlight relationships to the same extent as a series of skills needing to be mastered in order to attain a state of school readiness" (Dockett & Perry, 2002, p. 69). Woodhead et al. (2008) argued that discourses around readiness have been based on developmental stage theory, regarding early child development as "a natural and universal process of progressive transformations (or stages) in children's physical, mental, cognitive, socio-emotional and moral competencies" (p. 5). Moreover, the developmental view on school readiness fails to acknowledge that children are rights-holders who are entitled to and capable of expressing their views.

The past decades have seen a significant shift in ways of conceptualising school readiness (The Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, 2007). More and more research contend that school readiness needs to be conceptualised in a broad manner that acknowledges the influence that contextual factors have on children's transition from ECE to primary school (Allan, 2008; Blair & Raver, 2015; Boethel, 2004; Carlton & Winsler, 1999; High, 2008). This shift is derived from the sociocultural and ecological systems theories that contextualise children's learning and development within their social and cultural surroundings (Arnold et al., 2007; Carlton & Winsler, 1999; Dockett & Perry, 2009; High, 2008; Smart et al., 2008; UNICEF, 2012b). Recent studies (Ballam et al., 2017; Bond et al., 2019; Dockett et al., 2017b) on school transition are concerned with not only the individual child, but also their relationships and interactions with others (e.g., parents, teachers, and peers) as well as the complex ecological influences (e.g., family backgrounds, education policies, cultural beliefs, and paradigmatic trends and events). The change of focus of transition research has led to increasing recognition that human development is a complex and ongoing process influenced by the sociocultural context (Carlton & Winsler, 1999), and that the child's learning and transition occur within their entire ecological environment wherein a web of relationships are evident (Dockett & Perry, 2009).

Some researchers (High, 2008; Smart et al., 2008; UNICEF, 2012a) argued that school readiness is related to not only the child but also to their environment, such as families, schools, cultural backgrounds and beliefs, and the wider national policies because they influence how school readiness is understood, fostered, and implemented. Understanding readiness in this way locates responsibility for

supporting children's commencement of school on all parties involved (families, ECE, schools, and communities), and encourages teachers to understand that the child's ecology is a key factor to comprehend when children move from ECE to primary school. This view leads to consideration about the readiness of families and ECE/schools in terms of supporting children's transitions (Arnold et al., 2007; Hellblom-Thibblin et al., 2017; High, 2008), however, it fails to acknowledge that interactions between these parties may also impact on the way in which transition is understood and experienced (Fabian & Dunlop, 2007).

4.4 Transition as a Process of Change

Some researchers (Dockett & Einarsdóttir, 2017; Fabian & Dunlop, 2002; Griebel & Niesel, 2009) theorise school transition as a process of change. For example, Dockett and Einarsdóttir (2017) considered that transition involves adaptation by claiming that transitions are "spaces where different contexts, systems and approaches intersect, and those making the transition are charged with adapting to new environments" (p. 134). Fabian and Dunlop (2002) described school transition as a process of change that is experienced when children (and their families) move from ECE to primary school. Focusing on the idea of change promotes a dynamic view while the idea of readiness implies that school transition is something static.

Children's transitions from ECE to primary school are suggested to be associated with changes at three levels: the individual level, the relationship level, and the organisational level (Griebel & Niesel, 2009). Firstly, at the individual level, children experience changes in identities, roles, and status (Griebel & Niesel, 2009). Children become members of a classroom group in which they encounter new expectations and patterns of behaviours. Dunlop and Fabian (2007) indicated that, for many children, transition meant leaving a comfortable zone, a zone that is familiar and predictable. Facing the unknown children encounter new social contexts and need to find new ways of interacting with new people, places, and things. At a deeper level, Lam and Pollard (2006) suggested that transition can be understood as the shift of identity from being children to being institutionalised pupils in primary school.

Being a primary school child demands the child become autonomous and self-controlled (Dockett et al., 2017a). Children are expected to develop understanding of

the primary school environment and adapt to the more academic focused approach towards learning (Dockett & Einarsdóttir, 2017). According to Crafter and Maunder (2012), transition from ECE to primary school involves changes in “the form of knowledge construction; the adaptation of old skills or the incorporation of new ones; change in identities; and/or change in social position” (p. 7).

The transition process can also involve emotional change as it is a period in which excitement, confusion, and anxiety co-exist (Dunlop & Fabian, 2007; OECD, 2017). Empirical studies investigating children’s perspectives on starting school find that children have mixed feelings, some feel insecure and nervous (Broström, 2002), while others are excited and looking forward to starting school (Einarsdóttir, 2002). Empirical data collected in Australia and New Zealand provides evidence that transition is a time of anxiety for some children (Dockett & Perry, 2004a; Moore, 2001). Dockett and Perry (2004a) investigated perspectives of approximately 300 Australian children starting school. Data gathered from interviews and questionnaires revealed that 16.1% of those children were anxious about going to ‘big school’ and dealing with ‘big kids’. Moore (2001) examined the playground problems encountered by a class of five-year-old New Zealand children in the first eight weeks after they started primary school. Research data was gathered by classroom discussion. It was revealed that among the total number of 37 children, 86% reported anxiety about friendships. These two studies emphasised that peer relationships are perceived by children as crucial to their emotional wellbeing in times of school transition.

In discussing the change that parents experienced in school transition, Griebel and Niesel (2009) suggested that parents’ supervisory control over children may be reduced after the child starts primary school because teachers are taking over this role. However, this might not be the case for families who highly value children’s education and place an emphasis on children’s academic achievements. Empirical studies in New Zealand illustrated that Chinese migrant parents often believe that children’s learning of literacy and numeracy is limited in ECE (Chan, 2014; Wu, 2009). Parents may, therefore, exercise greater supervisory control over the activities that children engage in at home, in times of school transition. Starting school was also shown to be an emotional time for parents, as they experience changes in their roles,

responsibilities, parenting practices, and sometimes the feeling of separation (Dockett et al., 2011).

Secondly, at the relationship level, both children and parents need to leave some previously established relationships behind and form new relationships in times of school transition (Dockett et al., 2017a; Griebel & Niesel, 2009). The relationships between children and parents may also change, as the new expectations that families and primary schools have towards children may influence the perceived parental role and responsibility (Griebel & Niesel, 2009). Parenting practices may now focus on supervising homework and motivating children for school success. The child may want to exercise the autonomy and independence associated with the status of being a primary school student (Dockett & Einarsdóttir, 2017). These are likely to impact on relationships and interactions between parents and children.

Thirdly, at the organisational level, children need to navigate the physical movement from one educational context to another. Wilder and Lillvist (2017b) suggested that children may encounter bigger buildings, playgrounds, older and bigger children, and more adults in the new learning environment. They are expected to adapt to the new timing and routines of primary school (Dockett & Einarsdóttir, 2017). As the child moves from ECE to primary school, they often experience a change in the pedagogical approach, from a play-based approach to a more structured, even formal one (Ballam et al., 2017). The main differences between the pedagogies adopted in ECE and primary school is that ECE teachers tend to place an emphasis on children's identities, interactions, collaboration, and play, and allow children to decide what activities they want to engage with (Dockett & Einarsdóttir, 2017). The primary school teachers, on the other hand, focus on teaching specific subjects, such as mathematics, numeracy, and literacy, and the activities are often pre-organised by the teachers (Dockett & Einarsdóttir, 2017). The change in pedagogies means that the nature and content of child-teacher relationships are different between ECE and school, and the two institutions expect different children behaviours. Parents also need to adapt to the new timing and routines of their children's primary schools. Griebel and Niesel (2009) suggested that parents are challenged to "integrate three areas of life: family, school and employment" (p. 63) after their children start primary school. For example,

parents' working hours and social networks might need to be adapted in response to their children's schooling.

4.5 Transition as Continuous Learning

While change is a key focus for school transition research, studies also explore transition as a time of continuity. Dockett and Einarsdóttir (2017) suggested that "the dual process of continuity and change are integral to education transitions" (p. 146). Similarly, the ETC (2011) described transition to school as "a dynamic process of continuity and change as children move into the first year of school" (p. 1). Continuity is related to stage-based development theories, such as Erikson's psychosocial developmental theory and Piaget's cognitive development theory. These theories argued that achievements at one stage lay the foundation for the achievements in later stages (Erikson, 1950/1993; Piaget, 1973).

Continuity has been conceptualised in two ways: structural continuity and developmental continuity. Developmental continuity attends to children's continuous wellbeing, learning, and development (Boyle et al., 2018). It promotes the idea that new learning in primary school builds on what the child has learnt and experienced in ECE and families (OECD, 2017). In times of transition, continuity and change are not only related to children's learning but are also related to relationships among and between all involved, pedagogical approach and practices in the ECE and school contexts, resources and support that those involved in transition can offer and obtain (Ballam et al., 2017; Dockett & Perry, 2014). Structural continuity includes professional, curriculum and pedagogical continuity, and continuity with the home (Dockett & Einarsdóttir, 2017; Fabian & Dunlop, 2002; OECD, 2017).

According to the OECD (2017), professional continuity refers to ECE and primary school teachers' preparedness to support children and families when they make the transition. Dockett and Einarsdóttir (2017) suggested that professional continuity involves building relationships between teachers within the two institutions as well as between teachers and families. Curriculum and pedagogical continuity refers to the degree of alignment between ECE and primary school of teaching and learning approaches and developmental goals (OECD, 2017). Dockett and Einarsdóttir (2017) suggested that teachers' resistance may arise to curriculum and pedagogical continuity

if the notion of continuity is “perceived as a strategy to subsume one stage of education into another” (p. 140). Such a perception may lead to schoolification which occurs when ECE employs similar structures, curriculums, and practices as primary schools (Dockett & Einarsdóttir, 2017; OECD, 2017). Pedagogical and curriculum continuity can be achieved by building connections across settings to promote educational coherence (Dockett & Einarsdóttir, 2017). In doing so, each setting is valued for their own identity and unique contribution and teachers from both settings can develop shared understanding about children. In this sense, pedagogical and curriculum continuity enables school teachers to understand children’s past experiences so that they can build upon this foundation. From a sociocultural perspective, such a continuity allows for scaffolding within children’s ZPD (Shvarts & Bakker, 2019; Vygotsky, 1978; Wood et al., 1976). Continuity with the home, is concerned with engagement and support of family (Fabian & Dunlop, 2002). This can be achieved by teachers valuing parents’ perspectives and backgrounds, sharing information related to school transitions with parents, and inviting parents to be involved in transition-related activities (Fabian & Dunlop, 2002).

All these types of continuity are significant for supporting children’s school transition (OECD, 2017; Postlewaigh, 2018). Dockett and Einarsdóttir (2017) cautioned that all these aspects of continuity need to be paid attention to and that “attention to one aspect alone is unlikely to promote continuity of experiences and expectations for children, families and educators” (p. 142). Likewise, a concern with the negative effects of change on children and their school transition. This concern might be a deficit theorisation of the child as vulnerable to change. (Discussed later in this section).

In New Zealand, scholars have called for primary schools to utilise *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017a) to guide teaching practices and develop play-based educational approach to support children’s transition in the first year of their primary schooling (Hargraves, 2021; May, 2018). These practices are argued to be beneficial for promoting the pedagogical and curriculum aspects of continuity. When implemented in practice, consideration should also be given to professional continuity and continuity with the home because these two aspects influence educators’ understanding of children’s funds of knowledge and parental involvement in school transition. A wide range of literature suggested that professional relationships

between teachers in the two settings and parent-teacher partnerships need to be established, in order to support transitions through ensuing continuity, (Ballam et al., 2017; Boyle et al., 2018; Perry et al., 2014; Peters, 2010).

In New Zealand, continuity of learning when children move from ECE to primary school is regarded as a crucial element as “a foundation of remembered and anticipated people, places, things and experiences will give them the confidence to engage successfully in new settings” (Ministry of Education, 2017a, p. 26). Engagement in learning is perceived as a key contributor to successful school transitions (Cadima et al., 2015; Peters, 2010). Empirical research investigating children’s engagement in new entrant classes found that they are more likely to be engaged when there is a balance between their current ability level and challenge in the activities delivered to them (Carr et al., 2009). According to Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006), children learn and develop through progressively more complex interactions with people, places, and things. This has practical implications, with Peters (2010) advocating that teachers build on children’s current understanding and previous learning experiences so as to foster their engagement in primary school environment in times of school transition. Moreover, the practical applications can also be understood in terms of understanding the factors that influence a child’s response to, for instance, a school transition programme, or the imminent change in their life. Such an understanding enables teachers to recognise and respond to not only the child, but also the wider world’s influence over the child.

School transition is theorised by Dockett and Einarsdóttir (2017) as an educative moment that draws on previous experiences of children. Based on this theorisation, which is informed by Dewey’s work, Dockett and Einarsdóttir (2017) suggested that fostering transition needs to support “a balance between continuity and change in education” (p. 139). In times of transition, continuity means that children’s previous experiences provide the base for new learning in primary schools. Change means that new learning in the new contexts is to challenge and extend previous learning. Teachers can “support continuity by recognising and building on what has gone before” (Dockett & Einarsdóttir, 2017, p. 143). To achieve this, it is suggested to view transition as a process of relationship building (Dockett & Perry, 2008), which will be discussed in the next section.

In the literature much attention has been placed on “addressing discontinuity and promoting continuity” (Dockett & Einarsdóttir, 2017, p. 133). Supporting continuity was reported in a number of studies as key to support school transitions (see for instance, Arnold et al., 2007; Babić, 2017; Boyle et al., 2018; Broström, 2002; Dockett & Einarsdóttir, 2017; Ebbeck et al., 2013; Education Review Office, 2015; Fabian & Dunlop, 2002; Karlsdóttir & Perry, 2017). Boyle et al. (2018) suggested that providing continuity in times of school transition involves “coherence in children’s experiences and support for their negotiation of the inevitable change encountered as they enter school” (p. 423). Mitchell et al. (2017) argued that a level of continuity between ECE and school can foster a sense of belonging, while the discontinuities and contradictions tend to generate difficulties for the child and family in times of school transition. Continuity is not only related to the two educational settings in which transition is experienced, but also to the family as the child has to move between family and institution on a daily basis. Moreover, continuity might be practically impossible without suitable resourcing. For instance, coherence is hard to achieve without a meeting space for cross-sector communication and relationships building that allow the development of a shared understanding of children and families making the transition (Dockett & Einarsdóttir, 2017). When working with families who do not speak the mainstream language, teachers may find it difficult to understand parents’ unique cultural expectations and children’s learning experience at home without proper language support.

Discussions of continuity tend to regard discontinuity, which is integral to transitions, as a negative factor that impacts on school transition (Dockett & Einarsdóttir, 2017; Peters, 2010). However, Peters (2000) argued that the discontinuity between ECE and primary schools is not necessarily detrimental. It can be a source of pleasure as children learn new things in the new environment (Peters, 2000, 2010). For instance, Carl, the boy who participated in Peters’ (2000) study, progressed rapidly soon after he started primary school, and he was excited about the learning in school. Moreover, Carl enjoyed playing sports and less restrictions on what to eat in school because he was upset about the healthy eating rules in the kindergarten.

In researching Finnish children’s beliefs concerning their school transition, Eskelä-Haapanen et al. (2017) found that children tend to have negative feelings about

school transition when they find the cultural environment in school is different to the one at home. This difference seems to be inevitable for Chinese migrant children in New Zealand because the environment at home is often oriented by Chinese culture while the environment in the institutions is influenced by the mainstream culture (Chan, 2014; Guo, 2010; Wu, 2009; Zhang, 2012). Existing literature tends to view marginalised groups (for instance, families who are refugees or migrants, families with low socio-economic resources, and those who speak a different language to the dominant one) as being more likely to experience difficulties in times of children's school transition (De Gioia, 2017; Dockett et al., 2017a; OECD, 2017; Woodhead & Moss, 2007). The explanation is that these families are typically positioned as "having limited capital, or capital which is not compatible with dominant social contexts, including school" (Dockett et al., 2017a, p. 11).

A number of studies (see for instance, De Gioia, 2017; Griebel et al., 2017; Wilder & Lillvist, 2017b) have critiqued this positioning, and call for recognition of the strengths that families from diverse social and cultural backgrounds bring to transition. Woodhead and Moss (2007) urged teachers to adopt a positive approach towards children's school transition. This means that rather than seeing transition as problematic, it can be viewed as a time for teachers to recognise the child's potential and to develop an understanding of the rich social and cultural knowledge that children and families bring to transition (White et al., 2021). This view on transition resonates with *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017a) which promotes culturally responsive practices to support children's individualised learning trajectories. Seeing transition in this way enables teachers to have a positive expectation towards the child, and to provide responsive support to the individual child and family (Dockett & Einarsdóttir, 2017; Peters, 2010).

Positive teacher expectations are also found to be beneficial for children's experiences of transition (Peters, 2010). This idea is supported by *Te Whāriki* which suggests that children's transition from ECE to primary school is supported when teachers in both settings hold positive expectations for children's learning (Ministry of Education, 2017a). Saha and Dworkin (2009) defined teacher expectations as the "inferences that teachers make about the future behaviour or academic achievement of their students based on what they know about these students at the time" (p. 364).

Teacher expectations inform the way in which they interact with children in times of school transition. Teacher-child interactions influence children's self-perception which in turn impact on their learner identity and engagement in learning in the primary school context (Peters, 2010; Rubie-Davies, 2006). OECD (2017) found that children may receive little adult support after they moved from ECE to schools because of a lower teacher-child ratio. In this sense, positive teacher expectations encourage educators to focus on building upon children's existing knowledge and experiences, rather than addressing the perceived deficits. In some ways, ECE teachers have the role of creating a resilient self-image of a learner that does not get weakened by the potential discontinuities in terms of teacher-child relationships at school.

School transition has been described as a time when children's learning occurs (Dockett & Einarsdóttir, 2017; White et al., 2021). The purpose of addressing discontinuity and promoting continuity is to support children's ongoing learning which is an integral part of school transition (Dockett & Einarsdóttir, 2017; White et al., 2021). Wilder and Lillvist (2018) proposed that "learning is an always ongoing individual and collaborative process in which children learn actively and passively through their context" (p. 690) in educational transition. Learning is seen by Hellblom-Thibblin and Marwick (2017) as a process in which children's identities are constructed, and their identities are changed and developed in the process of transitioning from ECE to primary school. According to Ballam et al. (2017), learning is a socially constructed activity that is experienced by children through their interactions with the surrounding contexts. The Ministry of Education (2017a) explained this by suggesting that children's learning occurs when they interact with people, places, and things within their surrounding contexts. These perspectives on learning recognise the active role that children play in shaping their own learning and school transition.

However, learning not only takes place when children are actively engaged in activities, it also occurs when they are seemingly passive because they can develop an understanding of the context by observing the way in which more experienced others are functioning (Rogoff, 2003; Wilder & Lillvist, 2018). In times of school transition, children's active learning takes place when they engage in interactions with peers, teachers, and the surrounding environment. Passive learning happens when they make sense of the world around them by observing others' actions. The different ways in

which learning occurs means that teachers and parents might benefit from being aware of the hidden curriculum during transition. For instance, close observation of children who are seeming passive may enrich teachers' and parents' understanding of these children which in turn allows them to engage in scaffolding (Wood et al., 1976) to support children's subsequent learning.

Starting school not only involves children's learning, but also teachers' and parents' learning. Dockett et al. (2017b) conceptualised starting school as "an event that interrupts patterns of action, requiring that all involved develop new ways of being, operating, and interacting" (p. 287). In this sense, school transition may involve identity shift, changing behaviours, and relational changes of children, parents, and teachers. Children develop their social knowledge, in terms of how to act, interact, and react in the new context (Dockett et al., 2017b). Teachers are expected to understand and build relationships with the individual child and family so as to provide responsive support. Parents are encouraged to learn about new ways of interacting and communicating with teachers and schools. If school transition is considered as an opportunity for supporting children's ongoing learning, all parties involved need to work collaboratively to build a learning environment that invites and empowers children to interact with the people, places, and things.

4.6 Transition as a Process of Relationship Building

Existing transition literature regards relationships among all involved (e.g., children, families, institutions, and communities) as key factors in influencing children's positive transition experiences (Dockett & Perry, 2017; Education Review Office, 2015; OECD, 2017). When relationships among all parties are built, "each context is regarded as a valuable resource" (Dockett & Perry, 2017, p. 3) to support children's transition based on a comprehensive understanding of children's experiences in other settings. Peer relationships, children's friendships, teacher-child relationship, and teacher-parent partnership are identified by both *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017a) and *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007) as being influential in promoting children's learning. When children move from ECE to primary school, these relationships provide rich information and guidance for the child and family to deal with new and different learning environments and expectations (Dockett & Perry, 2017).

Children's relationships with others have been observed as crucial to their school transitions because these relationships influence children's feelings about school, their performance in school, and the support they can obtain (Murray, 2014). In their study of teachers' perceptions of children's diversity in school transition, Hellblom-Thibblin et al. (2017) recognised that new challenges and conditions are created for interactions and building relationships when children move from ECE to primary school. Starting school involves children moving to a new educational setting in which the routines and teaching approach might be different from the one they are used to in the ECE context (Dockett & Einarsdóttir, 2017). Existing literature on transition (Hellblom-Thibblin et al., 2017; Ladd et al., 2006) indicates that children may lose previously established relationships with teachers and peers and are expected to build new relationships with new teachers and peers.

In her New Zealand study of 23 children's experiences of friendship during school transition, Peters (2003a) found that having friends while transitioning to school benefited children's positive feelings about transition and contributed to their engagement in learning (Peters, 2003a). Peters' data (2003a) showed that having friends to play with during lunchtime is a source of pleasure, and that friends can provide support for children's learning in the classroom. Given the impact that friends have on children's school transition, Peters (2003a) called for teachers to reflect on the classroom climate and find ways to promote children's friendships, and to pay more attention to children who do not have friends. The impact that friends have on transition was also emphasised by Danby et al. (2012) who suggested that "friends provide social support and protection against the difficulties of starting school" (p. 63). Danby's research showed that children believe friendships are significant for their transitions to school. They utilised their social knowledge to build friendships by observing others play, constructing intervention where necessary, making requests, and engaging in collaborative play activities. Danby suggested that teachers and schools can play an important part in supporting friendships by providing new entrant children with time and opportunities to build friendships.

Parent-teacher partnerships are regarded as crucial for supporting children's transition because they help to develop shared understanding and responsibilities (Ballam et al., 2017; Danby et al., 2012; Dockett, 2014; Dockett et al., 2017a; Dockett &

Perry, 2008; Dunlop & Fabian, 2007). Rogers et al. (2017) argued that building partnerships based on mutual trust, respect, and shared responsibility may be challenging to achieve in practice, especially when families and teachers have different understanding and expectations towards the notion of partnership. Specifically, when families come from a different cultural or linguistic background than teachers, there are very likely different interpretations of partnerships. These different views may make the work of building parent-teacher partnerships difficult (Rogers et al., 2017). Zhang (2012) considered that the large number of Chinese migrant children's enrolments in ECE in New Zealand creates challenges for ECE services and teachers in terms of building and maintaining parent-teacher partnerships. Liao's (2007) study of Chinese migrant children's experiences of first year of primary schooling in New Zealand found a lack of communication and partnerships between primary school teachers and Chinese migrant parents. This led parents to have insufficient understanding of their children's learning content and progress in school. Zhang (2012) and Liao's (2007) findings question how partnerships between Chinese migrant parents and teachers (both ECE and primary school) influence and/or are influenced by their children's school transition.

School transition can create difficulties for building parent-teacher partnerships. In Australia, Rogers et al. (2017) investigated perspectives of parents and teachers on partnership during school transition by interviewing them. The collected data showed that although teachers claimed to value the perspectives and involvement of families, none of the parents, who participated in this study, had been consulted regarding the design and change of transition programmes and practices. Their research also found that although both parents and teachers see parent-teacher partnerships as crucial for positive school transition experiences, they have different emphases and purposes.

For the parents participating in Rogers' et. al. research, the purpose of parent-teacher partnership was to maximise the support that they can provide for their children's learning and wellbeing. The parents expected to build an individualised connection with teachers based on "their specific situations and their individual children" (Dockett et al., 2017a, p. 264). For the teachers, the purpose of parent-teacher partnerships was also about children's learning and wellbeing, but this was enacted in an institutionalised manner in which children and families are viewed as a

homogenous group. When talking about building teacher-parent partnerships, the teachers who participated in Rogers et al. study placed an emphasis on families' attendance in activities scheduled by institutions, such as information sessions and workshops. This type of participation typically involves one-way communication and runs the risk of overlooking the unique values, beliefs, and backgrounds that children and their families bring to school transition. Rogers et al. recommended teachers reconceptualise the notion of partnership and create opportunities to communicate with and learn about the children, families, and communities they are working with.

In the United Kingdom, Shields (2009) investigated parents' perceptions of parent-teacher partnership during children's transitions from ECE to primary school. Parents who participated in this study expressed that they had a "more distant and less reciprocal relationship" (p. 237) with their children's primary school teachers compared with the relationships they had with their children's ECE teachers. These parents felt they were actively involved in and fully informed about their children's learning in ECE. However, after their children started primary school, they felt excluded from the schools and not much communication was going on between them and the teachers.

These studies illustrate that parent-teacher partnerships are viewed by both teachers and parents as significant for supporting children's school transition. However, there are obstacles to the establishment of partnerships, including different understandings about partnerships, and different perceptions on the purpose of building partnerships. These studies suggest that collaborative activities need to be organised so that parents and teachers have the opportunity to communicate their individual perspectives and to develop a shared vision towards children's school transitions.

Collaboration between different parties involved (e.g., parents, teachers, ECE managers, and principals) in school transition is a crucial element that contributes to children's transition experiences (Bond et al., 2019; Hoffman & Sam, 2020; Nolan et al., 2019; Viskovic & Višnjić-Jevtić, 2020; Wilder & Lillvist, 2018). Wilder and Lillvist (2018) suggested that school transitions involve "bridging knowledge through collaboration" (p. 693). The knowledge that ECE, families, and schools have about children can be

shared through collaboration. The empirical evidence collected by Hanke et al. (2017) indicated that parents who enrolled children in institutions that organise a range of collaborative transition activities have more positive feelings about their children's and their own school transition experiences, compared with parents who enrolled children in institutions that organise less transition activities. These collaborative activities may enable parents and teachers to develop a shared understanding of partnership. Through collaborating with teachers from ECE and primary school, parents reported that they feel "more supported and better equipped to prepare for their child's transition" (p. 239). Hanke's study highlights the significance of parent-teacher collaboration and partnerships for parents' experiences of school transition.

During school transition, the "relationships between schools and prior-to-school settings, among service-providers within communities, between families and school and among families themselves all play an important role" (Dockett & Perry, 2017, p. 3). These relationships not only benefit children's learning, but also offer support for families and teachers to work in partnership to communicate and negotiate their perspectives and expectations regarding children's transition (Dockett & Perry, 2008). Such communication and negotiation foster "a strong commitment to a common goal" (p. 275) ensuring children from all backgrounds have a positive start to school. Dockett and Perry suggest that the relationships "between and among children, families, communities, educators and educational settings" (p. 3) help to build continuity between home, ECE, and primary school. These relationships are valued in the New Zealand context where communities of learning are established to promote collaboration and communication between ECE and schools to support children's learning pathways (Ministry of Education, n.d.-a).

Chinese migrant parents in New Zealand have reservations about collaborating and building partnerships with both ECE and primary school teachers because they perceive teachers to be authority figures in children's learning (Guo, 2006; Liao, 2007; Zhang, 2012). Chinese migrant parents may involve themselves little in collaborating with institutions in times of school transition. To mitigate this, having Chinese teachers working in the ECE/school might address this issue as Wu's (2009) study found that Chinese parents are willing to communicate with Chinese teachers (Wu, 2009).

Alternatively, institutions can seek language support from local communities and/or other Chinese parents who are bilingual (as discussed in 3.2).

4.7 Transition Programmes and Practices in New Zealand

In order to understand school transition in New Zealand, it is important to look at the transition programmes and practices employed in New Zealand's ECE services and primary schools. Transition programmes are the "strategies and procedures for ensuring the smooth placement and adjustment" (Margetts, 2002, p. 112) of children and families when they move from ECE to primary school. These include activities designed and initiated by ECE and primary school to create links between family, ECE, and school.

The official websites of a number of ECE centres and schools in New Zealand, show that many ECE services and schools have transition programmes to support children's transition to school (for instance, BestStart, n.d.; Gardner Road Kindergarten, n.d.; Kids at Play, n.d.; Medbury School, n.d.; Phoenix Preschool, n.d.). These transition programmes seem to be more about attracting parents than transitioning children as the description of these programmes utilise phrases like 'be school ready' (BestStart, n.d.), 'prepare children for classroom environment' (Gardner Road Kindergarten, n.d.), and 'ensure the best possible start at school' (Medbury School, n.d.) that meet parents' expectations of their children's school transition. Mitchell (2014) argued that the main interest of some ECE services is making profits for their owners or stakeholders, rather than catering for children's learning and developmental needs. According to Mitchell (2014), attractive images or slogans are utilised as selling points to attract customers which are the parents. With her recognition of this problem, Mitchell advocated that children's education needs to be put before the commercial interests of stakeholders.

The BestStart education and care centres have developed a 'be school ready initiative' to support children's school transition so that "children who start school feeling confident and capable are better placed to have learning success for life" (BestStart, n.d. para. 4). This programme offers children over four years opportunities to learn basic concepts of curriculum areas in primary schools, including maths, science, art, and reading. Kids at Play has an inclusive transition programme, including

fostering children's multiple academic skills, self-management, and self-care skills, such as toileting and hygiene practices. Children who are near their fifth birthday are asked to bring their lunch boxes and drinking bottles to the ECE centre. This programme also involves family-centre collaboration. The centre provides digital cameras for families to take to school visits and asks parents to share their experiences after they return. Moreover, a specific display wall is used for parents to understand children's experiences and for children to revisit their learning. These practices are believed to be beneficial for both children and parents' preparedness for primary school (Kids at Play, n.d.).

The Education Review Office (2015) found that many primary schools have a 'buddy system' which means that a child who started school earlier helps the new entrant to settle in. Pre-entry school visits have been widely adopted by both ECE services and primary schools as a significant part of transition programme (e.g., Pukeko Corner Kindergarten, Milton Primary School, and Kids at Play). Children and families are offered opportunities to visit the primary schools to become familiar with the school environment and classroom culture. However, it is unclear whether these transition programmes and practices are developed, implemented, and evaluated in collaboration with children, families, and communities.

One approach to include the voices of all parties involved is assessment. In New Zealand, children's learning in ECE services is documented in portfolios (Carr et al., 2013). Children's portfolios may include "annotated photographs, children's art, recordings or transcripts of oral language, kaiako observations and learning stories" (Ministry of Education, 2017a, p. 63). Learning stories are narratives written by teachers based on their observation and interpretation of children's learning experiences in ECE settings (Carr, 2001; Peters et al., 2009b). In practice, many centres include parents' voices in learning stories by inviting parents to write children's learning stories at home. Learning stories provide a cumulative series of written information about children's experiences displaying their learning dispositions and illustrating their capable and competent learner identity (Carr, 2001; Ministry of Education, 2017a). During transition, portfolios can be used as a resource to invite peer and child-teacher interaction (Peters et al., 2009b).

Peters' et al. (2009a) study showed that the utilisation of children's early childhood portfolios in the process of school transition benefited transition experiences. New entrant teachers who participated in this study noticed that portfolios positively influenced even the most shy of children's school transitions because "having their portfolio with them they just seem to have this sense of confidence, it's that ownership over something and the fact that the other children in the class are acknowledging their prior learning and lots of rich experiences" (Peters et al., 2009a, p. 9). The story of Gaurav, a boy who participated in this study, illustrates the power of portfolio as a tool for fostering belonging and engagement in times of transition. When he started primary school, the teacher noticed that Gaurav was very quiet and did not speak a word for almost a week. Then, he brought his portfolio to school. The teacher got to know his interests and previous learning experiences through reading the portfolio. His peers also showed interests in his portfolio and Gaurav started engaging with his peers in the classroom. In this sense, portfolios foster children's belonging in the school community, empower children to engage in the new learning context, and provides a basis on which primary school teachers can build children's new learning.

Gaurav's story emphasised that children's portfolios should include voices of all involved, including the child, family, and ECE teacher when utilised as a tool to support children's school transition (Hartley et al., 2014). A whole picture of children's previous learning experiences is provided when voices of all parties are included in children's portfolios. Such portfolios contain rich information about the individual interest of each child from multiple perspectives and in multiple contexts, and can be used as tools to support school transition.

However, in practice, there are obstacles that hinder the utilisation of children's portfolios to support school transition, such as parents' reluctance to provide their children's precious portfolios, and primary school teachers' degree of valuing portfolios (Peters et al., 2009a). To overcome parents' reluctance to share children's portfolios, primary school teachers could be encouraged to communicate to parents about the value of portfolios. Peters (2010) believed that parents would be willing to share their children's portfolios if they recognise that the portfolio is valued

by teachers and can positively contribute to their children's school transition experiences.

Another related obstacle to overcome is the degree of valuing by the primary teacher. One primary teacher in Peters et al. (2009a) study expressed that portfolios are not needed for children who can settle quickly into school. This teacher saw the portfolio as a 'security blanket' for children who experience difficulties in the process of school transition, rather than a valuable collection of children's prior experiences that she can build on. This suggests the need for teachers to develop an awareness that children's portfolios provide rich information regarding their funds of knowledge that are expected to be built upon (Education Review Office, 2015; Peters et al., 2009a).

4.8 Summary

This chapter unpacked the complexity of school transition discussing key concepts utilised to study transition. The literature on agrees that transition should be contextualised within children's social and cultural surroundings. This contextualisation leads to consideration about the impact of sociocultural factors, such as ethnicity, region of origin, and social class have on children's transition experiences (Doucet & Tudge, 2007). School transitions are suggested to be viewed as a socially and culturally constructed process that is experienced differently by people from diverse backgrounds based on their unique beliefs, values, and expectations (Dockett et al., 2012). Regarding school transition as related merely to children, fails to recognise the complex and dynamic nature of school transition. School transition is a multifaceted process, involving not only the child, but also ECE, family and community, primary school, and the wider political, social, cultural, and historical contexts. The transition from ECE to primary school has been widely researched both in New Zealand and internationally. However, cultural and language minority families' experiences of children's school transition are underrepresented in the existing literature (Peters, 2010). Specifically, in New Zealand, no empirical research has investigated Chinese migrant families' experiences of and perspectives on their children's transition from ECE to primary school. This research employs a qualitative interpretive research method to unpack Chinese migrants' perspectives and experiences regarding children's

school transition in New Zealand. The next two chapters explain the research methodology and design and describe the research process of the current study.

Chapter 5 Research Methodology, Design, and Process

5.1 Introduction

This research investigates the perspectives and experiences of ten Chinese migrant families regarding their children's transitions from ECE to primary school in New Zealand, with the aim of understanding the contextual elements that influence these perspectives and experiences. The literature review chapters have shown that school transition is a co-constructed process embedded in a complex system of interactions among the child's different ecological systems (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Dockett et al., 2017b; Dockett et al., 2014). This study explores how Chinese families support children's school transition at home, as well as how ECE services and primary schools play a role in influencing transition experiences. Broad social, cultural, and educational beliefs are also considered as they impact on how school transition is understood and fostered. A qualitative interpretive research methodology is employed to unpack the complexity of Chinese migrant families' school transition experiences in New Zealand. A multiple-case study design was initially planned to be utilised.

This chapter introduces the philosophical underpinning, design, and process of this research. Firstly, it discusses the researcher's ontological and epistemological stances which were guided by the belief that individuals construct knowledge based on their social, cultural, and historical backgrounds (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). To understand Chinese migrant families' perspectives and experiences regarding their children's school transition, it is important to listen to their voices and explore the contextual elements that might have influenced their beliefs and experiences. Second, this chapter discusses the methodological choice of this study. Characteristics of qualitative interpretive research will be outlined and justified. This is followed by discussions on the change of design which was influenced by the Covid-19 pandemic. I initially planned to include children's voices by interviewing them and observing their experiences in both ECE and primary school. Although children finally did not directly participate in this study, their views on school transition were explored through interviewing their parents. Third, the chapter considers ethical issues involved in this study, including informed consent, protecting human rights and autonomy, anonymity and confidentiality, and mutual respect and benefit. Last, this chapter describes the

research design and analyses including sampling and participant recruitment, data collection, and data analysis. Purposive sampling and snowball sampling methods were employed to identify and recruit research participants. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten Chinese migrant parents to collect data. Research data was analysed utilising the qualitative content analysis technique, based on the five systems of ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) and the four principles of *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017a).

5.2 Philosophical Assumptions

This section discusses my own philosophical assumptions. Creswell and Poth (2017) suggested that researchers always bring certain beliefs and philosophical assumptions to their research. In this chapter, I use the terms ontology and epistemology to explain the beliefs and philosophical assumptions that I bring to this study. In research, ontology informs epistemology which in turn influences the choice of methodology (Palaiologou et al., 2016).

Ontology is concerned with the nature of existence, being, and reality (Palaiologou et al., 2016). The two distinct ontological stances are positivist ontology and constructivist ontology. The former regards the world as “operating in a systematic and lawful manner, with myriads of discrete and observable events in which reality is separate from human sense-making” (Palaiologou et al., 2016, p. 23). For positivist ontology, there is single reality. In contrast, constructivist ontology sees the world as socially and culturally constructed as people attempt to make sense of their contexts. Thus, there are multiple realities based on individuals’ interpretation (Palaiologou et al., 2016).

My ontological stance falls into the category of constructivist approach. Due to my experiences of living in different worlds, the different communities I have come to see, and most importantly my experiences of learning about ECE in New Zealand, I believe that different groups of people (e.g., children, parents, and teachers) have a variety of perspectives regarding the transition from ECE to primary school. The construction of these different views on school transition is influenced by the social, cultural, historical, and political contexts that surround children, families, and teachers. The participants in this study may interpret their experiences of school transition

differently due to multiple factors, such as their social networks, family structures, educational beliefs, concerns and expectations towards school transition, and children's characteristics.

The constructivist ontological stance informs my epistemological position. Epistemology refers to the theory of knowledge. It is "an area of philosophy concerned with the creation of knowledge; focuses on how we know what we know or what are the most valid ways to reach truth" (Neuman, 2014, p. 95). It requires consideration about 'what is knowledge?' and 'how can one acquire knowledge?' (Willis et al., 2007). The epistemological position adopted by researchers reflect the ways in which they perceive knowledge. The two different epistemological positions are positivist epistemology and constructivist epistemology. The former promotes the idea that knowledge can be acquired by "gathering facts in a systematic and objective manner, predominantly by experimental methods or by testing of hypotheses" (Palaiologou et al., 2016, p. 23). The latter promotes the idea that knowledge is discovered by researchers attempting to understand participants' views and experiences regarding certain aspects of their lives (Neuman, 2014; Palaiologou et al., 2016).

My epistemological position is the constructivist one. In relation to school transition, I believe that children, parents, and teachers construct their views on transition subjectively as they engage in the contexts that surround them. Specifically, for Chinese migrant parents in New Zealand, their perspectives on education and school transition might be different due to their different backgrounds. Thus, to understand their perspectives and experiences regarding school transition, it is essential to listen to their voices, and to take account of their surrounding contexts. For example, their views on school transition might be influenced by their interactions and relationships with teachers and other parents, past learning experiences, and educational, social, and cultural beliefs in both China and New Zealand. Such epistemological position leads me to employ a qualitative research methodology for this study.

5.3 A Qualitative Interpretive Study

As the aim of this study is to understand Chinese families' perspectives and experiences regarding their children's school transition in New Zealand. I decided to

use a qualitative research methodology because it is “an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 4). This definition clearly identifies that the aim of qualitative research is to understand the human problem under investigation. Yilmaz (2013) described qualitative research as an “emergent, inductive, interpretive and naturalistic approach to the study of people, cases, phenomena, social situations and processes in their natural settings in order to reveal in descriptive terms the meanings that people attach to their experiences of the world” (p. 312). A qualitative research approach is desirable when one attempts to explore and understand a concept or phenomenon (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). It is widely used when one attempts to understand individuals’ beliefs, values, perspectives, and experiences regarding certain phenomena (Bricki & Green, 2007). Qualitative researchers aim to understand the meaning that the participants bring to the topic being studied by analysing participants’ narratives (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

The literature review chapters revealed that transition experiences are shaped by the practices, routines, and expectations of all involved, including children, parents, and teachers (Ballam et al., 2017; Dockett et al., 2017a; Dockett & Perry, 2008; Dunlop & Fabian, 2007; Peters, 2010). I initially planned to include all these people in my study, however, the Covid-19 pandemic made it impossible to pursue the original plan with the timeframe allowed for a PhD study. In order to complete the research within the allowed time, I needed to navigate lockdowns and ensure I did not place extra pressure on families, ECE services, and primary schools. I finally decided to recruit only Chinese migrant parents as participants because the primary aim of this study is to understand Chinese migrant families’ school transition experiences and parents hold rich information about this. Moreover, children’s views and teachers’ practices could also be investigated through interviewing parents.

Utilising the qualitative research approach leads me to seek information from Chinese migrant parents in terms of how children, themselves, and educators co-construct their experiences of school transition in New Zealand. Empirical studies (see for instance, Chan, 2012; Dockett & Perry, 2004a, 2004b; Einarsdóttir, 2007a; Peters, 2000) on school transition have revealed that parents and teachers tend to have different beliefs regarding school transition. These different beliefs mean that parents

and teachers may perceive and support school transition differently, and call for investigation of how children are supported in both home and institutions to gain a whole picture of their experiences of school transition. Utilising the qualitative research methodology for this study helps me to develop a deep and comprehensive understanding of Chinese families' experiences and perspectives regarding their children's school transition in New Zealand. This understanding includes not only how participants are involved in and experience the transition, but also how their involvement and experiences are influenced by multiple institutional, social, and cultural elements.

The philosophical underpinning of this qualitative research is interpretivism which refers to the school of thought that emphasises the significance of interpretation in understanding the social world (Ritchie et al., 2013). Interpretive research is informed by the ideology that reality is socially constructed. The role of researchers utilising this approach is to understand this reality by interpreting participants' lived experiences (Andrade, 2009). Ritchie et al. (2013) suggested that, in interpretive research, the understanding of social problems or phenomena is developed by analysing the points of view held by individuals who are involved in the context of the researched area.

Interpretivism holds three key assumptions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). First, interpretivists believe that "human beings construct meanings as they engage with the world they are interpreting" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 8). Second, the way in which individuals engage with and make sense of their world is informed by their social, cultural, and historical perspectives. Last, the construction of meaning is a social process, "arising in and out of interaction with a human community" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 8). Therefore, interpretivist researchers focus on both the phenomenon being studied and the contexts in which the participants live and work (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). To understand the topic under investigation and the contexts, interpretivist researchers tend to use open-ended questions so as to enable the participants to share their views regarding the topic being investigated. Through analysing the views held by the participants, researchers can develop understandings of the experiences of the participants, as well as the contextual elements that have influenced these views and experiences.

One major critique of the interpretivist approach is that the nature of interpretive research is subjective because it relies heavily upon the researcher's interpretation of participants' experiences. However, Mack (2010) argued that all research is subjective. A researcher's subjectivity influences all areas of research, including the selection of topic, the research questions, the literature being reviewed, and the research design and process. For this study, I was mindful of my preconceptions when collecting and analysing data, so as to manage the influence that my subjectivity might have on the research. It is inevitable that my interpretation of data could be biased because I bring my own social and cultural backgrounds to this study. When discussing the findings, participant quotes are provided to allow the reader to develop their own interpretations. When analysing data, I adopted the data driven analysis approach which means allowing for key themes to emerge from the participants' voices rather than forcing the data into preconceived categories.

The interpretivist paradigm informs this study because interpretivists believe that knowledge is dynamically constructed by individuals based on their social, cultural, and historical contexts, rather than being something objective and value-free (Palaiologou et al., 2016). Such a worldview accords with the existing transition literature which suggests that children's transition from ECE to primary school is influenced by all involved, including the child, family, and teachers from both institutions (Dockett & Perry, 2008; Dockett et al., 2012; Peters, 2010). This research aims to contribute the interpretations of the participants regarding their transition experiences because those interpretations are essential in developing a comprehensive understanding of Chinese families' experiences of children's school transition in New Zealand. To achieve this, the perspectives of all these parties noted above were included in this study. Although, teachers and children were not directly involved, their views were explored through interviewing the participating Chinese parents. Through analysing participants' experiences of transition based on the theoretical frameworks employed in this study (see 5.9), the ways in which family experiences are influenced by multiple educational, social, cultural, political, and historical factors are theorised.

5.4 Change of Research Approach

This research was initially designed to use the multiple-case study approach because it is suitable for holistic and in-depth investigation (Yin, 2014; Zainal, 2007). Employing the case study approach allows me to develop understandings of the way in which the different participating groups (children, parents, and teachers from ECE and primary school) interpret their perspectives and experiences regarding the participating families' school transition, as well as the contextual elements that have influenced their views and experiences. However, it was difficult to create full cases due to the interruption of the pandemic. To accommodate this, the study moved from a case study approach to semi-structured interviews to explore Chinese migrant parents' perspectives and experiences regarding school transition.

I initially planned to observe and talk to children in both ECE and primary school as they moved from ECE and primary school. I wanted to attend transition activities (e.g., school visit/s) alongside children and their families. Due to the pandemic, I experienced difficulty in creating full cases, but the flexible nature of qualitative research led to my consideration of alternative ways of conducting this research. This study became an interview-based qualitative inquiry. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten Chinese migrant parents. When investigating their experiences of school transition, I asked parents about their perspectives of school transition and parenting practices to support their children's transition; the transition practices delivered by the institutions (both ECE and school); and their children's perspectives on transition. In doing so, the perspectives of different parties (children, family, and institutions) involved in school transition are accounted for.

5.5 Children's Voices Matter

This research was designed to involve children as participants. Although they were finally not directly participated, their views were gathered through their parents' eyes. In discussing multiple ways of seeing and knowing children, Peters and Kelly (2015) argued that although interviewing children is considered the best practice, having adults speaking for children is one technique that researchers can consider when seeking to understand children's perspectives. Peters and Kelly believed that adults, such as parents and teachers, "can provide a rich source of evidence about children's experiences, although there is a danger that it overlooks the value of gaining

perspectives from the children themselves” (p. 16). This doctoral study, although did not directly involve children, aims to provide some indication of the importance of child voice and allows for some attention to child voice.

Listening to children’s perspectives on their transition experiences has become a growing interest in research about starting school (Einarsdóttir, 2007a). Dockett and Perry (2004a) pointed to the need to involve children in transition research as they believed that children and adults experience transition in different ways, and that listening to children’s voices helps to develop a full picture of transition experiences. This section discusses reasons of involving children in transition research. Children’s voices need to be accounted for because they have the right to have their perspectives heard, and they often have different concerns and expectations about starting school compared with these of adults.

According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, children have the right to express their views on things affecting their lives (The United Nations, 1989). The United Nations suggested the following:

States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child. (p. 4)

Recognising children’s rights to express their views has important implications for transition practices. It is suggested that transition practices should move from informing children about the process to involving them in developing responsive practices so as to offer tailored support in this period (OECD, 2017).

Transition from ECE to primary school is a major change in children’s lives, and thus, considering children’s perspectives is significant (Dockett & Perry, 2005; Ebbeck et al., 2013; Einarsdóttir, 2007a). This viewpoint is supported by Margetts (2008) who suggested that children’s agency should be recognised as it has crucial contribution to the development and improvement of transition programmes. This is to say, voices of children need to be heard and respected when designing transition practices that are expected to be responsive to each child’s background. Similarly, Ackesjö (2013) argued that listening to children’s perspectives on their transition experiences is essential for

the development of suitable transition practices. As children are directly involved in the school transition process, their voices are crucial if a comprehensive understanding of the complexity of school transition is to be obtained (Dunlop & Fabian, 2007; Margetts, 2008). The OECD (2017) added that involving children in the transition process by taking their views seriously fosters children's competence, sense of confidence, and commitment in learning. The above literature highlights that it is of value to include children's voices in transition research.

Another reason for taking account of children's voices regarding their transition experiences is that research has found that children often have different concerns and expectations about starting school from that of adults (see Chapter four). This finding means that children have rich information about their transition experiences, which could be unexpected by the adults. Listening to and analysing children's voices regarding their transition experiences adds another dimension to adults' perspectives and helps to develop a full picture of their transition experiences (Margetts, 2009; OECD, 2017).

Taking account of children's perspectives on their transitions enables teachers from both ECE and primary school to design and implement suitable and responsive practices that meet children's expectations and needs (Margetts, 2008; Margetts, 2009). The OECD (2017) suggested that, when children's voices are listened to, they are empowered to take ownership of their learning, which in turn promotes their engagement and commitment to learning and activities in the transition process. Adult-child conversations regarding children's learning and transition experiences can be an opportunity to enhance children's self-confidence and efficacy which contribute to their emotional well-being, socialisation, as well as continuing cognitive achievement (Fabian & Dunlop, 2007).

The discussions provided above indicate that involving children in school transition research benefits both the researcher and the child. For the researcher, children's voices provide an important data source to develop comprehensive understandings about school transition. For the child, being involved in research allows them to feel that they are respected as right holders who are competent to express

themselves, which may empower them to navigate their own learning and school transition.

5.6 Ethical Considerations

This doctoral study is guided by the expectations of ethical research. According to Orb et al. (2001), the central tenet of ethical research is doing good and avoiding harm to the participants. Before approaching potential participants, an ethics application was submitted to the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) to seek ethics approval. The AUTEC approved my ethics application on 26 March 2019, reference number 19/49. Due to the change of design, a subsequent ethics application was submitted to the AUTEC, and was approved on 12 October 2021.

The ethical considerations involved in this study include the following aspects: informed consent, human rights and autonomy, anonymity and confidentiality, and mutual respect and benefit.

Informed Consent

Informed consent means that participants of research agree to participate based on a clear understanding of the study in which they are participating (Kumar, 2014; Palaiologou, 2016). According to Coady (2010), participants must be informed in ways that they can fully understand about “the nature of the research, exactly what will be expected of them, any possible risks of the research, and they can withdraw from the research at any stage and withdraw any unprocessed data” (p. 74).

In this study, when recruiting participants, potential participants were given the Invitation Letter (see Appendix A, B) and Participant Information Sheet (see Appendix C, D). The information provided to participants was written in both Chinese and English languages to ensure that they fully understood the study in terms of the four ethical considerations described above. All the participants signed and returned the Consent Form (see Appendix E, F) that was provided. Before the interviews started, all the participants gave verbal consent to record the conversation.

Human Rights and Autonomy

It is universally accepted that one of the key ethical considerations in research is the issue of voluntary participation (Palaiologou, 2016). This requires researchers to respect participants' right to withdraw and to not participate. In this study, all potential participants were informed that they could choose whether or not to participate, and that they could withdraw at any stage of the study without any consequence.

Researchers also need to ensure participants' autonomy is upheld (Orb et al., 2001). Respecting participants' autonomy were evident in two ways in this study. Firstly, in the process of recruiting participants, they chose whether or not to be involved in my study autonomously. In other words, the participant recruitment was guided by the principle of freedom from coercion. Secondly, in the process of data collection, the participants were encouraged to express their views and experiences autonomously. The interviews were semi-structured and led by the participants' responses. The questions asked focused on an exploration of parents' views and experiences regarding their children's school transition, which meant this study did not test or measure parents' knowledge.

Participants' voluntary participation increases the likelihood of quality of data because a willingness to be involved in this study means participants are likely to provide meaningful and deliberate responses to the questions.

Anonymity and Confidentiality

Researchers should protect participants in terms of their anonymity and confidentiality (Palaiologou, 2016). According to Wiles et al. (2008), anonymity and confidentiality are "related but distinct concepts" (p. 1). Anonymity means that researchers do not know who the participants are while confidentiality means that researchers protect participants' privacy by removing identifying information from the outputs of research. There is no anonymity in this study because all the participants were known to me, as they attended interviews. In terms of protecting participant confidentiality, pseudonyms were given to participants and identifying features of participants are not mentioned in the thesis.

The research design employed in this study made it challenging to ensure complete confidentiality. Snowballing sampling method was employed to recruit participants and thus the participants may be known to each other. However, the information shared by one participant is not visible to other participants. The data collected from participants is only available to me and my supervisors. The information collected from the participants is only used in this thesis and other subsequent publications and presentations related to this study. Research data will be securely stored by the Auckland University of Technology for six years after the completion of this study. Thereafter, the paper information will be shredded, and digital information will be deleted.

Mutual Respect and Benefit

Trustworthy participant-researcher relationships need to be built when conducting ethical research (Palaiologou, 2016). Such relationships can be built on the premise of mutual respect and benefit. This study is designed to benefit both the researcher and the participants. The researcher can develop a deep understanding of Chinese migrant families' perspectives and experiences regarding their children's school transitions in New Zealand by undertaking this research. Through participating in this study, the participants have their voices heard regarding school transition. As this study is the first New Zealand study investigating Chinese migrant families' school transition experiences, the findings of this study may enable education practitioners and policy makers to understand the complexity of school transition for this cultural group, so that they can offer responsive support to Chinese migrant children and families in the process of school transition. This mutual benefit ensures that the participants and the researcher respect the contribution and commitment of each other.

Participants' cultural diversity was respected by the researcher communicating with them using their first languages. I share the same language and cultural origin with the participants, and this likely supported participants being comfortable talking to/with me. Like most of Chinese migrant parents in this study, I was born and raised in China, and then came to New Zealand for further education. This similar experience with the participants allowed me to empathise with them. Such empathy may have

encouraged the parents to share more information with me, which they may have choose not to do when talking to one who comes from other ethnic groups.

5.7 Sampling and Participant Recruitment

Ten Chinese migrant parents were involved in this study. The purposive sampling and snowball sampling methods were utilised to identify and recruit participants. Coyne (1997) suggested that researchers select participants based on the aims of study when using the purposive sampling method. The strength of this sampling method is that it helps researchers to involve people who have rich information about the issue being studied so as to conduct an in-depth study (Coyne, 1997). Utilising the purposive sampling method requires researchers to identify the key characteristics of potential participants before recruitment starts (Koerber & McMichael, 2008).

Prior to participant recruitment, the key characteristics of potential participants were identified. To be eligible to participate in this study, the following criteria need to be met. Firstly, parents need to be born in mainland China and then migrated to New Zealand. The rationale of having this criterion is that the statistics show that the majority of Chinese migrants in New Zealand were born in mainland China (Wikipedia, n.d.). Recruiting parents who were born in China enabled me to explore the complex influences that both Chinese and New Zealand's culture may have on Chinese migrant parents' perspectives on education and school transition. Second, they needed to have at least one child who would be about six months from their planned transition between ECE and school or had started their first year of primary school no more than six months. The justification for this criterion is that these parents are likely to hold rich information about school transition. As discussed in 4.7, many ECE services in New Zealand deliver school transition related practices after children turn four, and thus Chinese migrant parents are very likely to have experienced these practices when their children are about to make or have made school transition. Moreover, given the high value that most Chinese migrant parents in New Zealand place on children's academic learning (Guo, 2006, 2012; Huang & Gove, 2012; Liao, 2007), they are likely to have considered and engaged in their children's school transition six months before their children start primary schooling which is perceived by most Chinese parents as the start of children's formal education (Lau, 2014).

Snowball sampling was employed to recruit participants-- it is the most widely used sampling method in qualitative research (Noy, 2008). When utilising snowball sampling, the researcher “starts with a small number of people who are readily available and easy to contact and then expands the sample by asking each participant to recommend other potential participants” (Koerber & McMichael, 2008, p. 463) who are associated with the issue under study, and whose characteristics are compatible with the participant selection criteria of the study.

To recruit Chinese migrant parents to participate in this study, invitation letters and participant information sheets were shared with my personal contacts, including ECE teachers and Chinese migrant parents. These documents were written in both English and Mandarin to ensure that potential participants could fully understand the information provided. The selection criteria, purpose, and potential benefits of this research were clearly addressed in participant information sheet (see Appendix C, D). The participant information sheet also informed potential participants of their roles (e.g., attending individual interviews) if they decide to participate. Those people who received the invitation letters and participant information sheets were asked to share this information with Chinese migrant families they knew that might meet the selection criteria described above. Twelve Chinese migrant parents responded to the invitation. Ten participants were finally included in this research, as the other two did not respond to my later invitation to attend interviews.

5.8 Data Collection

This study utilised interviews to collect data about the participants’ perspectives and experiences regarding their children’s school transition in New Zealand. An interview is considered to be a social interaction based on a conversation (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). When conducting an interview, knowledge is constructed in the interaction between the interviewer and interviewee (Punch, 2009). The qualitative research interview is further described as attempts to understand the world from the participants’ point of view, to unfold the meaning of their experiences, and to uncover their lived world (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

Based on the nature and the flexibility allowed for the researcher, research interviews are divided into three categories: structured interview, unstructured

interview, and semi-structured interview (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Gill et al., 2008). Structured interviews are fixed in nature because the questions used in this type of interview are pre-determined by the researcher (Mukherji & Albon, 2018). When conducting a structured interview, researchers are given limited flexibility to ask participants for elaboration (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). The unstructured interview, on the other hand, is highly flexible in nature because it does not consist of any pre-determined questions (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). However, it can be hard to conduct an unstructured interview because of the lack of clear guidance about what questions to ask the participants (Gill et al., 2008; Mukherji & Albon, 2018).

The semi-structured interview is the most commonly used data collection method in qualitative research (Mukherji & Albon, 2018). A semi-structured interview is organised around a set of pre-determined open-ended questions, which help researchers to focus on the area being investigated, allowing for other questions to emerge as the conversation between the researcher and the participant proceeds (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Gill et al., 2008). According to Mukherji and Albon (2018), researchers use semi-structured interviews to “relate theoretical perspectives with real life circumstances by encouraging interviewees to reflect on and discuss their interpretations of interview themes” (p. 160). The flexible nature of semi-structured interview allows for “the discovery or elaboration of information that is important to participants but may not have previously been thought of as pertinent” (Gill et al., 2008, p. 291) by the researcher.

This study utilised semi-structured interviews to collect data from Chinese migrant parents. A list of indicative questions (see Appendix I) was developed before the interview took place. Those questions focus on exploration of the participants’ beliefs and experiences regarding school transition, as well as the contextual elements that may have influenced their beliefs and experiences. The participants were asked to share and explain their concerns and expectations towards their children’s school transition in New Zealand. They were asked what transition practices did the ECE and school deliver that supported transition, and how they felt about these practices. The participants were also asked about the perspectives that their children and teachers held about school transition. All interviews were audio recorded with the participants’ permission. When conducting interviews, I followed the Oral Consent Protocol (see

Appendix G, H) to obtain their consent to have the interviews recorded. The interviews were conducted in mandarin Chinese to ensure that participants could fully express themselves. The audio recorded interviews were subsequently transcribed and translated by me. The transcripts were sent to participants to verify their accuracy before being analysed. None of the participants reported the need to alter the interview transcript.

5.9 Data Analysis

The collected data was manually analysed. This section discusses the data analysis process involved in this study. Raw data was analysed to develop key themes that were then analysed with reference to the theoretical framework employed in this study.

Qualitative Content Analysis

Creswell (2014) suggested that qualitative data analysis goes hand-in-hand with data collection, which means that data analysis should be an ongoing process which starts shortly after the researcher has collected the first set of data. In this research, data analysis started as soon as the first interview was finished. The understanding gained by analysing the earlier interview data assisted me to better organise the subsequent interviews to collect more relevant information to address the research questions (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009).

Research data was analysed utilising the technique of content analysis which is one of the most commonly used methods in qualitative data analysis (Westbrook, 1994). Hsieh and Shannon (2005) defined qualitative content analysis as “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (p. 1278). Qualitative content analysis is suitable for this study as the objective is to develop a comprehensive understanding of Chinese migrant families’ experiences regarding their children’s transition from ECE to primary school in New Zealand.

Conducting content analysis involves a process of grouping and condensing raw data into categories based on the researcher’s interpretation and inference (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). It is an inductive process in which the categories and themes are

generated from the data by the researcher's careful examination. According to Mac Naughton et al. (2010), data analysis can be theory-led or data-driven. Theory-led data analysis means that the analysing process is guided by pre-identified theoretical constructs. Data-driven analysis, on the other hand, involves a process of developing a system of categories based on the information provided by the participants. For this research, data-driven analysis was firstly conducted in order to avoid the risk of forcing data into preconceived categories. This initial analysis enabled me to develop a category system based on the interpretation of the information collected. The categories developed were then discussed and analysed with reference to the four principles of *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017a) and the five systems of ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

To analyse research data, I followed the three stages data analysis technique suggested by Akinyode and Khan (2018). These three stages involve developing basic themes, organising themes, and global themes. Basic themes emerge by researchers repeatedly reading the transcribed raw data. An organising theme is the combination of two or more basic themes to represent the principal meaning of these themes. Global themes are the summary of "the main themes and a revealing explanation of the transcripts that gave the meaning of transcripts as a whole within the context of a given analysis" (Akinyode & Khan, 2018, p. 168). When analysing data, I engaged in a sequence of developing basic themes, organising themes, and global themes. The global themes and organising themes were then used as subheadings in the findings and discussion chapters.

To identify basic themes, I firstly read all data repeatedly to "achieve immersion and obtain a sense of the whole" (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1729). Then, I started coding the data manually. The text information that are most relevant to address the research questions was placed into different categories which was labelled with different terms that represent the key meaning of the category. Thereafter, the basic themes emerged in the coding process were identified. For instance, when coding the texts about participants' understanding of education in China and New Zealand, the following basic themes emerged: structure of education system, children's interests, teacher-child interaction, teacher-led, child-centred, play, efforts, academic learning, emotional wellbeing, social skills, language proficiency, and

parental involvement. These basic themes were then combined into organising themes of differences between education in China and New Zealand, the problem of using play to foster children's learning, and the participants' changing educational beliefs. These organising themes were then summarised into the global theme of participants' educational beliefs. Those themes were then considered in relation to the existing literature and the theoretical framework employed in this study.

Theoretical Framework

The five ecological systems of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) and the four principles of *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017a) were utilised as theoretical tools to abstract and theorise the key themes that emerged from data. The ecological systems theory has been widely used to explore the complexity of children's school transition (see for instance, Dockett & Perry, 2004a; O'Kane, 2007; O'Toole, 2016). It requires consideration of the impacts that children's surrounding contexts have on their transition experiences (see for instance, Dockett & Perry, 2001, 2004a; Fabian & Dunlop, 2007; O'Kane, 2007; O'Toole, 2016; Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000). The four principles of *Te Whāriki*, have not been applied by empirical research to investigate children's school transition, although they offer "a wealth of knowledge and meaning" (Peters & Paki, 2013, p. 211) that can be utilised to support and understand school transition in New Zealand (Mortlock et al., 2011).

A theoretical framework consists of concepts that are relevant to the particular study, and that underpin the researcher's thinking in terms of how they perceive and plan to research the selected topic (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). It offers concepts that can be applied when coding and analysing data. Mortlock et al. (2011) suggested that the four principles of *Te Whāriki* offer a starting point for examining strategies that teachers adopt when understanding and fostering children's school transitions. When analysing data, the five ecological systems provided the overarching framework. Under the five systems, the four principles of *Te Whāriki* were used as sub-concepts to theorise data where relevant. The combination of the four principles of *Te Whāriki* and the five systems of ecological systems theory enabled me to understand the participating Chinese migrant parents' perspectives and experiences regarding their

children's school transition in New Zealand, and how these perspectives and experiences might be influenced by multiple contextual elements.

The ecological systems theory consists of microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). The four principles of *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017a) are Whakamana (empowerment), Kotahitanga (holistic development), Whānau Tangata (family and community), and Ngā Hononga (relationships).

When analysing data, the concept of microsystem was used to explore how the child's immediate relationships with people, place, and things influence their own and their families' school transition experiences. For example, the participants typically expressed that their children aspired to build relationships with new peers in primary school, when being asked about their children's feelings about school transition. This aspiration was analysed within the microsystem. Under the microsystem, the principle of empowerment led to consideration of how the Chinese migrant participants and educators took (or not) account of children's voices and encouraged (or discouraged) children to direct their own lives when supporting school transition. One empowering transition practice delivered by the ECE services found in this study was that teachers asking children to bring their own lunchboxes and practice the lunch routines that children may experience in primary schools. The holistic development principle was used to explore the emphases that parents and teachers place on the aspects of child development when supporting children's transition; and how these emphases influenced transition experiences. This study found that some participants emphasised children's learning of academics when supporting transition, and children's academic preparedness contributed to these parents' confidence about children's school transition. The family and community principle was employed to analyse how the participants engaged in direct interactions with their children to support school transition. The relationships principle guided the analysis of how children's peer relationships and friendships contributed to their excitement about starting primary schools.

The mesosystem was employed to explore the impact that parent-teacher relationships and the relationship between ECE and school had on participants'

experiences of school transition. For example, a couple of participants suggested that they actively communicated with teachers but received vague responses, while one participant indicated that the ECE teacher communicated to her regarding things to expect after her child starts school. The mesosystem was utilised to explore how ECE and primary school teachers empowered/disempowered the participants to support children's continuous learning in times of school transition. Moreover, the mesosystem was applied to analyse how the perceived lack of collaboration between ECE and school may influence the participating families' experiences of school transition. The family and community principle led to the exploration of how the participants actively asked teachers for advice for supporting school transition, and how teacher-parent communication was experienced and critiqued by the participants.

The exosystem is concerned with the influence that adults' environments have on children's school transition. This system was utilised to analyse the impact that the participants' social network, family structure, and financial ability had on children's school transition. For instance, the data revealed that some participants' communication and interactions with their friends and relatives influenced their concerns and expectations towards school transition. Moreover, the family structure and language environment in the home were found to impact on the ways in which transition was perceived and experienced by the participants. These themes emerged from data were discussed in relation to the exosystem.

The macrosystem refers to the broader national, social, and cultural contexts in which the developing individual lives (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). The data showed that, in accordance with the Confucius belief system, most participants in this study held their children's academic performance in high value, and thus expected educators to support children's learning of academics in times of school transition. The macrosystem was employed to explore how the participants' perspectives and expectations regarding school transition was influenced by broad social, cultural, educational, and political contexts. Under this system, the empowerment and holistic development principles were used to analyse how the cultural beliefs on education influenced the ways in which children were supported in times of school transition, given that New Zealand and China have disparate cultural beliefs on education. The relationships principle was employed to explore how the different cultural beliefs on

the notion of parent-teacher partnership between China and New Zealand influenced the participants' perspectives and experiences regarding school transition.

The chronosystem concerns with change or consistency experienced over time at both the individual level and contextual level (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). During the interviews, the participants talked about their changing educational beliefs, understanding of the change involved in school transition, and the influence that the pandemic had on school transition. The chronosystem was applied to explore how the participants understand the changes involved in school transition, such as the change of relationships, learning and social environment, parental roles, and the nature of parent-child interactions. This system also led to investigation of the participants' changing parenting practices in times of school transition. Moreover, as this study took place when the Covid-19 was widespread around the world, the chronosystem was also employed to analyse how the pandemic impacted on the participants' parenting practices at home, children's relationships building with teachers and peers, and language development.

5.10 Summary

This chapter has discussed my philosophical worldviews and how the worldviews and my personal backgrounds (e.g., culture, language, and past experiences) have informed my choices of research methodology and research design. My constructivist ontology and epistemology lead me to see knowledge as socially and culturally constructed. Thus, to understand the experience and knowledge that Chinese migrant families have regarding their children's school transition in New Zealand, a qualitative interpretive research methodology was selected as it allowed for in-depth exploration of meaning that participants ascribed to their transition experiences. This study involved Chinese migrant parents as participants, and thus ethical considerations were given, in terms of obtaining informed consent, respecting participants' human rights and autonomy, protecting their confidentiality, and ensuring mutual respect and benefit.

This chapter has also described the process of this research. Ten Chinese migrant parents were recruited by employing snowball and purposive sampling methods. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect data for this research. The

information collected from the participants include not only their own experiences of supporting children's school transition, but also the transition practices that the ECE services and schools delivered. Moreover, children's perspectives regarding school transition were collected through interviewing the participants. Research data were analysed utilising the technique of qualitative content analysis. The key themes emerged from data were considered in relation to the ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) and the four principles of *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017a). The methodological limitations of this study will be recognised in the last chapter (chapter 9). The next two chapters discuss the findings of this research.

Chapter 6 The Participants and Their Educational Beliefs

6.1 Introduction

The first part of this chapter provides background information about the participants and summarises their experiences of children's school transition. Such information is important because it informs the discussion and analysis of the data collected from the participants. From an ecological perspective, the wider educational beliefs impact on parents' perspectives and experiences of school transition (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; O'Kane, 2007). The rest of this chapter is concerned with the participants' understanding of education, in terms of the perceived difference of education in China and New Zealand, parents' cultural understanding of play, and their expressed changing educational beliefs. Understanding participants' educational beliefs is significant because these beliefs influence how school transition is perceived and supported by the participants.

6.2 The Participants

The table below provides background information of the participants.

Table 2. *Background Information of The Participants*

<i>Name</i>	<i>Number of children</i>	<i>Length of migration</i>	<i>Occupations</i>	<i>Education background</i>
<i>Zhao</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>9 years</i>	<i>Fulltime mother</i>	<i>Educated in China</i>
<i>Qian(male)</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>10 years</i>	<i>Unemployed</i>	<i>Educated in China</i>
<i>Sun</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>7 years</i>	<i>Fulltime mother</i>	<i>Bachelor's degree in New Zealand</i>
<i>Li</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>11 years</i>	<i>Student</i>	<i>Bachelor's degree in New Zealand</i>
<i>Zhou</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>21 years</i>	<i>Fulltime mother</i>	<i>High school and university in New Zealand</i>
<i>Wu</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>3 years</i>	<i>Teacher</i>	<i>Educated in China</i>
<i>Zheng</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>9 years</i>	<i>Teacher</i>	<i>Master's degree in New Zealand</i>
<i>Wang</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>17 years</i>	<i>Nurse</i>	<i>Bachelor's degree in New Zealand</i>
<i>Feng (male)</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>3 years</i>	<i>Accountant</i>	<i>Master's degree in New Zealand</i>
<i>Chen</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4 years</i>	<i>Accountant</i>	<i>Educated in China</i>

All the participants of this study have university degrees. Educational and social backgrounds shape experiences as migrants and provide dual frames of cultural references that influence parents in their understanding of school transition. Moreover, these backgrounds contribute to the ways in which parents interact with children and teachers during times of school transition. For instance, educational experiences of university study in New Zealand can contribute to different understandings of the mainstream educational beliefs, philosophies, and practices in the host country.

Zhao came to New Zealand after she graduated from a university in China. At the time of interview, Zhao's son been at primary school for eight months, and her daughter was starting primary school in four months. Zhao believed that children's academic preparedness is significant for their school transition. She expressed that she was less worried about her son's school transition because she had taught him a lot in terms of literacy and numeracy before he started school. Zhao' family experienced challenges during her daughter's school transition. Her daughter was unwilling to go to school because she knew that her parents would push her to study after school. Moreover, Zhao's daughter was concerned she would lose her existing relationships with the toys and her friends in the kindergarten. Zhao was anxious about her daughter's school transition because she believed that the girl was not academically ready. She started teaching her daughter literacy and numeracy, and became more confident about her daughter's school transition after she saw the girl's improvement. In her words, "she is much better now, she can count to 10, and can write and recognise them. She can also write her own name. We are quite satisfied."

Qian finished his bachelor's degree in China and migrated to New Zealand for the purpose of family reunion. His son had been at primary school for six months at the time of interview. According to Qian, he and his family were generally happy with his son's school transition because his son was getting along well with classmates, and he would seek assistance from teachers when encountering difficulties. Qian seemed to hold a negative attitude about the education system in New Zealand, as he expressed that children only play in the school and there was not much learning going on. He showed a preference for private schools, however, the financial situation of the

family did not allow it. Qian also expressed a concern about bullying because of the status of being a migrant child and the physical appearance of people from his hometown (his son is short). Although Qian expected his son to learn more academic knowledge in primary school and showed preference towards private schools, he also directly expressed that his son's physical and psychological health are important.

Sun came to New Zealand for higher education (bachelor's degree) eight years ago. At the time of the interview, her son was about to make the transition from ECE to primary school within the next couple of months. In order to enrol her child at a good school, the family moved to another area in Auckland to a place where the primary school had a good reputation. Although Sun said that children's learning of knowledge was not the most important thing for education and school transition, her parenting practices suggest otherwise. Her interaction with her son focuses on helping the boy to improve literacy and mathematic competencies. Before her son started primary school, she had already planned to send her son to after-school classes, and was ready to supervise the boy's homework after school. Sun's English proficiency was good, and she was able to engage in daily communication with teachers. However, according to Sun, the teachers never communicated with her regarding her son's upcoming school transition.

Li migrated to New Zealand in 2009 and married a New Zealander. At the time of interview, Li was a university student studying arts. Her son had started primary school a few months before. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the boy made his school transition online, and had never been to the primary school except for the school visit which took place when he was in ECE. Although the transition was experienced online, Li said her son adapted to school life well. Li expressed that her educational belief is different from traditional Chinese families who underline children's academic performance. Li thought that children's imaginative and creative thinking are more important, and she liked the idea of children learn through play because it fosters children's social skills. Li's social network consists of both Chinese migrants and New Zealanders. Based on her knowledge, these two groups of people understand education differently. According to Li, compared with New Zealanders, Chinese migrants seemed to be more anxious about children's learning and school transition, and most Chinese parents would send their children to after-school classes to study,

for example, English and science. Li said that she likes the way in which many local parents raise their children, such as sending children to sports classes to foster their ability of working in a team.

Zhou had three children, five years old, three years old, and one year old. Zhou came to New Zealand when she was in high school. She realised that education in New Zealand and China are different in terms of the ways in which teachers interact with students. According to Zhou, teachers in New Zealand are appreciative while teachers in China are critical. She said that she liked the educational philosophy in New Zealand because it helps children with independence, creativity, and confidence. At the time of interview, Zhou's first child had just started primary school. Although the transition was experienced online (due to Covid-19), Zhou said it was relaxing because the teacher was easy going. Because of the family circumstances, Zhou and her husband did not engage in any intentional parenting practices to support their son's school transition before starting school. They would sometimes draw with him because he was interested in drawing, and they sometimes took the boy outside to play in the weekend. Zhou expressed that she expected her son to have a good personality, be considerate of others, not to bully classmates, and know how to protect himself. For school transition, Zhou expected that the teachers would help her son to find his interests and build on them.

Wu came to New Zealand after she graduated from a university in China. At the time of interview, her son was about four months from transitioning to school. Zhou believed that school transition is important because children mainly play in ECE but are expected to focus on study in primary school. Zhou held high expectation towards her son's learning in primary school. To help her son to be ready for school life, Zhou engaged in direct teaching and had bought learning materials to assist with the boy's development of English language, mathematics, and logical thinking. She also talked to her son about the rules in primary school, such as following the teacher's instructions and finishing homework. Zhou had chosen a private school for her son on the recommendation of her friends, and her own research about the textbooks being used in this school. Zhou was concerned about her son's school transition because she thought that the boy's English proficiency was limited. To help her child to improve his English, Zhou employed a private teacher for her son.

After completing her bachelor's degree in China, Zheng came to New Zealand to do her master's. She married a Frenchman and had a son who had started primary school at the time of interview. Based on the couple's knowledge, there were two English-French bilingual schools in Auckland, and one was close to their home. Before their son was born, Zheng's and her husband had decided they would send their children to a bilingual (English-French) primary school. Zhou said that the family, to a certain extent, had been helping her son with his school transition since the boy was born. To be accepted by the chosen bilingual school, children have to be bilingual, thus, Zheng and her husband had been intentionally helping their son with English and French. Zheng understood that education in China and New Zealand are different in terms of the emphasises. From Zheng's perspective, education in China stresses the result while New Zealand focuses on the process. She and her husband wanted to find a balance between the educational approaches in the two countries so as to best support their son's school transition and education in New Zealand. Zheng expressed that they did not expect the boy to learn much academic knowledge at an early age, however, they were also willing to push their son a bit where necessary. Zheng experienced challenges in terms of teacher-parent communication after her son started school. The teacher made assumptions about the parenting practices that Zheng engaged in based on her nationality. The teacher assumed that all Chinese parents would teach children literacy and numeracy at home, and he did not like it. This misunderstanding was resolved by Zheng writing a long email to the school explaining herself.

Wang came to New Zealand for the purpose of higher education. She married a Chinese high school teacher in New Zealand. The couple had three children, six years old, five years old, and three and a half. Wang and her husband held different educational beliefs. Wang expected their children to be happy, especially in ECE and primary school. Her husband considered that children's academic performance is important. For their first child's school transition, Wang did not intentionally help her son with academic learning. After her child started school, Wang found that some of the boy's classmates are far more academically developed than her child. Since then, she started to value children's learning of academic knowledge and had been intentionally helping her second child (three and half years old) with learning literacy

and numeracy by using game cards. Wang expressed that Chinese migrant children mostly experience a Chinese language environment at home, and thus, their English proficiency might be limited. Wang wanted extra language support from institutions to help children to improve their English ability which she believed was important for Chinese children's school transition in New Zealand.

Feng came to New Zealand for a master's degree. He had two children, one five years old and one five months old at the time of interview. Feng observed that the education systems in China and New Zealand are different. According to Feng, teaching activities in China are normally teacher-led while in New Zealand they are child-centred. For his child's school transition, Feng expected the boy to study hard, adapt to the new classroom environment, and build relationships with teachers and peers. Feng's son's school transition was influenced by the financial situation of the family, the parents' careful observation of the physical and cultural environments of potential schools, and Feng's research of the school's report published by the Education Review Office. When supporting his son's school transition, Feng utilised his psychological knowledge to play games to improve his son's memory, mathematics, and concentration which Feng believed was important for school transition.

Chen migrated to New Zealand after she graduated from a university in China in 2016. She had three children, eight years old, five years old, and two years old. Chen believed that children and parents in China are more stressed than they are in New Zealand as children in China needed to start learning to read and count from ECE and parents were expected to help their children. In China, according to Chen, parents need to put effort into teaching their children literacy and numeracy before they start primary school. Moreover, many parents send children to transition programmes (similar to an after-school class), thus, there is a financial burden too. During the interview, Chen placed a high value on her child's school transition, as evident in her concerns and parenting practices. Chen and her husband both speak Chinese at home, and they are concerned about their child's English ability. Chen found that many Chinese migrant children mainly play with other Chinese children in ECE services, and thus she was concerned that her son would not be able to communicate and build relationships with peers who are not Chinese after starting primary school. To support her second child's school transition, Chen asked her oldest child to take his little

brother to play at the primary school. Chen also transferred her son to a public kindergarten where there were more local children, with the purpose of encouraging the boy to build relationships with his future classmates. Chen's communication with teachers was limited due to her limited English proficiency, and she wanted institutions to offer language support so that she could understand more about her child's learning.

6.3 Education in New Zealand and China

All the participants were born and raised in China and migrated to New Zealand in their adulthood. As they raised their children and sent them to ECE and schools in New Zealand, they found that education in the two countries were different, as Feng explains.

我个人感觉新西兰这边更多是一种散养的形式。老师会觉得，你感兴趣我就教，你不感兴趣我就不教。但是对于小朋友来说，3-6岁之间，他们不知道自己要学什么，只是看到朋友在学什么他们就想学什么。这是我小孩的一种行为，他就会通过模仿来学习，
(冯)

The education system in New Zealand is loose. Teachers would teach children if they were interested. On the other hand, if children were not interested, teachers would not teach them. For children aged between three to six years old, they sometimes do not know what they want to learn. They would want to learn whatever they see others were learning. This is what my child does, he learns by simulating others. (Feng)

Feng's observation that the education systems in the two countries are different focuses on wanting more structure. The educational system in China is more structured and it helps children to prepare for assessment (normally by examinations) by forcing them to study academic knowledge (Li, 2004; Li, 2010; Ma, 2017; Zhou et al., 2020; Zhou & Brown, 2017). Focusing on the subject to be assessed, teachers in China instil prescribed knowledge into children, while teachers in New Zealand are expected to support children's learning based on their personal characteristics and interests (Education Review Office, 2013; Guo, 2010; Wu, 2009). The possible elements that have contributed to Feng's understanding about the education systems in the two countries may include his own experiences (as a student) of receiving education in both China and New Zealand, his observation (as a parent) of his child's learning in

both ECE and school, and his relationships and communication with teachers, his social networks, and his child. Being educated in China, where the education system, community, and nation stress the importance of educational structure and underline the role that institutions and educators play in children's learning, Feng seemed to have developed a belief that the control that institutions and teachers have over children, to a certain extent, contributes to their academic performance.

Feng questioned the New Zealand ECE approach where teachers support children's learning based on their individual interests. According to Feng, compared with China, teachers in New Zealand exercise less control over children since teaching activities are delivered to enhance children's interest. Based on his experience, Feng considered that it is sometimes difficult to support children's learning based on their interests because children can become interested in what others are interested in. This observation is consistent with Wang et al. (2015) who suggested that children learn about the physical, social, and cultural world by observing and imitating others. If teachers and parents do not observe children closely, they may know little about children's interests and are thus unable to offer responsive support that fosters children's learning based on their interests. Empowering children to share their ideas would be a way to enable teachers and parents to identify children's interests. This would allow them to deliver meaningful teaching/parenting practices that build on children's interests and promote contribution and exploration that are valued in the New Zealand context (Ministry of Education, 2017a).

When talking about education in China and New Zealand, the participants in this study also expressed that the education system in New Zealand requires less children's effort and parents' engagement compared with China.

*(在新西兰) 孩子在负担上肯定是轻松很多, 在学业的负担上。
(在中国) 他们是从幼儿园就开始读书认字。给父母的压力也很大, 父母的任务很多。要在上学之前就要教孩子认识大概2000个字。 (陈)*

Children's burden of studying in New Zealand is far lesser. In China, kids need to start to read and write from ECE. There are lots of pressure for parents as well because there are many tasks need to be finished by parents. For example, parents need to teach children at least 2000 words before starting primary school. (Chen)

Chen noticed that compared with New Zealand, ECE in China focuses more on children's learning of academic knowledge, such as numeracy and literacy. Chen believed that the key role of parents in supporting children's school transition is to help children to be academically prepared for the subject knowledge that will be taught in primary schools. Such a view of education resonates with the literature on education in China, which suggests that education in China emphasises the importance of students' academic performance (Chen & Uttal, 1988; Guo, 2013; Ma, 2019; Zhou et al., 2020). With regard beliefs about effort, Chen talked about the New Zealand system being less stressful. For Chen, the pressure of academic learning/tutoring that New Zealand education places on children and parents is less than that of China. According to Chen, parents in China are expected to teach children literacy before they start primary schools while this is not expected of parents in New Zealand.

Chen's understanding of the difference between education in China and New Zealand seemed to focus on the 'burden' placed on children and parents in terms of learning (or helping children to learn) academic knowledge. Such a belief can influence Chinese parents' perception of ECE in New Zealand and their own roles in supporting children's learning. For instance, parents may question the reason for sending children to ECE if they do not see teaching practices/homework that help children to improve academically. These parents can be confused with what else to do to support their children's learning if they feel they are not expected to teach children in New Zealand as much as they are in China.

In New Zealand, parents are seen as significant partners and valuable resources for curriculum planning in ECE because they possess unique cultural values and rich understanding about their children (Ministry of Education, 2017a). Chinese parents may need explicit direction in regard to their roles in supporting their children's transition so that they can engage collaboratively to build partnerships with teachers. To enrich parents' understanding of the mainstream education belief promoted in New Zealand, educators (both ECE and primary school) can actively communicate with parents to explain the educational approach and teaching practices employed in the institutions. Such communication not only benefits parental understanding of New Zealand's educational philosophy but may also increase their willingness to share their

distinct cultural knowledge with teachers who can then design and deliver responsive practices to children and families.

6.4 Play and Chinese Beliefs

The participants' beliefs about play were discussed during the interviews. The parents observed that play is the main approach through which children learn in ECE in New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 2017a; Wu, 2009). Through interacting with people, places, and things around them, children develop physically, socially, emotionally, and cognitively (Ding, 2021; Ministry of Education, 2017a). For instance, children's social and communication skills are found to be enhanced when playing with their peers (Huang, 2013). The participants in this study questioned the educational benefits of children's play. This finding is consistent with Wu (2009) who indicates that Chinese migrant mothers in New Zealand found it hard to understand the learning embedded in children's play in ECE. In China, these parents may, arguably, not need to worry about play because teaching activities (even if they are in the form of play) are normally led by teachers who are seen as experts regarding education (Wu, 2009). In New Zealand, however, the emphasis on children's free play means there is a tension for parents to wonder where the learning is (Wu, 2009).

Participants Zhao, Qian, and Sun directly expressed that children learn very little in ECE services and public schools in New Zealand as they only play. They saw this as a problem as they expected their children to learn more academic knowledge which they believed was crucial for their children in achieving higher social status as they became adults (Ding, 2021). In the Chinese tradition, play is not seen as educative, and thus many Chinese migrant parents in New Zealand do not consider play as an appropriate way to promote children's learning (Wu, 2009). The idea children learn through play has been introduced to ECE in China by the Chinese Ministry of Education since 1990s (Zhang et al., 2020). However, it "has not been successfully implemented because it is incongruent with Chinese education tradition" (Ding, 2021, p. 1). Ding argued that Chinese parents' understanding of the benefits of children's play and ECE teachers' ability to design play-based curriculum are limited.

幼儿园什么都不教。现在没有期待很多，对这边的公立小学和幼儿园，因为你真正要求的话还是要去私立的。（赵）

The kindergarten teachers do not teach anything. I don't expect much from public primary schools and kindergartens here in New Zealand, you need to go to private schools if you really want your child to learn. (Zhao)

就在玩呗，就天天玩感觉，天天在那里玩。我希望孩子能多学一些知识性的东西。（钱）

He always plays in the centre; he plays every day. He just plays in the centre. I hope children can learn more knowledge from the centre. (Qian)

Previous studies (Huang, 2013; Wu, 2009) found that Chinese migrants in New Zealand typically do not perceive the educational outcomes of children's play. The perspective that Zhao and Qian held towards children's play reflects the traditional Chinese educational belief which regards play and learning as distinct concepts (Ding, 2021; Huang, 2013; Wu, 2009; Yang, 2011). In contemporary China, play has been widely utilised as the main approach to foster children's learning in ECE settings (Zhang et al., 2020). However, research (Lin et al., 2019) has found that Chinese parents have mixed feelings about the philosophy of children learning through play. On the one hand, they embrace the value of play for children's early development; on the other hand, they believe that traditional adult-led instruction is crucial for children's learning of academics (Lin et al., 2019).

Because of the perception that there is limited learning happening in the ECE centre and primary school, Zhao developed a negative attitude towards the education system in New Zealand. In New Zealand, children are unlikely to have examinations until high school. The absence of examination results from New Zealand's education system may limit Chinese parents' understanding about their children's learning. They expect to have actual evidence about children's learning, for instance, and more teacher-led instruction and homework. Many participants in this study showed a preference towards private schools because they thought private schools focused more on children's academic learning.

听朋友说，私立的和公立的教育内容也差了很多。（钱）

My friends told me that the content of education in private schools and public schools are quite different. (Qian)

我觉得私立学校可能管的严一点，作业多一点，我觉得目的性更强一点吧。知识上的学习更注重一些。（孙）

I think private schools are stricter to children, they would give children more homework. The education practices in private schools are probably more purposeful. They emphasise more on children's learning of academic knowledge. (Sun)

Qian and Sun considered that the educational approach adopted in private schools in New Zealand is similar to the one employed in China where children are forced to study hard to achieve academic excellence (Huang, 2013). Qian and Sun believed that private schools had more discipline for children, deliver more visible academic-related teaching practices, and gave children more homework. Such practices made Qian and Sun aspire to send their children to private schools, however, their finances did not allow for this. The preference of sending children to private schools demonstrates that some Chinese migrant parents' educational beliefs are disparate with the one being promoted in New Zealand where children's interests and enjoyment of the process of learning are valued (Ministry of Education, 2007, 2017a).

In summary, based on their understanding about New Zealand's education, some participants were frustrated. They did not think the public education system in New Zealand was effective in terms of helping children with academic learning which they perceived was the most significant aspect of education. Furthermore, the philosophy that children learn through play was questioned by some participants in this study. The frustration and questions that those parents have in regard New Zealand's education system points to the need for enhanced teacher-parent communication to assist parents to understand the teaching practices carried out in these institutions. Parents are likely to appreciate the value of play when they understand the educational benefits embedded in play (Huang, 2013; Wu, 2009). Teacher-parent communication can also enable educators to comprehend the distinct cultural beliefs and values held by these parents. In New Zealand, understanding the unique backgrounds of families is a crucial part of ECE (Ministry of Education, 2017a).

Chinese migrant families' macrosystem consists of both the Chinese culture and New Zealand's culture (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). However, not all participants held the same educational beliefs. Some exhibited a

certain degree of acculturation, that is, the New Zealand culture had influenced the ways in which they understood education (Park & Chesla, 2007). The next section discusses the changing educational beliefs held by some participants in this study.

6.5 Changing Educational Beliefs

It was clear from the interviews that educational beliefs held by parents are not static, but may change over time. For example, Zheng's experience of changing educational beliefs illustrate that parental views are dynamic in nature. Zheng expressed concerns about her son's education in New Zealand because she saw many of her Chinese migrant friends were worried about their children's education. Based on her understanding, Chinese migrants either adopt a Chinese education approach or a New Zealand's approach. Zheng was initially planning to adopt the New Zealand way to educate her son, however, her educational beliefs changed after she read a book called *Little Soldiers* (Chu, 2017). This book is about an American mother (Chu) of Chinese descent raising her son in Shanghai, China. Chu found that the public education system in China adopted a military-like system to force children to learn and get higher scores in examinations. Chu wondered if Chinese children were paying too high a price for future academic excellence, and if there could be a way to keep the advantages (facilitating excellence in children's academic learning) but eliminate the negative influences.

In reading the book, Zheng developed an empathetic connection with and a similar expectation as Chu. She aspired for an integrated approach that combines the excellence of both Chinese and New Zealand's education systems. A possible explanation of Zheng's experience is that parents' educational beliefs are dynamic, and they may adapt their beliefs as they raise their children and as they do their own research (Wu, 2009). Zheng's experience of changing educational belief shows how personal Chinese migrant parents' perspectives and experiences of school transition can be. This act of reading a book can then contribute to Zheng's changing behaviours with regard to transition. For instance, after she recognised that academic competence should not be the only focus in school, she can recognise that she might engage with her child, teachers, and institutions differently. In Zheng's instance, her unique personal and unpredictable story leads her to think transition as a complex balancing of different cultural worlds.

A couple of participants did not agree with those Chinese migrant parents who believed that children's academic learning is the most important thing for their education.

我觉得中国人就是很焦虑。什么都学，各种补习班，都是学习上的，英文啊、科学啊之类的。我洋人朋友也很多，他们好像更注重孩子的团队精神啊、体育啊这方面的。我还是更偏重洋人这种，我觉得孩子的学习还是要follow 学校这种教育。（李）

I think most Chinese migrant parents are anxious about children's school transition. They ask children to learn a lot of things, send them to many after school classes to improve children's academic learning, such as English and science classes. I have many foreign friends (Kiwis). They seem focus more on children's team spirit and physical development. My focus is like the local parents. I think children need to follow the education system in the country. (Li)

Instead of solely emphasising children's academic learning, Li expressed a more holistic view on education as she valued children's social skills and physical wellbeing that are promoted in ECE in New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 2017a). Parental views on education can be influenced by family structures and social networks (O'Toole, 2016; Ryan, 2001; Wu, 2009). Li is married to a New Zealander. She explained that she had a social network of many 'foreigners' (New Zealanders). Although New Zealanders are not a homogeneous group of people and different New Zealanders may have different perspectives on children's education, Li's interactions and communication with her local friends might have contributed to her westernised educational belief. Hearing and seeing her local friends helping children to develop social skills and physical wellbeing may have enabled Li to develop a deeper understanding about the mainstream educational belief in New Zealand.

Likewise, Zheng expressed a similar view on education and school transition. Based on her relationships and communication with other Chinese migrant parents, Zheng found that most Chinese migrant parents emphasise the significance of children's academic ability for education and school transitions, however, Zheng expressed a broader view on children's education and school transition, believing that children's emotional wellbeing and relationships with others are also crucial. These two elements are emphasised by the national ECE and primary school curriculum in New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 2007, 2017a), and have been identified as key

elements that influence their experiences of school transitions (Dockett & Perry, 2004b; Dunlop & Fabian, 2007; Moss, 2001; OECD, 2017).

Zheng expressed that her understanding about ECE in New Zealand changed after her child started ECE. Before she sent her child to ECE, her communication with other Chinese migrant parents resulted in her belief that education in New Zealand was not effective. However, based on her child's experiences in the ECE centre, her belief started to change.

根据我个人的经验，从社交媒体上看到的信息，以及和朋友同学了解到的信息，我觉得新西兰这边更注重的是过程，国内是非常非常注重结果。（郑）

Based on my personal experiences, the information I see on social media, and my communication with my friends and classmates, I think New Zealand's education focuses on the process while Chinese education emphasises the result. (Zheng)

Zheng realised that the educational approach adopted in China and western countries have different focuses. Chinese education emphasises the results of learning of subject knowledge (Ding, 2021). On the contrary, New Zealand's education encourages children to enjoy the process of learning. Zheng expected to integrate the advantages of the two different approaches to best support her child's learning in New Zealand.

Zheng's aspiration of a hybrid educational approach might be the reason that she did not agree with those Chinese parents who believed that New Zealand's education is not effective. The question here is what counts as effective? For those who believe that New Zealand's education is not effective, it seems that they only considered children's academic learning. They conclude that education in New Zealand is not effective when they do not see any solid evidence of children's academic performance. This criterion seems to be biased as it merely reflects the Chinese traditional view on education (Ding, 2021; Li, 2004; Li, 2010). In China, parents receive evidence of children's examination results from schools regularly, and the results are regarded as indications of children's academic performance. The absence of quantifiable proof of children's learning in New Zealand may have led to those parents' belief that New Zealand's education is not effective.

Early childhood education in New Zealand does not particularly focus on children's academic development, instead, it aims to promote children's various interconnected domains of development, including not only the cognitive aspect, but also other dimensions, such as physical, emotional, spiritual, social, and cultural dimensions (Ministry of Education, 2017a). The assessment of ECE in New Zealand adopts a narrative approach, and teachers would write children's learning stories based on their observation and interpretation of children's experiences in ECE (Carr, 2001; Peters et al., 2009b). This assessment model offers parents qualitative information regarding their children's learning process. For the parents who question the effectiveness of ECE in New Zealand, learning stories are not convincing as they do not directly indicate the outcomes of children's learning.

作为家长你应该帮他慢慢去找到他喜欢的东西。这个是对我们来说最重要的。然后在他走不动的时候能在后面推他一下。Push 的会比当地家长可能会多一些。（郑）

As parents, we want to help him to find his own interest. This is the most important thing. When the child feels hard to go ahead, we would push him a bit. We probably push children more compared with local parents. (Zheng)

The excerpt above is an example of how Zheng's educational belief was informed by both Chinese and New Zealand's culture. For Zheng, the most important thing for family education is to help the child to find his own interest. This is in accord with the educational philosophy in New Zealand where children's interests are emphasised (Ministry of Education, 2007, 2017a). She is also willing to push the child where necessary and this is evident in traditional Chinese parenting practices (Li, 2001; Li, 2004). This excerpt illustrates that Zheng recognised that her educational belief is contextual and fluid. It is contextual as Zheng considered engaging in specific parenting practices (e.g., push her child) in certain circumstances. The fluid nature of Zheng's belief was shown when she exhibited the willingness to push her child even though her interaction with her child might be more controlling than local parents.

Compared with Zheng, Zhou showed a more westernised educational belief that promotes children's wellbeing, confidence, and independence. Zhou came to New Zealand when she was in high school, so her education experience enabled her to

understand the different ways in which teachers in New Zealand and China interact with students. In New Zealand, teachers would praise and encourage students for their engagement in learning. In contrast, teachers in China would criticise students for not getting a desirable result. In the Chinese tradition, enjoyment comes after children accomplishing certain tasks through hard-work, and learning is not associated with happiness (Ding, 2021). In New Zealand, as noted earlier in this section, children are expected to enjoy the process of learning. When asked about her perspectives of ECE in New Zealand, Zhou expressed that she liked the educational philosophy in New Zealand.

我觉得新西兰这边的幼教对孩子独立性，创造精神，自信心，安全感的培养（很好）。我自己的孩子在幼儿园呆的非常愉快，没有任何一点不想去的意思。然后回来会和我反馈很多东西。
(周)

I think ECE in New Zealand positively contributes to children's independence, creativity, confidence, and sense of security. My own kids had a great time in the ECE centre. He never refused to go to the centre. He told me a lot about what happened in the centre after he came home. (Zhou)

The excerpt above exhibits that Zhou valued children's emotional wellbeing. Her child's happiness in the centre, liking school, and communication with her contributed to her preference towards New Zealand's education.

Through the conversation with Zhou, I found her educational belief was quite different from the traditional Chinese. She realised this too, saying that many Chinese migrant parents she knows hold high expectations about children's academic performance. Zhou found these families were very concerned about children's school transition in New Zealand as they believed that public education cannot help children to achieve family expectations. These families prefer to send children to private schools as they considered that children in private schools learn more knowledge. They believed private education lays the foundation for children's future academic success that is highly valued in Chinese tradition (Wu, 2009). Zhou, on the other hand, was willing to follow the public education philosophy in New Zealand because she liked the idea of catering for children's happiness and wellbeing (Ministry of Education, 2017a).

She explained that her educational belief was influenced by her unhappy childhood experiences.

我觉得是和我的成长环境有关系。我从小就住在国内的一所大学里，周围的环境风气都是和我说你要好好学习，我们没有什么时间可以玩，就是从小都是上课外班，包括取得很多成绩，重点小学，重点中学，这样一路过来。（周）

I think this (my educational belief) is influenced by my experiences. I lived in a university in China when I was a child. All people around me would tell that I need to study hard. I did not have time to play. I went to after school classes since I was a child. I was expected to get good results in examinations and go to the best primary school and middle school. (Zhou)

In recalling her memories of schooling in China, Zhou expressed that her parents forced her to study hard and left her no time to play. She did not like her childhood experiences; hence, she did not want her son to have a similar childhood to her. The perceived undesirable childhood experiences influenced her educational beliefs and parenting practices. Unlike her parents, she considered that children's happiness and wellbeing were more important than academic learning because her wellbeing was somewhat neglected by the parents when she was a child. This belief was reflected in her parenting practices. Instead of sending the child to after-school class to study academics as many Chinese migrants do, Zhou engaged in parenting practices based on the child's interests. For example, she would take the child to do outdoor activities in the weekend and spend time drawing with the child because the child was interested. Although parents might still exercise significant pressure on their child in outdoor activity or art, compared with her parents, Zhou's parenting practices are more likely to contribute to her child's happiness and enjoyment of childhood which are valued in New Zealand's education (Ministry of Education, 2007, 2017a).

During the interviews, it was clear that some participants' educational beliefs changed. For example, Wang's educational belief changed from one that values children's happiness to one emphasises both emotional wellbeing and academic learning. Wang initially did not think academic learning is important for children's school transition, however, due to the influences of her husband who was born in China and is a high school teacher in New Zealand, and the school transition

experiences of her older child, she started to value academic learning for her second child's school transition.

我对小学和幼儿园就是希望孩子可以快乐的成长，没有太多的感触。然后我和我老公我们之间有一点矛盾是因为他希望孩子成绩可以好一些，因为他是这边的高中老师。但是随着孩子上学以后，教育理念有一点改变。我们选择的幼儿园，对于教育方面（知识的学习）还是比较注重一些的。也自己做了一些幼小衔接方面的研究。（王）

For ECE and primary school education, I do not have much expectation, just want him to be happy. My husband and me have different views on children's education. He wants the child to do better in academic learning because he is a high school teacher. After my child started primary school, my educational belief changed a bit. When choosing ECE centre for the second child, I valued her learning of knowledge. I have also done some research about children's school transition. (Wang)

Wang's oldest child had gone to primary school and the second one was about to make the transition from ECE to school. Before the first child went to school, Wang did not think academic study was important. She expected children to be happy in ECE and school. However, she found that children entering primary school with different levels of academic abilities after her oldest child started school. As she did not help her first child with academic learning before he started primary school, her son's academic development level was not as advanced as some of his classmates. Since then, Wang started to value academic study and had done some research about children's school transition.

Wang recognised that children need to adapt to a new learning environment after starting school. Based on her own research about children's school transition, she believed that children could adapt to the new environment easily if they have learnt some basic knowledge before starting school as this would enable children to better understand the content that primary school teachers teach and would give children the confidence to engage in the new learning environment. In particular, the language environment changes with school transition. According to Wang, most Chinese migrant children mainly experience Chinese language at home. In the ECE centre, although teachers mostly speak English, children are not required to sit and listen to them all the time. This situation changes in primary school because there are more teacher-led

activities and children are required to listen to teachers' instruction. The teaching approach adopted by primary school requires a higher level of English ability. Children's engagement in learning might be impeded if their English proficiency is limited. Thus, Wang believed that children's English language ability influences their school transitions.

When supporting her second child's school transition, Wang helped her child's learning of numeracy and English through a playful approach.

我教孩子数学方面，基本的数数，英语方面，我是通过一些游戏卡。（王）

I helped him with learning of counting and English through playing game cards. (Wang)

Because of she held different perspectives to her husband, and due to her experience of her first son's school transition, as well as her own research, Wang's educational belief changed from emphasising children's happiness to valuing both children's wellbeing and academic learning. This demonstrates that Wang expected to combine advantages from both Chinese and New Zealand education, which seems to be a common expectation held by some Chinese migrant parents in New Zealand (Huang, 2013; Wu, 2009).

6.6 Summary

The participants in this study hold different beliefs about children's education and these beliefs are dynamic. Chinese migrant parents' educational beliefs are found to be influenced by their past experiences in China as well as their experiences in the host country (Guo, 2013; Wu, 2009). Chinese migrant parents also learn from their older children's school transition experiences and would adjust their parenting practices to support younger children's school transitions. Some parents actively sought out an integrated educational approach to best support their children's learning in New Zealand (Guo, 2013; Wu, 2009).

Discussions in this chapter reveal that people with similar macrosystems may have different educational beliefs. For teachers, building relationships supports nuanced understanding of the formation of beliefs and supports teachers in avoiding

assumptions of stereotypical beliefs about certain cultural groups of people. The changing educational beliefs expressed by the participants mean that constant parent-teacher communication is significant for teachers to understand the dynamic beliefs and expectations that each family have towards their children's education. The backgrounds and educational beliefs of families are emphasised in ECE in New Zealand as evident in the principle of *Whānau tangata* (Family and Community) of *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017a). To implement this principle in practice, teachers are expected to adopt an individualised approach so as to understand the specificity of each family. This can be achieved by teachers inviting parents to share their beliefs and expectations about children's education so that the two parties can develop a shared understanding and common goal. For parents whose educational beliefs are different from mainstream education in New Zealand, teachers can communicate with them to explain the educational approach adopted. For example, if teachers can explain to Chinese migrant parents about the benefits of children's play, they may develop a positive attitude towards play and a deeper understanding about education in New Zealand.

Chapter 7 Chinese Families' Perspectives on Transitions

7.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces and analyses the participants' understanding of school transition. The first section discusses participants' understanding of school transition. This is followed by an exploration of the factors participants shared regarding their concerns about transition, and their expectations of children and institutions during transition. The last section analyses the participants' children's feelings about school transition and explores the factors that influenced their feelings.

7.2 Parents' Understanding of Transition

Parents' understanding of school transition was discussed during the interviews. The data showed that while all participants valued children's school transition (directly or indirectly), they tended to have unique concerns and expectations based on their individual circumstances and the individual characteristics of their children. This section details and analyses the participants' understanding about school transition, exploring how the participants' beliefs about school transition might be influenced by the complex ecological systems surrounding them, for instance, their education history, family structure, social network, and understanding of their own children.

教育的话我觉得，不管是在中国还是新西兰，对于教育的看法没有改变。就比较注重教育。你在教育上花再多的钱都是值得的。
(吴)

No matter in China or New Zealand, my educational belief did not change. I think children's education is very important. No matter how much money you spend on education is worth it. (Wu)

对于知识的学习，肯定是主要的。然后第二点呢，我觉得培养孩子的想象力、开放思维、逻辑思维这方面也很重要。(吴)

First, the most important thing is his academic learning. Secondly, I think it is also crucial to foster his imagination, open-mindedness, and logical thinking. (Wu)

The first excerpt above shows that Wu feels her belief about children's education is universal rather than contextual. This accords with previous research (see

for instance, Chan, 2014; Guo, 2010; Li, 2001; Li, 2004; Liao, 2007; Wu, 2009; Yang, 2011) which found that no matter in which country they settle, Chinese migrant parents highly value children's education. Her willingness to spend money on children's education reflects the traditional Chinese view on education which regards it as a family business (Huang & Gove, 2012). The second excerpt indicates that Wu not only values academic learning, but also the child's learning dispositions, such as imagination, open thinking, and logical thinking, in times of school transition. Learning dispositions, which incorporates a 'ready, willing, and able' element, "enable children to construct learner identities that travel with them into new contexts and across time" (Ministry of Education, 2017a, p. 23). In the ECE context in New Zealand, five learning dispositions (taking an interest, being involved, persisting with uncertainty and challenge, expressing ideas and feelings, and taking responsibility) are valued (Carr, 2006). The emphasises that Wu placed on both her child's academic performance and learning dispositions provide evidence that although the high value that she placed on education is universal, her understanding of education is, to a certain extent, contextual.

Wu explicitly expressed that she thinks school transition is important because primary school is the starting point of children's formal learning.

我觉得幼小衔接这个阶段还是蛮重要的。因为他在幼儿园的阶段呢就是以玩为主，学习是次要的。但是上了小学之后就会有一个很大的变化，就是以学习为主，玩为辅。然后小学里面会学知识啊，他的规矩啊。（吴）

I think children's transition from ECE to primary school is very important. Children mainly play when they are in ECE, learning is less important. However, there will be a big change after they start primary school. Their main task in primary school is study. Children will need to learn knowledge, some rules in primary school. (Wu)

Wu understood that the educational practices delivered in ECE and primary schools placed different demands and expectations on children (Ackesjö, 2013). From an ecological perspective, the different educational approaches that ECE and primary school adopts mean that there are competing exo and macro beliefs in the educational ecology of New Zealand. In times of school transition, the competing beliefs may influence teacher-child and parent-child relationships and interactions as primary

school teachers tend to play a more instructive role compared with ECE teachers, and parenting practices may focus more on helping children with learning of academics after children start primary school. Wu's perspective on school transition reveals that she expects children to adapt to the changes involved in school transition and to focus on learning academic subjects after starting primary school. This perspective reflects the traditional Chinese education belief which emphasises children's academic excellence (Chan, 2014; Huang, 2013; Zhang, 2012). Wu's view on school transition was similar to other participants who expressed school transition was significant. Zheng, however, did not perceive school transition as a crucial process.

没有那么重要吧，要不然我们就送他到私立学校去了。我们知道这边的私立学校很注重知识的学习。因为我们不想在孩子太小的时候就做太多的学术方面的学习。（郑）

I think school transition is not that important, otherwise I would have sent him to a private school. We know that private schools in New Zealand focus on children's learning of knowledge, but we do not want our child to do much study of academic knowledge when he is so little. (Zheng)

As many other Chinese parents, Zheng believed that private schools in New Zealand focus more on children's academic learning compared with public schools, however, she never thought about sending her child to a private school. Zheng explained that this is because of her family structure. Her husband is a French and the couple had decided that they would send their child to a bilingual (English and French) primary school before he was born.

因为我们有一个 *interview*，所以从出生到小学这段时间，某种程度上都在做准备（郑）

We have been preparing him for primary school since the child was born because children need to pass an interview before entering that bilingual school. (Zheng)

Although Zheng did not think school transition is important, the parenting practices she engaged in suggest otherwise. Her husband and her had been preparing their child for primary school since the child was born. They knew that the child needed to speak French in order to be accepted by the bilingual primary school, so, they had intentionally helped the child with his learning of French at home. For these

parents, their interactions with their child were influenced by their aim to enrol the child in a bilingual school and by their understanding of the entry requirement of the school. For Zheng's family, supporting transition appears to be a lengthy process that started soon after her child's birth. The experiences Zheng shared provided evidence that school transition was influenced by the complex interactions of the multiple ecological systems. For instance, the choices of school were influenced by the macrosystem, as there were only two French-English bilingual primary schools in Auckland. These schools' entry requirement of children being bilingual impacted on the family's ongoing parenting practices of teaching children French and English at home.

The discussions above suggest that the participants value school transition, either directly or indirectly. Some participants directly expressed that school transition is crucial, because primary school is the start of children's formal learning. Although there is a national curriculum for ECE in New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 2017a), the participants did not see children's learning in ECE as formal. This might be influenced by the traditional Chinese view which underscores the importance of adult-lead instructions for children's learning. These participants understand the two different education settings have different demands and expectations for children and expect their children to adapt to the changes and learn more knowledge in primary schools. While Zheng did not verbally acknowledge the significance of school transition, she manifested her emphasis on school transition through parenting practices in relation to preparing the child for primary schools.

None of the participants talked about the change of roles they needed to make to cope with in the process of children's school transition. As noted in section 4.4, parents not only need to support children in the process of school transition, but also experience role changes embedded in school transition (Hanke et al., 2017). In times of school transition, parents are expected to communicate and collaborate with new teachers and adapt their roles from caregivers to parents of primary pupils (Dockett et al., 2017b; Griebel et al., 2017). In New Zealand, family is a crucial part of ECE and school transition (Ministry of Education, 2007, 2017a; Peters, 2019). Thus, when fostering school transition, it is of value to consider ways to support parents and recognise their experiences of school transition. For example, if educators talk to

parents about the changes that they need to experience and manage in the process of their children's school transition, Chinese migrant parents can be more prepared and willing to work collaboratively with teachers to support children's school transition.

7.3 Important Factors for Transition

The participants in this study expressed a holistic view on school transition. Apart from academic learning, participants underscored the significance of children's personality, wellbeing, learning and living habits, communication with others, independence, and English proficiency.

首先是人品，要懂得关爱别人，不要欺负同学。我觉得他能知道他不会在别人有无礼的行为。当他受到别人对他的无礼的时候，他知道说出来，保护自己。（周）

The most important thing is personality. He needs to know how to care for others, do not bully his classmates. I hope he knows that he cannot behave rudely to other people. When others are being rude to him, he knows to speak out and protect himself. (Zhou)

For Zhou, children's ability to care for their own wellbeing and the wellbeing of others is crucial for school transition. This view accords with the strand of Mana Atua (wellbeing) of *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017a) and the key competencies of managing self and relating to others of *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007), which emphasise that children's wellbeing should be protected and promoted. According to Zhou, caring of others is a significant aspect of the child's personality and it requires knowledge. The expectation Zhou held towards her child also reflects the concept of *Ren* in Confucianism, which requires one to love people and be considerate of others (Luo et al., 2013; Park & Chesla, 2007). From an ecological perspective, Zhou exhibited a mix of cultural and relational expectations towards the child and his school transition.

For Zhou, children's academic excellence becomes less important, and the priority is placed on children's wellbeing and relationships. One possible influence to consider here is her migration, which led Zhou to enter an unfamiliar environment. Through her experience of migration, she observed that building relationships with others can contribute to her child's wellbeing and adjustment into the new environment in primary school. Zhou's view on school transition problematises the

stereotyped view on Chinese migrants which suggests that Chinese migrants typically underscore children's learning of literacy and numeracy (see for instance, Huang, 2012; Guo, 2012; Wu, 2009). Moreover, her expectation that her child being able to 'speak out and protect himself' resonates with the notions of autonomy, independence, communication, and using language that are being promoted in New Zealand's national ECE and primary school curricula (Ministry of Education, 2007, 2017a).

Unlike Zhou, Sun explicitly expressed that academic competence is the most important thing for children to possess before starting primary school.

肯定是听说读写，计算什么的。（孙）

Listening, speaking, reading, writing, and numeracy. (Sun)

现在就是帮他培养一些生活习惯。比如垃圾扔垃圾桶，然后他有时候会凶小朋友，我就告诉他不要这样。（孙）

Now I am helping him to form good living habits, such as throwing rubbish into the bin. Sometimes he is rude to his peers, I told him he cannot do that. (Sun)

Apart from academic readiness, Sun believed children's living habits and abilities to get along with peers were also important for school transitions. This suggests that Sun valued children's relationships with others in the process of school transition. Sun's belief shows evidence of both Chinese and New Zealand's educational paradigms. Her perspective reveals that she expects a hybrid approach to transition that combines the merits of both Chinese (academic learning) and New Zealand's education systems (social competence).

Similarly, building relationships with peers was considered as a significant element for children's school transition by Chen.

最重要的就是跟人沟通。我担心孩子沟通不来，孩子心理上会感觉孤单、无助。（陈）

I think the most important thing is communicating with others. I am concerned that my son won't communicate with others, and he will feel lonely and helpless. (Chen)

Chen was concerned that his son's emotional wellbeing would be impacted if he could not communicate and establish relationships with peers. During school transition, communicating with others and building new relationships in primary schools are crucial as they contribute to children's sense of belonging and engagement in learning in the new learning environment (Peters, 2010; Peters & Woodhouse, 2021). Children's relationships with others not only contribute to their social and emotional development, but also influences their cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1978). Teachers organising activities that encourage peer communication and interactions is one way to support new entrant children's relationship building with others. Such activities offer new entrants the opportunity to socialise and build relationships with peers they are meeting for the first time. The buddy system, utilised by some primary schools in New Zealand (Education Review Office, 2015), can also support children's socialisation and relationship building because experienced peers may provide new entrants with 'scaffolding' (Wood et al., 1976) to adjust into the new learning environment in primary school.

A consideration when supporting Chinese migrant children's relationship building with peers is their language proficiency. Chinese children may enter school with different level of English proficiency, and many participants in this study expressed a concern that their children's English language may negatively impact on their communication and interactions with peers. For example, Wang believed that children's English proficiency is significant for school transition.

*我觉得在上学之前要接触一些英文的资料，要比全中文的要好得多。有些学校有 **language class**，对于英语不太好的，学校会把他送去英语班，这个很好。（王）*

I think it is better for children to have access to English learning materials rather than materials that are all in Chinese before they start primary schools. Some schools have language classes. They would send children whose English are not good to this class. This is good. (Wang)

Wang expected primary schools to offer language support for Chinese migrant children. Based on her understanding about Chinese migrant families in New Zealand, she knew that some Chinese children started school with limited English proficiency. Children may lose interest in learning if they cannot understand what the teachers are

talking about. It may then negatively impact on children's engagement in learning and their self-image (Peters, 2010). The participants seemed to be less worried about children's English proficiency when they are in ECE. This might be influenced by parental perception that there is less teacher-led verbal instructions conducted in the ECE centres. To adjust to Chinese migrant parents' language expectations and accommodate Chinese migrant children's language abilities, institutions can collaborate with bilingual families and local communities to support Chinese families' school transition. Such collaboration allows Chinese migrant families' language-related expectations and parenting practices to be heard and built upon in schools, which may ensure continuity of children's language learning. Moreover, schools can utilise the language and cultural resources that the local community has to enhance the practices delivered in school; for instance, schools can invite bilingual community members to support bilingual practices.

In contrast with those participants who underscored the importance of children's English proficiency, Zhou believed that children learn English fast, and parents do not need to worry about their children's language development. Zhou found that many Chinese migrants held a negative attitude towards the multicultural environment in ECE centres in New Zealand as they expected children to learn English in the centre. She suggested these parents needed to adjust their views and embrace the multicultural environment because New Zealand is a country of diverse cultural groups.

一些华人不太希望他们去的幼儿园有太多的华人。他们是想如果没有太多的华人是不是我的孩子语言能力就好了，就能好好学英语了。我是觉得新西兰已经是很多元文化了，咱们要做的就是要去适应这个大环境，而不要太挑剔（周）

Some Chinese migrant parents do not like the centre to have too many Chinese children. They think that their children will be able to improve English language ability if there are no other Chinese kids. I think we (Chinese migrants) need to adapt to the multicultural environment of New Zealand, and not be picky (Zhou)

Based on her communication with other Chinese migrant parents, Zhou found that the multicultural environment in the ECE centre was not appreciated by many Chinese parents. These parents' anxiety is possibly influenced by their belief that the

multicultural environment in the centre detracts from the real purpose of sending the child to the centre, which is to learn English that contributes to their children's opportunities to succeed in their later educational and professional lives in an English-speaking country (Guo, 2012; Huang, 2013). This anxiety might be eased by teachers communicating to Chinese migrant parents about the benefits of children learning in a multicultural environment, and about the early childhood curriculum which values and respects the cultural backgrounds of each child and family (Ministry of Education, 2017a).

This section shows that Chinese migrant parents have a holistic view on school transition. As well as academic learning, participants believed children's personality, wellbeing, communication skills, and English proficiency were crucial elements for school transition. This finding suggests that Chinese migrant parents' educational beliefs are not only influenced by their home culture, but also by the mainstream culture in the host country (Wu, 2009). The different attitudes the participants held towards the multicultural environment provides evidence that the macrosystem impacts on individuals differently (Arends-Tóth & Van de Vijver, 2004; Berry, 1997, 2005), and reminds education practitioners, policy makers, and researchers to adopt an individualised approach when trying to understand and support school transition.

7.4 Concerns Regarding Transition

The participants expressed different concerns about their children's school transition. The concerns that participants had included children's academic performance, English ability, Chinese language development, relationships building with peers and teachers, bullying, and teachers' attentiveness to children.

我还蛮紧张的。因为我之前有一些家长的小朋友们，他们是在今天六七月份开始读小学了，比我儿子大半年。跟他们聊天的过程中就会说有一些小孩子会跟不上。（吴）

I am pretty concerned about his school transition. My friends' children started primary school in June and July this year. When I communicated with them, they told me that some children could not catch up with the class. (Wu)

Because of her communication with other Chinese parents, Wu started to be concerned about her son's school transition. She understood that there would be

more teacher-directed teaching activities in primary school and was worried that her son could not understand the teacher because of his insufficient proficiency with English. To address this concern, Wu asked a local teacher to help her child with English speaking and listening. From an ecological perspective, Wu's social networks, her interactions and her relationship with her child influenced her feelings and experience of school transition (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

Chen was also concerned about her child's English proficiency. She believed that her child's English ability was limited because both the parents speak Chinese at home, and because her child mainly played with Chinese children in the centre. In this case, the language environment at home and the child's experiences in the ECE centre contributed to Chen's concern regarding her child's school transition. Based on her observation and communication with other Chinese migrant parents, Chen found that Chinese migrant children's peer relationships are often formed with other Chinese children. This led to a concern regarding her child's relationship building with peers who are not Chinese, as starting primary school would bring contact across diverse cultural backgrounds. The language environment at home and her child's social experience in ECE contributed to Chen's concerns regarding her child's school transition. Chen's believed that the teaching practices in primary schools required children to have a higher level of English ability compared with ECE.

担心就是他不够主动去问问题。还有就是英文，因为在家里我只和他说普通话，很少说英文的。（冯）

I am concerned that he will not actively ask teachers when he has questions. Another thing is his English. I rarely speak English to him at home, mainly Chinese. (Feng)

Feng was concerned about her child's interactions, communication, and relationship building with teachers and peers because of his son's English proficiency. According to Feng, his son was shy and would not communicate with people he does not know well, thus Feng was concerned that his son may experience difficulties in communicating with new classmates and teachers after starting school. These difficulties can negatively impact on the child's emotional wellbeing and belonging that are significant for school transitions (OECD, 2017; Peters, 2010). The language

environment at home and his child's personality contributed to Feng's concern. When talking about his son's relationship with teachers in the ECE centre, Feng expressed:

因为他喜欢语言，他就最喜欢那个教他讲故事的老师，教数学的老师就不太亲近。（冯）

He liked the story telling teacher most because he liked language. He was not close to the mathematics teacher. (Feng)

The excerpt above manifests that the child preferred to establish relationships with teachers who build on their interests. This illustrates parents' concerns regarding their children's school transition are individualised, that is, parents may have specific concerns based on their understanding of their own children. For primary school teachers to build relationship with newcomers, it is crucial that they understand the interests of the children. This understanding enables teachers to design responsive practices that attract children's attention and stimulate children's engagement in learning (Besi & Sakellariou, 2019; Bond et al., 2019). Moreover, teachers can build partnerships with parents so as to understand their unique perspectives or concerns, and to offer targeted support for both children and families (Hoffman & Sam, 2020; Peters & Woodhouse, 2021).

Qian was concerned that his son would not be able to communicate and interact with new peers in primary school because of his limited English proficiency. Children's school transition experiences might be negatively influenced if they are unable to form relationships with new peers. Existing research (Mashburn & Pianta, 2006; Murray, 2014) indicates that children's relationships with peers influence their liking of school, sense of belonging, and engagement in learning. Thus, it is vital that primary school teachers assist Chinese migrant children to establish relationships with peers who come from different cultural backgrounds. In ECE centres, teachers can create opportunities for Chinese migrant children to socialise and build relationships with peers from other cultural backgrounds, so as to promote Chinese children's development of social skills that are significant for school transition and learning in the new environment.

Zhou's view was different from Wu, Chen, Feng, and Qian, as she was worried about her child's Chinese because she knew many Chinese kids who were born overseas do not speak fluent Chinese.

我们其实特别担心他以后不会说中文了。因为生活中能看到，很多国外出生的孩子中文水平没有那么好。（周）

We are very concerned that he will not know how to speak Chinese when he is older. we know that many oversea born Chinese kids do not speak good Chinese. (Zhou)

Zhou expressed that she expects her son to have a sense of belonging in both China and New Zealand. The different perspectives held by the participants regarding their children's language development provide evidence that not all Chinese migrants held the same expectation of their children. Parental expectations of their children impact on parental views of school transition. For example, Zhou was concerned that school transition might negatively influence her child's Chinese language development because the child would be immersed in an English language environment in the primary school. This concern was influenced by her understanding of other Chinese migrant children's language development and her expectation towards her child's development of cultural identity.

Qian was concerned about bullying.

就怕他会不会在学校，因为是移民嘛，而且我们那边的人长的比较矮小，就怕他在学校被欺负。（钱）

I am concerned that he might get bullied in school because we are foreigners in this country, and because people from Guangdong are normally short. (Qian)

The perceived minority status and the short appearance of people from his hometown contributed to Qian's concern regarding his son's safety. This finding is consistent with existing literature which found that some parents are concerned about bullying due to their children's appearance and cultural origin (Peters, 2010).

Another concern expressed by the participants was teachers' attentiveness to children.

我发现对于我们孩子的幼儿园，老师比较注重最好的学生和什么都不会的学生。每个孩子的 level 其实都是不一样的，但是老师真的是没有太多的能力关注太多的孩子，所以我就觉得孩子在刚上学的时候有些时候是被忽视的，就是没有人管。（王）

For the centre that my son is attending, I found that the teachers paid more attention to the best kids or the kids who know very little. Children are different in terms of the level of development. The teachers really do not have much energy to attend to all the children. So, I think sometimes some kids are neglected when they first start primary school. (Wang)

Based on her child's experiences in the ECE centre, Wang found that teachers are too busy to attend to every child. She was concerned that the primary school teachers would neglect her child. Her communication with other parents leads her to recognise that there are differences among New Zealand's teachers. Responsible teachers would help children a lot while teachers who do not support children can negatively influence children's learning and school transition experiences. Similarly, Feng was concerned that the high child-teacher ratio in primary school may lead to teachers being unable to pay attention to her child. Teachers' attentiveness to children influenced Wang's and Feng's concerns regarding school transition. The OECD (2016) suggested that a high child-teacher ratio seems to be inevitable in school transition. Primary school teachers' rich understanding of the individual child and family may counteract this challenge because such understanding enables teachers to deliver targeted support within the large classroom environment and their intense daily work. The responsiveness of transition practices has been identified as being influential for transition experiences of children and families (Ballam et al., 2017; Einarsdóttir, 2014; Fabian, 2002; Peters, 2010).

Zhao compared her child with her friends' and relatives' children in China. She found that children in China are more academically developed, and this led to her anxiety about her own child's school transition.

很焦虑。我国内的朋友，人家的孩子三岁就认识多少多少个字呀。我儿子五岁了连自己的名字都不能写清楚，话也讲的不清楚。（赵）

Very anxious. I have some friends in China, and their children know so many words when they are 3. My son is five, and he could not even write his name. He could not talk clearly. (Zhao)

Zhao's story shows how parents' social networks influence perspectives of transition. The comparison that Zhao made between her friends' children and her own child led to her concern about her child's school transition. Zhao did not appear to take into account that her son was learning English and that he was building up an extra vocabulary. In her eyes, her child was far less academically prepared than her friends' children. Zhao's concerns can also be seen as a response to broader pressures on parents. In China, the education system focuses on children's academic achievement and children's learning is assessed by examinations (Yu & Suen, 2005). Thus, Chinese parents are under pressure to expect children to have high academic competence. In contrast to China, the emphasis in New Zealand is on educational process, and parents are encouraged to be less concerned with outcomes and more concerned with process and engagement. For example, *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017a) explicitly emphasises that children's participation and relationships with others contribute to their learning. Despite migrating to New Zealand, the high value that Zhao placed on children's academic performance did not change. It is important here to consider the possible influence of the deep-rooted Chinese belief that academic excellence is important for future success (Chan, 2014). As education in China employs examinations to rank children based on their test results, Zhao exhibits an expectation towards both her child's personal and relative performance which means she expects her child to achieve better outcomes than his peers.

This study found that the participants held different concerns regarding their children's school transition because the backgrounds of these families and the characteristics of the children were different. For instance, for children whose English was limited, parents were concerned about their English; for children who mostly speak English at home, parents were concerned about their Chinese language. The elements that contributed to participants' concerns regarding children's school transition included the language environment at home, parental understanding about the child, educational practices carried out in the institution, and their child's communication with others. To better support Chinese migrant families' school transition in New Zealand, teachers can actively communicate with parents and

children. Such communication enables teachers to understand the individual concerns held by each family and develop responsive practices to assist parents and children to make school transition (OECD, 2017; Peters, 2010).

7.5 Expectations of Institutions and Children

The participants expressed that they expected ECE to help children with academic learning, English language, and communication skills. Moreover, some participants expected ECE to assist children to know the routines and rules in primary school. For primary school, participants expected teachers to help children to develop a sense of belonging and security in the new environment, and to help children find their interests. The participants also expressed expectations towards their children's development of cultural identity.

还是希望基础教育能好一点，所以可能会给他上一些补习班吧，这边教的东西太少了。（孙）

I hope that children can receive good primary education (learn more knowledge). So, I will send him to some after school classes. Children learn so little in school in New Zealand. (Sun)

Sun's expectation of her child's primary school reflects the Chinese cultural perspective that education prioritises children's academic excellence (Chan, 2014; Zhang, 2012). Although she accepted that the child would not learn much academic knowledge in primary schools in New Zealand, she still expected to help her child with learning of knowledge by sending him to after school classes. This finding is consistent with Wu (2009) who found that Chinese migrant parents would deploy their own resources to compensate for the perceived limited learning happened in institutions, for example, by directly teaching them or sending children to after school classes.

就希望孩子动手能力强一些，对生活的态度积极一些，开心一些。没有太大的期许。希望孩子上小学之前认识一些字母和数字。（陈）

I just want him to improve his manual skills, to develop a positive attitude towards life, and be happy. Really not much expectation. I want him to learn some letters and numbers before he starts primary school. (Chen)

Chen held a less academic-oriented expectation about children's school transition. The excerpt above demonstrates that Chen believes both academic learning and emotional wellbeing are important for children's school transitions. This is in accord with the educational philosophy in New Zealand that promotes a holistic view on child development (Ministry of Education, 2007, 2017a).

我是希望幼儿园阶段孩子能提高一下语言沟通能力，最好到了小学之后没有太大障碍。还有就是，他上小学还有幼儿园那种时间安排上的变化，他需要有一些了解。（陈）

I hope ECE can help children to improve their verbal communication ability and skills, so that they don't have language issues after starting primary school. Moreover, he needs to understand the different time arrangement between ECE and primary school. (Chen)

Chen believed that children's English language ability and basic academic preparation are crucial for children's school transitions. She expected ECE teachers to help children with communication skills which enable children to build relationships with peers and teachers in primary school. Moreover, she expected ECE teachers to help the child to understand the changes involved in school transition. Primary schools and ECE centres have different rules and different demands for children (Dockett & Einarsdóttir, 2017). Helping children to understand these differences before they start schools will allow them to make better adjustment in the primary school environment when they make school transition.

我希望老师能让孩子建立安全感，每天去学校能感觉很开心。然后能不能引导一下孩子的兴趣爱好。（周）

I hope primary school teachers can help children to develop a sense of security, and that the child is happy to go to school. Additionally, I hope teachers can guide children's interests. (Zhou)

Zhou expected teachers to foster children's enjoyment of school. School liking is a crucial element that contribute to children's school transition experiences as it influences children's emotional wellbeing and engagement in learning (OECD, 2017; Peters, 2010). Zhou also believed that children's learning journeys are different and expected teachers to support children's individualised learning based on their interests. This clearly contradicts the traditional Chinese education belief that

emphasises students' efforts over interests (Ding, 2021). Such an expectation reflects the New Zealand way of education which emphasises children's diversity and individuality (Ministry of Education, 2017a). Zhou's emphasis on children's emotional wellbeing was influenced by her own childhood experiences (as discussed in 6.5).

The participants in this study not only value their children's academic learning, but also their wellbeing, interests, enjoyment of school, and communication skills that are valued in the New Zealand's education context. This broad view might be influenced by their relationships and communication with their children's teachers and their own observation of children's learning in institutions.

Apart from expectations of ECE and school, participants also expressed expectations about their children's cultural identity development.

我期待他认为自己是个中国人，认同自己的历史，认同自己的文化。（冯）

I hope he can know that he is a Chinese and understand our history and culture. (Feng)

To help his child to recognise his Chinese identity, specific parenting practices were carried out. Feng read stories about Chinese history to his child and talked to him about their family members in China.

我儿子现在就认为他是新西兰人，我就会告诉他你是中国人，但是他现在就对中国比较陌生。（吴）

My son now thinks he is a New Zealander. I would tell him that he is a Chinese, but he feels unfamiliar to China. (Wu)

Wu expressed that his son was westernised because he received his early education in New Zealand. Like Feng, Wu expected her son to develop a cultural identity. This means that Chinese migrants expect their children to appreciate their Chinese origin while being able to adapt to the mainstream culture in New Zealand. To help his son develop his Chinese identity, Wu planned to teach him the Chinese language and about Chinese culture when he was older.

下一代还是希望他和中国保持联系的。希望他对我们的父母也有一个孝顺这个东西，有一个归属感。（陈）

For the next generation, I want them to stay connected with China. I want the child to know that he needs to be filial to our parents, and to have a sense of belonging to China. (Chen)

Chen also expected the child to develop a cultural identity, and to keep the merits of the traditional Chinese values, such as filial piety emphasised in the Chinese Confucius culture (Huang & Gove, 2012).

Most of the participants highly valued their child's development of a cultural identity. This reflects a mix of macro and micro expectations of the child. At the macro level, the participants expected their children to understand the culture and history of China. At the micro level, they want their children to stay connected with their relatives in China and be filial to elders. Although the participants did not express that they expected teachers to help with this, ECE in New Zealand aims to support "children from all backgrounds to grow up strong in identity, language and culture" (Ministry of Education, 2017a, p. 7). *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017a) promotes teaching practices that value children's home languages and cultures because such practices enhance children's learner identity and sense of belonging. Teachers are expected to be responsive to children's cultural ways of knowing and being (Ministry of Education, 2017a, 2021). In times of school transition, culturally responsive practices contribute to both children's and families' sense of belonging (OECD, 2017; Peters, 2010).

The discussions in this section demonstrate that the participants valued children's school transition, and show that different participants had distinct concerns and expectations towards their children's school transition. Participants' understanding of their children, family environment, social networks, education background, and cultural origin all contributed to their perspectives on school transition. The findings in this section have implications for transition practices. Institutions need to design transition practices that acknowledge and promote Chinese migrant families' cultural values. Such practices foster both Chinese parents' and children's sense of belonging. Moreover, understanding children's individual characteristics and expectations held by parents are crucial as it helps teachers to offer responsive support. To achieve this, teachers need to implement the principles of *Ngā hononga* (Relationships) and *Whānau tangata* (Family and Community) of *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017a). Establishing relationships with family enables teachers

to better understand each family's specific concerns, expectations, and needs, which in turn allows teachers to support individualised school transition and learning trajectory.

7.6 Children's Excitement about Transition

This study was initially designed to involve children as participants. However, due to the pandemic, it was difficult to interview and observe children about their perspectives and experiences of school transition. Instead, I asked the parent participants about their children's perspectives and feelings about school transition. All participants but one expressed that their children were excited about starting primary school. This section analyses children's views and feelings about school transition from the perspective of their parents, exploring the factors that contribute to children's excitement to start school.

他很兴奋，挺想去的。有新的朋友，觉得长大了这样子。（李）

He is very excited about going to primary school. He wants to go to primary school because he will make new friends there, and starting primary school means he is a big boy. (Li)

(对于读小学)很兴奋很向往。他向往好多小朋友和他一起玩。对于学习一个字也没提。（冯）

He was excited about starting school. He looks forward to playing with more kids. He did not mention anything about study. (Feng)

Both Feng's and Li's children exhibited some understanding about school transition. They know that they would meet new peers in primary schools, and they were excited about it. The perspective that these two children had towards school transition demonstrated that they valued friendships and that they were keen to interact with different people. These children's perspectives are reflective of the educational philosophies being promoted in ECE and primary schools in New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 2007, 2017a).

Feng seemed to be disappointed because his son did not mention anything about studying in primary school which was his hope. This suggested he expected his child to focus on learning academics after starting primary school. This expectation is also evident when he expressed that he would have sent the child to a private school if

his financial situation allowed because private schools focus more on children's academic learning. This seemed to be a prevailing view among the participants in this study since most of them expressed a preference towards private schools.

Feng and his son had different perspectives about school transition. Existing literature (see for instance, Dockett & Perry, 2002; Eskelä-Haapanen et al., 2017; Peters, 2000, 2003a) found that parents and children do hold different views on starting schools. Feng's emphasis on children's academic learning is consistent with the traditional Chinese educational belief which prioritised children's academic excellence (Chan, 2014; Zhang, 2012). The child's perspective, on the other hand, seems to be reflective of New Zealand's ECE belief which promotes the idea that children learn through relationships with people, places, and things (Ministry of Education, 2017a). Peters (2010) suggested that children's relationships with peers contribute to their experiences of school transition as they are "associated with positive feelings about school and better academic achievement" (p. 18). Peer relationships are also crucial resources for social support in times of school transition when children need to bridge the familiar and unfamiliar (Peters, 2010). Children's interest in growing their peer relationships reflects the whole picture of school success in New Zealand, which is in fact consistent with Chinese parents' aspirations for children's successful education.

Feng's dissatisfaction about his child's lack of interest in study could be dealt with by teachers providing explanations about the educational beliefs, approaches, and practices employed in the centre/school. Such information sharing enriches parents' understanding about school transition which may in turn positively influence parent-child interactions and relationships.

Unlike Li's and Feng's children who expected to meet new friends in primary schools. Zheng and Wu expressed that their children were excited about starting primary school because they had friends that had started school before them and they looked forward to meeting their old friends in the new learning environment.

到目前为止，他是没有过担心和焦虑的，他就是想去。可能是因为小学里面有他的好朋友。（郑）

So far, he does not have any concerns and anxiety. He just wants to go. Probably because his friends are in the primary school. (Zheng)

Zheng's son knew that he would go to school ever since he turned four when his friends were leaving the centre and starting school. The boy structured his ideas and expectations and created narratives about meeting his old friends and exploring the new environment of the primary school with them. Similar expectations were held by other children in this study, and their parents reinforced the narratives by confirming that they would have opportunities to interact with old friends after starting primary schools.

*他很兴奋，还是蛮期待的，因为学校有一些他的哥哥姐姐们
(吴)*

He is excited about starting primary school. This is because some of his brothers and sisters (Wu's friends' children) are studying in that primary school. (Wu)

Here, parents' social networks could impact on children's attitude about school transition. In Wu's story, the child has developed a positive attitude towards school transitions because he looked forward to interacting with peers with whom he had already developed relationships before entering primary school. Children's expectation of meeting peers and exploring new environment in primary school reflects the key concepts being promoted in ECE in New Zealand, such as Ngā hononga (Relationships), Mana reo (Communication), and Mana aotūroa (Exploration) (Ministry of Education, 2017a). The child's excitement about school transition seemed low in value for Wu, as she expressed that 'I am pretty nervous because I heard that some children cannot keep up with others in school.' For Wu, the child being competitive with peers appears to be more important than building relationships. Such a view aligns with the competitive nature of the assessment model adopted by historical (keju) and/or contemporary (gaokao) China, which rewards students who perform well in examinations (either keju or gaokao) with high-powered positions or opportunities to attend better higher education institutions (see 3.4).

Zhou's son realised that he would start primary school soon because he saw his friend leaving the ECE centre and starting primary school. The child talked to Zhou about the graduation ceremony organised by the ECE centre, and he was excited about his own forthcoming school transition. The school transition rituals contributed to the boy's sense of excitement. Ackesjö (2013) suggested that rituals are significant

elements in school transition as they contributed to children's identity construction. The graduation ceremony delivered by the centre enabled Zhou's son to understand what happens after they finish ECE and offered him a sense of growing up which was valued by the children of some of the participants in this study.

他是很期待的。他就自己跟我说，等他过五岁生日的时候，他就可以背着大的书包还有午餐盒去读小学了。（周）

He looks forward to going to primary school. He told me that he will have a big school bag and bring his own lunch box to school after his fifth birthday. (Zhou)

Zhou's son looked forward to his school transition, welcoming the sense of growing up along with the significance of being a primary school student. For example, being a primary school student meant that children could carry big schoolbags and bring lunchboxes. Children's understanding of growing up seems to be different from that of parents. The way Zhou's son understands starting primary school demonstrates that he views being autonomous and independent to mean growing up. Most parents in this study, on the other hand, believed starting school meant children needed to put more effort into learning academics.

The distinct ways in which parents and children constructed the notion of growing up reflects the different educational beliefs that prevail in China and New Zealand. Parents' views were more in line with Chinese beliefs while children's perspectives were consistent with New Zealand's education philosophy, which shows how people's experiences might shape their perspectives. Children's experiences in ECE centres in New Zealand, their interactions with peers and teachers, and their exploration of the environment surround them may have contributed to their understanding of growing up (Ministry of Education, 2017a). For parents, their past learning experiences in China, where primary school signified the start of formal learning and children's learning starts to be assessed by examinations, may have contributed to the belief that children need to study hard to achieve academic excellence after starting school (Chan, 2014; Zhang, 2012).

The excerpts above emphasise two factors that contribute to a child's excitement, meeting friends (old and new) and becoming *big kids*. Meeting friends

mean that children believe friendships are crucial for their school transitions, which is congruent with existing literature (see for instance, Danby et al., 2012; Ebbeck et al., 2013; Peters, 2000). In times of school transition, having friends and making new friends contribute to children's school liking, sense of belonging, and engagement in learning (Peters, 2010). *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017a) underscores the significance of children's relationships with people, including their peers, for their learning. The notions of 'significant others', 'scaffolding', and 'changing participation' in sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978) also foreground that children's relationships with peers, friends, and siblings play a crucial role in their learning and school transitions. Relationships are found to be important resources that provide children with both social and emotional support (Danby et al., 2012). New entrant children re-negotiate and re-construct their identity and participation in the primary school learning environment while interacting with their peers and friends. In times of school transition, group rejection and failure to build friendships may negatively impact on children's attitude towards schools and impede their engagement in learning (Denham, 2006; Ladd et al., 2006; Peters, 2010). Teachers can support children's relationships building by designing activities that encourage peer communication and interactions.

Children's expectation of interacting with old friends in the new learning environment in primary school may not always be achieved because teaching practices are delivered differently in school and ECE (Einarsdóttir, 2007a). Once children are in primary schools, they may find that they are not in the same class or interest group with their friends who started school before them, and there may be limited opportunities for them to interact with those old friends. In ECE in New Zealand, children are empowered to navigate their own learning experiences and they have the autonomy to choose who, what, and when they want to communicate, interact, and build relationships with (Ministry of Education, 2017a). In primary schools, learning activities tend to be prescribed by teachers and children have less choices in school than ECE (Ackesjö, 2013).

Einarsdóttir (2007a) found that children may become negative about school if the actual experiences are not something they expected. Thus, it is crucial that teachers and parents help children to develop a clear understanding about the

changes in teaching approaches and relationships involved in school transition. For example, there will be more teacher-led learning activities and less free play time. Moreover, they will be able to meet their old friends, but they may not have much time to play together. Such an understanding enables children to be ready to cope with these changes, and not to be overwhelmed when they find the actual experiences in school are not the same as what they envisaged.

Based on their communication with their parents and their own observation of children who started school before them, children of parents who participated in this study realised that starting school means becoming more independent and taking control over their lives. Children knew that being primary school students are different from being ECE kids. For example, children of participants in this study knew that they would be able to bring their own lunchboxes and carry bigger school bags after starting primary schools. These changes contributed to children's excitement about school transition. The ECE in New Zealand aims to empower children to direct their own lives (Ministry of Education, 2017a). In primary school, however, there are more rules and management of the environment which lead to children's less control over their lives. This creates a tension between the educational philosophy being promoted and the actual educational practices. Children's increased control over their lives may not be achieved at home either. Most participants in this study directly expressed that school transition leads to greater parental control over children's learning, for instance, by forcing children to study academics at home or sending children to after school classes.

Zhao's daughter was the only child in this study who did not want to go to primary school.

她可能是看到哥哥现在读小学的经历，家长和学校对孩子的要求都会有很大变化。她会看到哥哥每天都要做 reading，然后家长要陪着，纠正他的读音，写字的方法之类的。她可能不想要这方面的压力，她觉得我在幼儿园玩的很开心，有很多玩具，很多朋友，她不想去一个新的环境。要有这么多学习压力的地方。她会讲我的 kindy 有很多玩具，哥哥的学校都没有这些，我不喜欢。
(赵)

She may have seen her brother's current experience in primary school. The expectation that parents and school have towards child change a lot after starting school. She saw her brother doing reading every day, and we might correct his pronunciation. I think she does not want this

pressure; she feels very happy to play in the kindergarten, there are many toys, many friends, she does not want to go to a new environment. She would say that my kindy has a lot of toys, and my brother's school doesn't have these, I don't like it. (Zhao)

The excerpt above reveals that Zhao's daughter was confident and competent to express her desires to play and to explore in the playful ECE environment rather than going to primary school. The girl's view on school transition might have been influenced by the parenting practices that Zhao carried out with her son who started primary school earlier. The daughter noticed that the nature of parent-child interactions became more parent-directed and academic-focused after her older brother started primary school. Zhao's interactions with her son, although did not directly involve her daughter, might have negatively influenced the daughter's understanding about school transition. The girl's unwillingness of going to primary school is an example of how children can develop understanding of the world by observing the ways in which others are functioning (Rogoff, 2003; Wilder & Lillvist, 2018).

Another factor that may have contributed to Zhao's daughter's perspective about school transition might be the perceived change of physical and social environments involved in school transition. Her communication with her parents and older brother enabled her to understand that entering primary school meant fewer opportunities to play with toys, as well as meeting people that she did not know. Unlike those children who showed eagerness of meeting new people in the new setting, Zhao's daughter did not want to enter an unfamiliar environment. A similar finding was reported in Einarsdóttir (2007b) which found that some children were worried about school transition because they were reluctant to enter an unfamiliar environment. Zhao's daughter valued her relationships with her peers, the centre's environment, and toys in the centre, and was concerned that she would lose these relationships with these people, places, and things after starting primary school. The aspiration of maintaining these relationships may have influenced her unwillingness to make the school transition.

The girl's communication with her mother expressed her desire to explore and interact with the environment in ECE. She was interested in maintaining her

relationships with peers. Her desire and interest are consistent with the ECE philosophy adopted in New Zealand where communication, exploration and relationships are valued (Ministry of Education, 2017a). In this sense, the girl can be seen as a successful ECE child in New Zealand. The question raised here is why such a confident and competent child did not want to go to school? One possible reason might be the parenting practices that Zhao engaged in to support her daughter's school transition.

Zhao did not attempt to solve her daughter's concern regarding school transition. Instead, she tried to help her daughter with academic learning and she became more confident about her daughter's school transition when she saw that the child's academic ability had been improved. Zhao understood what her daughter was concerned about in regard to starting school, however, Zhou did not appear to act on this concern. The parenting practices carried out by Zhao illustrated that she was heavily influenced by the Chinese educational belief which stressed children's academic excellence (Chan, 2014; Zhang, 2012). ECE in New Zealand aims to promote children's holistic development which includes the cognitive dimension as well as the emotional dimension (Ministry of Education, 2017a). The girl may experience difficulties in the process of school transition if her emotional wellbeing is not catered for. Peters (2010) suggested that "almost any child is at risk of making a poor or less successful transition if their individual characteristics are incompatible with features of the environment they encounter" (p. 38). I would add that children are likely to experience less successful school transitions if the transition practices (both parental and institutional) do not cater for their individual needs.

This study found that most Chinese migrant children felt excited about starting primary school. Children looked forward to school transitions because they would meet and play with more peers in primary school and because of the sense of growing up that being primary children provides. This finding is consistent with previous research investigating children's perspectives on school transitions (Eskelä-Haapanen et al., 2017; Peters, 2000). There was one child did not want to go to primary school because she was concerned about the academic pressure that teachers and parents give to children and losing her existing relationships with people, places, and things in the ECE centre after starting primary school. This finding means that children may have

different perspectives on school transition and cautions adults to listen to children's voices when supporting school transitions (Ackesjö, 2013; Einarsdóttir, 2007a; OECD, 2017; Peters, 2010). Especially children who are reluctant to make the transition from ECE to school, teachers and parents need to find out about their concerns and offer individualised support.

7.7 Summary

The perspectives of Chinese migrant participants on children's transition from ECE to primary school are individualised. Some parents hold on to traditional Chinese cultural beliefs and consider children's academic learning is crucial (Chen & Uttal, 1988; Guo, 2012; Li, 2001; Li, 2004) while others exhibit westernised educational beliefs emphasising children's other dimensions of development, such as social, emotional, and cultural aspects (Ministry of Education, 2007, 2017a; Wu, 2009).

The results of this research build on previous research on Chinese migrant families' educational beliefs. Previous research (Guo, 2013; Guo, 2010; Huang, 2013; Li, 2001; Li, 2004; Zhang, 2012) investigating Chinese migrants' educational beliefs in western countries suggested that Chinese migrants typically emphasise children's academic learning. This study finds that although Chinese migrants highly value children's academic development, they do not overlook other aspects of child development. For example, participants in this study clearly expressed that they think children's emotional wellbeing and social development are significant. Moreover, this study provides empirical evidence that Chinese migrants is not a homogeneous group of people. The participants' concerns and expectations in this study are different. The concerns and expectations held by participants are influenced by the complex ecological systems surround them, such as their understanding about the child, their own research about education and transition, their social networks, family environment, and past learning experiences. To better support Chinese migrant families' school transition, an individualised approach is appropriate as it enables teachers to understand the distinct concerns and expectations that might be held by each family. Such an understanding allows teachers to design and deliver culturally responsive transition practices to support Chinese migrant children and families.

This chapter has reported and analysed the participants' perspectives about education and school transition. The aim of this research is to investigate both the perspectives and the experiences of Chinese migrant families regarding children's transition from ECE to primary school in New Zealand. The next chapter reports and analyses the participants' experiences regarding school transition.

Chapter 8 Chinese Families' Experiences of Transitions

8.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses participants' experiences of their children's school transition. First, it examines the parenting practices that participants engaged in during their children's school transition. This study found that children's school transition leads to participants' academic-focused parenting practices. This chapter then analyses the families' experience of transition practices that ECE and schools delivered to support school transition. This is followed by discussions on school/centre-family communication and exploration of participants' experiences and feelings about the different types of institution-family communications used during transition. Challenges that participants encountered in their children's school transition will then be discussed and analysed. This last section includes discussion of the impacts that the Covid pandemic had on participating families' school transition experiences.

8.2 Chinese Migrant Families' Parenting Practices

Family is one of the systems that influences school transition, through for example, parents' interactions with children. All participants but one carried out parenting practices to support their children's school transitions. The types of parenting practices that Chinese migrant parents engaged in include different types of interactions with children and choice of schools. This section details and analyses the parenting practices that the participants engaged in to support their children's school transitions, exploring the contextual elements that may have influenced the way in which they interact with children in times of school transition.

Interactions with Children

In China, grandparents normally take care of children when young parents are working, and this is reflective of a collectivist ethos which places the responsibility of raising children on the entire family (Phuong-Mai et al., 2005; Winfield et al., 2000). For some Chinese migrant families in New Zealand, the child's grandparents would come to the host country to help raise the child (Wu, 2009). However, for most participants in this study this is not the case and they have been raising the child by

themselves. For some families, the border closure of New Zealand due to the Covid-19 may have impacted on their access to family networks.

In times of school transition, participants engaged in a variety of activities to support children.

我会做一些小游戏和他一起玩。但是目的是要锻炼他的记忆力算数能力专注力这些东西。因为我是读心理学的，就知道一些这个东西。（冯）

I would play some games with him to improve his memory, concentration, and numeracy. I knew some of these games because I studied psychology. (Feng)

The educational background of Feng influenced the ways in which he interacted with his child when supporting school transition. Rather than directly help (e.g., parent-led teaching) his child with learning academic knowledge, Feng used his own psychological knowledge to improve his child's abilities (e.g., concentration) that he believed significant for children's learning of academics in primary school. The utilisation of games is, to a certain extent, consistent with children's experiences in ECE where children learn through play. While Feng's utilisation of result-oriented games does not align with the idea of children learn through free play in *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017a), such parenting practices can offer children a certain degree of continuity of learning between ECE and family. This is identified as important for children's school transition (Arnold et al., 2007; Babić, 2017; Boyle et al., 2018; Dockett et al., 2017b; Karlsdóttir & Perry, 2017). The playfulness of such parenting practices can attract the child's interests and foster contribution which is valued in ECE in New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 2017a).

Wang's parenting practices involved both direct teaching and playful interactions. Before her son started school, Wang intentionally helped him with learning academic knowledge at home. She interacted with him to improve his literacy and numeracy, and helped him to form a habit of learning which she believed was important for her child's transition to school.

他三岁半就开始，在他有能力做题的时候，我已经找到了适合他的资料，然后让他慢慢去适应一下。（王）

Since my son was three and a half years old, I thought he was ready to do exercises and I had already found and bought learning materials that suited him. I asked him to do some exercises since then. (Wang)

The excerpt above reveals the high value that Wang placed on academic learning for children's school transition. She had prepared learning materials for the child since he was three and a half years old. Moreover, her own research about the learning materials indicated that Wang was highly involved in supporting her child's school transition. Wang's parenting practices demonstrate that her experience is influenced by the interactions among microsystem (direct interaction with the child), exosystem (her own research about learning material for the child), macrosystem (the high value placed on academic learning), and chronosystem (regular parenting practices since the child was three and a half) (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

我就会给一些 worksheet 给她做，练一下写数字啊、写字母啊，还有练习一下她自己的名字，尝试让她做一些加减法，5 以内的。（赵）

I would give some worksheet to her. For example, asking her to write numbers, letters, and her own name, and trying to teach her to do some addition and subtraction. (Zhao)

Unlike Feng and Wang, the way in which Zhao supported her child's school transition was more traditional. Huang (2013) found that the most common parenting practice Chinese migrant parents conduct is helping their children with literacy and numeracy, and this is evident in the transition related parenting practices of most participants in this study. This finding is consistent with Wu (2009) who found that Chinese migrant parents believe that children's learning is limited in the ECE centres in New Zealand, and they would help children with learning of knowledge, such as literacy and numeracy, at home.

Helping children with their academic learning gave Zhao confidence about both her children's school transitions. Zhao has two children, one was eight years old, the other was four and a half years old. When asked to compare her feelings about the two children's school transition, she said she was more concerned about the second child's school transition. She was not concerned for the first child because she had

taught the child quite a lot about reading and numeracy. For the second child, Zhao was worried about her future school life because the child was not patient and did not like to sit down and read. Zhao's perception of her second child's academic preparedness and unwillingness to go to primary school (as discussed in 7.6) influenced Zhao's confidence regarding school transition. Parents' confidence regarding their children's school transition seems to be missing in the existing literature on transition. In New Zealand, although parents' cultural beliefs and traditions are valued as evident in the family and community principle of *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017a), no specific consideration is given to their emotional wellbeing, such as confidence. Parents' confidence can be an important factor to consider as it directly influences their interactions with children and teachers.

做了很多啊，比如说现在因为疫情，新西兰封城嘛，没有办法去幼儿园，在家里会辅导他功课，就买了一些英语、数学、逻辑思维方面的课，每天让他去做。再一个就是日常会教他一些东西，比如说上了小学之后有一些规矩要做好。（吴）

I have done many things. Recently, he cannot go to the ECE centre because of the pandemic and the lockdown in Auckland. I would tutor his study. I bought some English, mathematic, and logical thinking online classes and asked him to study every day. Additionally, I taught him...for example, some rules that he will need to follow after starting primary school. (Wu)

This excerpt shows that the child's substituted ECE (the learning he was asked to engage in at home during lockdown) looks nothing like the ECE he would have had in the centre where free play and exploration are promoted. At home, the learning activities that the child was asked to engage in had a strong focus on academic learning, as prescribed by Wu. Wu's interactions with her son, in terms of helping the boy to learn the rules in primary school, reveal her cultural understanding that teachers are authorities that should be respected and followed by children (Chan, 2011; Guo & Dalli, 2012; Sy, 2006).

The excerpts above reveal that these participants were involved in either direct or indirect interactions with their children to support their children's academic learning. This type of parenting practice may mean that the participants' educational beliefs are influenced by their cultural origin that emphasises children's academic

performance (Huang, 2013; Zhang, 2012). There were a variety of ways in which academic learning was supported by the participants. This demonstrates that culture is not the only factor that influences transition and parenting practices, and reminds researchers and educators not to assume a common parental view on transition based on a family's cultural origin.

Not all participants' parenting practices focused on children's academic preparation because their beliefs and family situations/structures are different.

我们没有刻意准备，可能和我的家庭情况有关系，因为我们三个孩子嘛，还有一个小的，我老大四岁的时候，老三刚出生，就是没有办法给他太多关注。（周）

We did not intentionally prepare him for primary school. It is probably because of our family structure; we had three children. There is a little baby. I just gave birth to the third child when the oldest turned four. So, we could not pay much attention to him. (Zhou)

For some families, the emphasis on school success seems to be less important as the family size expands. For example, Zhou's experiences regarding her child's transition to school was influenced by the specific situation of the family. Due to the specific event of the third child's birth, Zhou was not able to offer much support for her first child's school transition. The narrative provided by Zhou indicates how the priorities of the family are altered. Zhou's experience provides empirical evidence to support the critique that Dockett et al. (2014) made in regard to ecological systems theory which positions the child at the centre. As they argued that child might not be always prioritised in the microsystem. In Zhou's story, the parents balanced a lot of pressure and had to decide what to prioritise. This experience is not uncommon in Chinese society where parents may have other priorities, for example, looking after grandparents, and thus unable to pay attention to children's learning. The implication for institutions is that understanding family specifics can contribute to the responsiveness of their practices. Moreover, when working with families that come from non-dominant cultural backgrounds, institutions can assist them to get access to the public services/information that are available but may not be known by these families.

Participants would tell their children about school and show them the physical environment of the school before they made the transition to that school. Qian believed that children knowing the school they are going to is important. Children's school transitions are likely to be easier if they are familiar with the primary school before they start (Ahtola et al., 2011). Knowing the physical environment of the school might help children to develop an expectation to explore in the new environment. After starting school, the familiarity children have about the school can be a resource for them to communicate and socialise with peers which facilitates relationship building.

他有个哥哥，会让他跟着哥哥经常去小学里转一转。还有一个就是让他跟同学之间，尤其是洋人孩子一起玩。我现在给他转到公立幼儿园就是因为公立幼儿园洋人孩子比较多。让他提早认识小学里的同学。还有26个字母和一些数字。现在也养成了一个习惯，每天他就写一写。（陈）

He has a big brother who is in primary school now. I sometimes tell him to go with his brother to go to the school to walk around. Additionally, I tell him to play with his peers, especially the local kids. The reason for transferring him to the public kindergarten is that there are more local children in public kindergarten. He will know more local peers who will attend the same primary school as him. And some basic literacy and numeracy, like letters and numbers. It is becoming a daily practice now. (Chen)

Chen carried out a variety of parenting practices to support her child's school transition. These practices included helping her child become familiar with the primary school environment, encouraging her child to establish relationships with peers, and helping her child to form a habit of learning literacy and numeracy. Transferring her son from a private centre to a public kindergarten so that he could get to know more local children clearly demonstrates that Chen values her child's relationships with peers. Chen also reveals that both the child's academic learning and social development are believed as significant for school transition. Her parenting practices reflect New Zealand's education ideas which promote children's holistic development and emphasise the importance of relationships (Ministry of Education, 2017a). Building peer relationships prior to the entrance of primary school will contribute to children's sense of belonging, school liking, and engagement in learning after they start school (Ackesjö, 2013; Peters, 2010).

The discussions in this section revealed each of the participants had different parenting practices. Some directly taught children academic knowledge. Some fostered children's learning utilising a more playful approach. The different practices reflect different beliefs about school transition which are influenced by the participants complex ecological systems, such as their family structures, educational and professional backgrounds, and the wider cultural educational beliefs of both China and New Zealand (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Telling children about school and showing children the school were common practices carried out by the participants. Such practices enable children to know what they will experience after they start school and help children to become familiar with the physical environment in the school. These practices may contribute to children's school transition experiences as "a foundation of remembered and anticipated people, places, things and experiences will give them the confidence to engage successfully in new settings" (Ministry of Education, 2017a, p. 26). Given the emphasis that most Chinese migrant parents place on children's academic performance in education and school transition, one possible explanation of their parenting practice of helping children to get familiar with school is that they expect their children to adopt to the new environment quickly so that children can engage in the learning of subject knowledge.

Choosing Schools

All the participants in this study expressed that they carefully selected primary schools within the school zone for their children. The factors that influenced their choices of schools including the families' financial situations, the types of schools (private or public), the textbooks used in the schools, friends' recommendations, the physical and cultural environments of the school, and the schools' reports published by the Ministry of Education.

Discussions in chapter seven illustrate that many participants believe that private schools are more desirable compared with public schools in New Zealand because of the emphasis that private schools place on children academic learning.

我认为在新西兰的话，私立和公立的小学还是有一些差别的。私立小学教的内容会多一点。然后第二点就是，它的教材是剑桥的

教材，这个教材我是蛮喜欢的。第三点就是我这边有很多的朋友家的小孩都在这个学校，都和我说这个学校非常好。（吴）

I think private schools and public schools are quite different in New Zealand. Private schools teach more academic knowledge. Secondly, the textbook that this school uses is from Cambridge and I like the textbook a lot. Thirdly, many of my friends' children are studying in this school and they all told me that this school is good. (Wu)

Wu's choice of primary school was influenced by multiple factors. For example, she would not be able to send her child to a private primary school if the financial situation of the family did not allow it because the fee for private schools is much higher than public schools. Another element that contributed to her choice was her own research about the textbooks used in the school. Although her child was not directly involved in her research, the research has impacted on her child's school transition because Wu's preference towards the textbook being used in the school contributed to her decision of sending her son to that primary school. Lastly, Wu's relationships and communication with her friends enabled her to understand more about the educational practices being carried out in the chosen school and helped her to make the final decision of sending her child to this private school.

Feng would have sent his child to a private school too if money was not an issue, because he believed that private schools do better in terms of helping children with academic learning which he believed is important.

第一个，我会看我们的经济情况，这个是很现实的情况，如果我经济允许的话我可能会选择私立学校。第二个呢，我会考虑老师怎样，然后会看教育部网站上的报告、教育部对学校的评价。（冯）

Firstly, I need to think about my financial condition, this is a realistic problem. I would have sent my child to a private school if financial conditions allowed. Secondly, I will think about the teachers, and read the report about the school from the Ministry of Education. (Feng)

Apart from the financial issue, Feng's choice of school for his child was also influenced by his access to information. Feng was the only participant who read the school's report published by the Ministry of Education. He stated that most Chinese parents did not know there are such reports available online. Given the high value that

Chinese migrant parents place on children's school transition (as discussed in the previous chapter), it is reasonable to infer that they would be keen to read these school reports as they contain official information about the schools. ECE services and schools could inform parents how to go about accessing these reports. This would enrich parents' understanding about potential primary schools for their children.

Feng initially wanted to send his son to a Montessori school because the child attended a Montessori ECE centre, and the teachers suggested that he enrol his child in a Montessori school. This choice may allow for learning continuity as centre and school adopt the same educational philosophy (Dockett & Einarsdóttir, 2017; OECD, 2017). However, Feng finally sent his child to another school because he found that the environment in the Montessori school that he visited was not desirable.

那个学校的孩子都是家庭收入水平和文化水平比较低的，那些孩子可能也不太会去努力学习。物理环境也比较差，垃圾到处乱扔。（冯）

Most of the children in that school come from low income and poor educated families. I guess these children probably would not study hard. The physical environment is not good too, they throw rubbish everywhere. (Feng)

Feng carefully observed the environment in the Montessori school during a school visit. He was dissatisfied with both the physical and cultural environment, and this impacted on his willingness to send his son to this school. He guessed that many children in that school are from families with low income and education level. Feng developed assumptions about children from these families based on stereotypes. These assumptions demonstrate that Feng believed children's family backgrounds influence their behaviours, learning, and school transition, and imply that Feng expects his son to build relationships with peers who study hard. For institutions, helping parents to become familiar with diverse communities can enrich parents' knowledge of different cultural groups living in the multicultural society of New Zealand, and also assist parents to understand the benefits of studying in an environment where children from diverse backgrounds interact with each other.

This section has discussed the factors that influenced the participants' choices of primary school for children. Children's voices seemed to be missing in the choice of

schools. All the participants decided which schools their children would go to without consulting with their children. Such practices clearly contradict the New Zealand educational belief that children are “competent and confident learners and communicators” (Ministry of Education, 2017a, p. 2). Existing research suggested that children’s voices should be accounted for when designing and implementing transition practices (Margetts, 2008; Peters, 2010). Allowing children to have their voices heard empowers them to exercise their autonomy and feel a sense of responsibility for their own learning and school transition (Ministry of Education, 2017a).

8.3 Parents’ Roles in School Transition

Parents’ roles change in the process of school transition as children’s identities shift from ECE children to primary school pupils (Griebel & Niesel, 2009). Some participants in this study recognised that they would play a different role after their child started school. There were also participants who believed that their role would not change as their child transitioned to school. This section details and analyses the role changes involved in school transition experienced by the participants, it explores how school transition influenced the nature of parent-child interactions and relationships with regard to supporting children’s learning.

我就是准备好了以后盯着他写作业。我肯定要给他报一些课外班。（孙）

I am prepared to supervise him to finish his homework (after he starts primary school). And I will certainly send him to some after school classes. (Sun)

According to Sun, becoming a mother of a school child means she will have to supervise her son to finish homework, and involve the child in more academic learning activities, such as sending the child to after school classes. During the interview, Sun referred a number of times to after school classes as she believed that children’s learning in school is not enough, and she needed to help her child to learn more. Sun’s plan for her son implies that starting school may lead to her child having less control over his life as the parents is determining when, where, and how the child is to learn.

Some parents experienced their role changing in the nature and volume of communication, and the tasks coming from the school. Zheng explained that there was

more for her to do to support her son when he started school. Firstly, especially in the first weeks after he started school, the school delivered a lot of written information to parents in order to enrich their understanding about the school. Secondly, according to Zheng, parents of school children need to supervise children's learning, for example, help them to finish homework. During the interviews, the participants expressed a cultural view on learning which emphasised children's mastery of literacy and numeracy (Guo, 2006; Huang, 2013). Thirdly, Zheng expressed that, like children, parents meet new teachers and parents of other children in the process of school transition. Thus, they are expected to communicate and establish relationships with these new people. Transitioning from ECE to school means children and families enter a new learning and social environment (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; OECD, 2017; Peters, 2010) and both children and parents need to build new relationships with new people. The nature of parent-child relationship changes too, from one focusing on caring to one prioritising children's learning (Dockett et al., 2011).

Many participants in this study perceived a distinction between the role of parent as carer and the role of parent as teacher/supervisor. This raises the questions: why are caring and learning seen as different priorities? Why are caring and learning not seen as interdependent? Culture might have played a role in shaping the ways in which these parents differentiate caring and learning. In China, as noted in section 7.4, children's learning starts to be evaluated using examinations from primary school and this may contribute to parents' role construction as teachers/learning supervisors at home. In ECE, on the other hand, because learning is not quantitatively assessed and because children are seen as dependent, parents may emphasis their roles as carers. In New Zealand, caring and learning are interdependent, and integrated in the ECE curriculum, as evident in the principle of holistic development and the strands of wellbeing and belonging (Ministry of Education, 2017a).

幼儿园时候就是 look after，我会问他你今天玩的开心吗？那开心就好了。上小学之后，就会问他在学校学了什么？（赵）

When he was in kindergarten, I would ask him if he was happy today. After starting primary school, I would ask him what he learned at school. (Zhao)

According to Zhao, the focus of her parenting practices changed in school transition. Her role changed from a caregiver to a learning supervisor or tutor. This change of role of Zhao reflects most of the participants' different expectations towards ECE and primary school. She showed a high expectation towards school in terms of helping children to learn academics which is evident in Chinese tradition (Chan, 2014; Zhang, 2012). As the excerpt above demonstrates, after the child started primary school, the focus of parent-child communication shifted focus from the child's wellbeing to the content of learning in school.

When asked about the changing roles of parents involved in children's school transition, Wu and Wang believed that their roles would not change after their children start school.

我觉得我应该是不太需要适应。因为他现在我基本上就是以一个小学生家长在教小孩子，在教育他。包括做功课啊。（吴）

I think I don't really need to adapt to the role of a primary school kid's parent. I am now teaching him as a mother of a school kid, including asking him to study academic knowledge. (Wu)

(对于家长的角色变化)我觉得还好，对于我来讲其实区别不太大。（王）

Regarding the change of parents' roles involved in school transition, there was not much difference for me. (Wang)

Wu and Wang both explained that their roles did not change because their focus on children's academic study did not change in the process of school transition. When talking about their roles, many participants in this study tended to focus on helping their child to study, and not on, for example, connecting with the school and/or helping their children to socialise. The roles of co-educators and partners with teachers are not recognised by most participants in this study. This is consistent with the Chinese traditional educational belief that positions teachers as educational authority figures that should not be questioned or intervened (Chan, 2011; Guo & Dall'i, 2012; Sy, 2006) (as noted in section 3.3). Parent-teacher collaboration is significant for children's school transition as it helps to develop shared understanding and expectation that contribute to children's continuous learning between home and

institution (OECD, 2017; Peters, 2010). Especially for cultural minority families, such collaboration enriches parents' knowledge about mainstream educational ideas, in New Zealand, for example, the ideas of children learn through play, and parents and teachers work in partnerships to collaboratively support children's learning. When communicating with cultural minority families, teachers also develop an understanding of the unique cultural values that these families and children bring to transition which is crucial for designing culturally responsive practices that foster children's sense of belonging and their development of cultural identity (Peters, 2010; White., 2021).

Most participants in this study believed that the nature of parenting practices would become more academic-oriented after children start primary school. Such a belief contradicts the cultural belief about teachers being experts. The reasons might be that these parents believed that children's learning in New Zealand schools was limited, and their high expectations towards children's academic excellence made them feel the need to take on the role as teachers to compensate for the perceived limited learning (as noted in sections 7.2 and 7.3). The parenting practices that the participants engaged in provide evidence that children's lives may become more controlled by parents as the child transitions to school. This finding contradicts Griebel and Niesel (2009) who argued that school transition may lead to parents' lower supervisory control over children because teachers are taking over this role.

Zheng expressed that she would need to establish relationships with new teachers and parents. Zheng's recognition of the need for her to build new relationships was influenced by the school teachers who communicated with her about this. Most participants' understanding about school transition still focused on children themselves. As noted in section 3.2 school transition is a process experienced by not only the children, but also the parents (Dockett et al., 2017a). It involves children and families moving from one microsystem to another. The strong focus participants placed on their children's academic learning when supporting transition means that their understanding of school transition was largely concerned with children's readiness, especially their academic readiness. With this understanding of transition, the responsibility of helping children with academic learning placed on families and institutions, however the impact that interactions and relationships between family and institution might have on children's school transition are

unrecognised. Moreover, solely focusing on children's academic learning may lead to insufficient consideration of other aspects of children's lives that are important for school transition, for instance, the social, emotional, and cultural dimensions. The practical implication for institutions is that they can communicate with Chinese migrant families regarding school transition in terms of the contextual, collective, and holistic nature of transition. Such communication helps Chinese parents to develop a broader understanding of school transition, and to understand the benefits of family-institution collaboration for their children's school transition. This understanding may contribute to Chinese migrant parents' increased willingness of building partnerships with teachers.

8.4 Transition Practices Delivered by Institutions

Existing research suggested that institutional transition practices and collaboration among transition partners (e.g., children, parents, educators, and other professionals whenever possible) contribute to children's and families' positive school transition experiences (see for instance, Ahtola et al., 2016; LoCasale-Crouch et al., 2008). This section details and discusses the institutional transition practices experienced by the participants. According to the participants, the types of transition practices delivered by the ECE centres and primary schools include pre-entry school visits, information sharing, helping children with academic study, familiarising children with things that would happen in primary schools, and having older children helping new entrants. There were also participants who expressed that they did not know what transition activities that the ECE centres/schools had. In terms of the collaboration among transition partners, the participants commented on each institutions' active communication with parents but perceived that there was little connection between ECE and school.

School visits were common transition practices organised by the ECE centres. All participants visited the primary schools prior to their child's school entry. Most of the participants attended school visits organised by the ECE centres. Two participants expressed that the centre did not have a school visit arrangement and they took the child to visit primary schools by themselves.

School visit 时候，他们给家长介绍学校，老师，还有校园环境。然后校长告诉我们家长也要 ready。没有什么压力，挺好的。
(李)

During school visit, the staff introduced the school, teachers, and the physical environment. The principal told us that parents need to be ready too. It was stress free; it was quite good. (Li)

Children and parents become familiar with the primary school, the teachers, and the environment during school visits. This familiarity can make children's school transition easier as it reduces children's nervousness of entering a new environment (Peters, 2010). For parents, school visits give them the opportunity to communicate with teachers which may allow them to better understand the expectation that primary schools have towards them and their children and may enable them to carry out responsive practices at home to support children and become prepared to deal with the changes involved in school transition.

Apart from school visits, the participants noticed that some ECE centres have a class specifically designed for children aged over four to help them prepare for school transitions.

他这个幼儿园是在他四岁的时候转换了一个班级，就是到了 preschool 这个班级。这个班级就是为了幼小衔接去做准备的。
(吴)

My son was transferred to the preschool class when he turned four. This class is designed to support children's transition from ECE to primary school. (Wu)

他们（幼儿园）是四岁以后慢慢引导孩子学习字母写自己的名字，包括用笔。然后他们每个星期抽两天，让家长给孩子做好午餐的饭盒带去幼儿园让孩子知道以后去小学大概的这个流程。
(周)

The ECE centre started to teach children letters, write their names, and using pens. The teachers would ask parents to prepare lunchbox for children to bring to the centre twice each week. These enables children to know things that will happen after they start primary school. (Zhou)

The ECE centres that Wu's and Zhou's children attended had transition programmes to support children's transition to school. These transition practices not

only assisted children with their academic development, but also helped them to become familiar with things that children will experience in school. For example, the centre asked children to bring their own lunch boxes to help children to get familiar with school lunch routines. These practices are intended to foster children's independence, confidence, and responsibility. Children's independence is emphasised in the strand of wellbeing of *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017a). Independence and responsibility are the key learning dispositions that are valued in the New Zealand context (Carr, 2006; Ministry of Education, 2017a). These transition practices described above empower children to care for and take responsibility of their own wellbeing.

Wu and Zhou had a clear understanding of the transition activities delivered by their ECE centres. There were also participants who did not know what transition activities the centres had.

现在上的是公立幼儿园，原来上的是私立，还是华人的，感觉好沟通，知道他们有。现在公立的，应该有吧，我也不知道。
(陈)

He is going to a public kindergarten now. He used to go to a private centre. The owner was a Chinese, and I felt it was easy to communicate. The one he is attending now is a public one, they probably have some transition activities, I don't know. (Chen)

Chen had been a fulltime mother after she came to New Zealand in 2016. She explained that language barriers prevented her from communicating with teachers, which in turn impacted on her understanding about the transition related activities organised by the kindergarten. This lack of understanding impacts on parental involvement at home as parents cannot intentionally build on what a child has learnt in the ECE centre. After the child starts school, this language barrier may hinder communication between parents and school teachers and could impact parents' understanding about teaching practices and their child's learning. At the same time, this may also impact on the teachers' knowledge about the child's interests and characteristics, and the families' backgrounds. As discussed in section 3.3, teachers' insufficient understanding about children and families may limit their abilities to offer responsive support. Transition practices can accommodate families' diverse linguistic backgrounds by institutions collaborating with local communities and utilise the

language resources that communities may have to facilitate the communication between institutions and language minority families. This collaboration can be supported by the Ministry of Education and/or regional council reach out to local communities to find out the ways in which these communities can and will support institutions to foster school transition.

没有唉，我觉得这个学校（幼儿园没有），但我听说其他学校（幼儿园）好像有。我女儿上的是公立的幼儿园，所以它好像是。。。它不会说有专门的在孩子4到5岁之间让孩子练读写的这些练习。（赵）

Nothing, I think this kindergarten won't do anything. But I heard that other centres seem to have. My daughter is in a public kindergarten, so it seems to be. . . They don't have special exercises for children aged between 4 and 5 to practice reading and writing. (Zhao)

According to Zhao, the kindergarten that her daughter was attending does not have any transition programme. Specifically, she mentioned that the kindergarten does not organise learning activities that promote children's reading and writing which she believed were important for school transition. Such a view reflects Zhao's emphasis on the academic dimension of child development in times of school transition and in her child's education (see section 7.2). This emphasis may narrow Zhao's understanding of the institutional practices that aims to support, for example, children's independence, social skills, and emotional wellbeing (Ministry of Education, 2017a). Zhao's interpretation of her knowledge of institutional transition practices may mean that there is limited communication between kindergarten and family. As noted in sections 4.5 and 4.6, a lack of parent-teacher communication can limit parents' understanding about children's learning experiences in the ECE that they expect to build upon at home. In this sense, children's continuity of learning between ECE service and family may be hindered (OECD, 2017; Peters, 2010).

Transition programmes of ECE contribute to parents' experiences regarding children's school transition (Ahtola et al., 2016; LoCasale-Crouch et al., 2008). Parents may feel more confident about children's school transition when ECE providers offer programmes and activities specifically designed for children's school transition. Zhao compared the ECE centre that her son attended with the kindergarten that her daughter was attending. The ECE centre had transition activities, such as literacy and

numeracy learning, asking children to bring lunch boxes, writing names, and packing their own belongings. Zhao believes that these activities made her son's school transition easier because they helped with the child's academic and social preparedness. The absence of transition activities in the kindergarten that her daughter attended, on the other hand, negatively influenced Zhao's feelings about her daughter's school transition.

幼儿园老师好像都没聊过这些，好像都不是特别重视。他们就是很祝贺的那种，说孩子长大了要去小学了。好像就是教孩子写写名字。（李）

ECE teachers did not talk about children's school transition. I think they don't really take this seriously. They would congratulate as the child is grown up and going to primary school. They just taught children to write their names. (Li)

Li's experiences lead to her perception that teachers do not value children's school transitions. This belief was influenced by a perceived lack of teacher-initiated communication about supporting transition, and teacher-child interactions in times of school transition. Li's understanding of the teachers' views on transition only reflects her point of view based on her experience and observation. The teachers might have been empowering children to: cater for their own wellbeing and the wellbeing of their peers, develop a sense of belonging, participate actively in activities available to them, communicate with teachers and peers, and explore the environment, as guided by *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017a). These practices were possibly not perceived/appreciated by Li because of cultural differences between China and New Zealand (as noted in section 6.3). Li's belief that teachers do not value school transition leads to the consideration of how might school transition be supported differently by transition partners? Parents and teachers may both value school transition, yet they can support transition in different ways, informed by the complex ecological systems. The implication of this difference is that understanding the contextual factors that influence individuals' (children, parents, and teachers) beliefs and behaviours regarding transition is important in order to comprehend the complexity of transition. Moreover, institutions can develop culturally responsive communication methods to work with minority families. For example, when working with Chinese migrant families, teachers' explanation of the learning and development embedded in institutional

practices can help them develop a positive attitude towards teachers and enriched understanding of the education philosophy being promoted in New Zealand.

According to the participants, the transition practices that primary schools delivered include parent-teacher meeting and the utilisation of buddy systems.

我们有一对一的家长会，一个学期有两次。老师会告诉家长，比如说数学可能一般。我觉得还是挺满意的。老师说孩子比较擅长语言。老师也会告诉我们回家之后怎么教孩子。（冯）

We have one-to-one parent-teacher meetings, twice every term. The teachers would tell the parents, for example, the child's mathematics is not that good. I am quite satisfied (with this type of communication). The teachers also told me that the child is good at language. They also suggested ways that we can help children at home. (Feng)

An individualised approach was adopted by the primary school teachers to communicate with Feng. This type and content of parent-teacher meeting was appreciated by Feng who was satisfied with the teachers sharing information about his child's life in the institution, his interests, and his shortcomings. Feng's experience of and feeling about institution-family communication show that some parents may feel that they need something in particular (e.g., what the child was not good at). Institutions can support individualised transition by recognising the implications of their choices for different parents and by balancing parents' feelings with the institutional approaches. Although the communication between Feng and the teacher was appreciated by Feng, it seemed to be a one-way matter, rather than reciprocal. Existing research (Ahtola et al., 2016; Peters, 2010) suggested that supporting transition needs to adopt a reciprocal approach in which parents and teachers can learn from each other to enrich their respective understanding (as noted in section 4.6).

Compared with Feng, Zheng received more support from primary school teachers.

他会给孩子一个 buddy，就是给新来的小孩安排一个好朋友。在前两周我觉得老师是愿意主动的过来和家长聊一下孩子在学校的大概的表现。主要不是学术方面的，比如跟其他小孩相处怎么样啊，所以在这方面我觉得还可以。一开始老师会建议我们要不要

和其他的家长交一下朋友啊，参加他们的聚会啊，这些我觉得还是挺有用的，因为你想让小孩融入其他小孩，你得先和其他家长有一个交流。（郑）

The primary school teachers arranged a buddy who started school earlier for the new coming kid. In the first two weeks, the teacher would initiate communication with parents, and tell them their children's performance in school. The communication was not particularly about children's academic learning, it is about how the child was getting along with other children. I think this is good. The teacher also asked us whether we want to socialise with other parents and join their parties. I think this is useful. If you want your child to get along with other children, you need to firstly communicate with other parents. (Zheng)

The primary school that Zheng's son attended arranged an older child to help her son to adapt to the new environment in the school. This type of practice was used in some other primary schools in New Zealand too, as the Education Review Office (2015) found. The utilisation of a buddy system to help newcomers to adapt to the school learning environment reflects the notion of 'changing participation' in sociocultural theory (Dockett et al., 2014; Lave & Wenger, 1991). This means more experienced others assists new entrants to adapt into a new community. Through the guidance and interactions with the older child, new entrants progressively construct understanding about the school environment and experience an identity shift from a newcomer to an experienced member of the school community.

The teachers also communicated regularly with Zheng about her son's daily life in school and encouraged her to socialise with parents whose children are in the same class as her son. Seeing the parents build relationships with each other may stimulate children to develop friendships with their peers. Especially for Chinese migrant families, their relationships with other parents may not only help them to better understand the education philosophy adopted in New Zealand, but can also be sources of social support. All these practices contribute to Zheng's positive feelings about her son's school transition. The content of communication between the teacher and Zheng was perceived by her as about her child's socialisation rather than academic learning. Such a perception indicates that Zheng perceives academic learning and socialisation as distinct domains, rather than interrelated. This contradicts the New Zealand educational belief which regards children's different aspects of development as

interdependent. Zheng's educational belief reflect the Chinese education tradition (as noted in section 3.4) which prioritises academic learning over other aspects of child development (Chan, 2014; Zhang, 2012).

This study finds that ECE services and schools have different practices to support children and families making school transitions. Based on the participants' interpretation of their experiences, some institutions have a variety of activities specifically designed for school transition while others did not appear to have any transition-related activities. For those institutions that were reported by the participants as delivering no transition-related activities, it seems there is a lack of institution-family communication to explain the benefits of institutional practices for children's learning and school transition. This finding suggests the need for culturally responsive communication between institutions and families to fulfil the unique expectations that might be held by Chinese families, in terms of the content of communication. For example, by talking about the specific learning occurred in the seemingly 'non-academic' learning activities.

For institutions that have activities to support transition, there was no sign that such activities catered specifically to the needs of Chinese migrant group. Transition practices seem to be general and delivered to children and families from all backgrounds. Existing research has indicated that school transition is an individualised process and children and families experience it differently (see section 4.2) (Dockett et al., 2017b; OECD, 2017; Peters, 2010). Thus, transition practices should provide tailored support that takes account of the cultural beliefs and values of the families. The participants in this study perceived transition practices tended to focus on helping children to get ready for school and adjust to the school environment. There was a lack of support for Chinese migrant parents to make their transition. As discussed in section 3.2, parents not only need to support children to make transition, but transition practices should offer responsive support to parents too as well (Dockett et al., 2017a).

To provide tailored support, teacher-parent communication is significant as it helps teachers to understand parents' needs, however, this study found that the communication between these two parties is problematic.

8.5 The Problem of Institution-Family Communication

Bidirectional communication between teachers and parents, which is a key part of the mesosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1994), has been identified as beneficial for children's school transition experiences (Dockett & Perry, 2014; Fabian & Dunlop, 2007; Hellblom-Thibblin & Marwick, 2017). It enriches teachers' understanding about children's past learning experiences and family backgrounds. Parent-teacher communication also enables parents to understand children's learning in institutions which they can build on at home to promote children's learning continuity. This section details and discusses the communication between the participants and teachers in times of school transition, exploring the participants' feelings about and experiences of teacher-parent communication and the elements that influenced the communication between the two parties.

Parent Initiated Communication

Some participants in this study thought that the communication between teachers and parents was problematic. They expected to know about their children's experiences in the ECE centres and schools and initiated conversations with teachers to seek information about their children's learning. However, they felt they did not receive clear information back from their teachers.

*因为作为家长其实我很想知道小孩在幼儿园做了什么，在家里我可不可以做类似的事情来强化这个部分，但是这个是没有的。
(郑)*

As parents, we really want to know what the child does in the centre so that we can do similar things at home to enhance their learning. They do not have this type of communication. (Zheng)

Zheng felt that the communication between teachers and parents needed to be enhanced. Chinese migrant parents expect to know the things that children do in the centre so that they can help children with their learning at home accordingly (Wu, 2009). However, based on Zheng's experiences, teachers were too busy to communicate to parents about children's daily lives in the centre. Teachers may feel that children's portfolios can provide information about children's learning experiences in the centre, however, Chinese migrant parents can find it hard to comprehend the qualitative and narrative information contained in the portfolio since

they are used to the Chinese way which delivers quantifiable evidence (examination scores) to parents. The Chinese migrant parents who participated in Wu's (2009) study suggested that the information in portfolios was either insufficient or irrelevant. Especially during school transition, many parents are concerned, and are willing to help their children to make the transition (as shown in section 7.3). Teacher-parent communication at this time enables information sharing between these two parties and contributes to children's continuous learning (Dockett & Perry, 2008; Dockett & Perry, 2017).

The participants actively communicated to other parents and teachers to seek for advice when facing challenges regarding children's school transition. For example, Zhao was concerned about her daughter's English proficiency and that her daughter would not have the patience to sit and follow teachers' instructions in primary school. Zhao initiated communication with the ECE teachers regarding her concerns. However, the teacher held a different perspective about this issue, telling Zhou that her daughter's English is fine. Zhao was not satisfied with this answer and concluded that teachers in New Zealand always talk about the positive side of children.

他们只会说孩子今天做的很好，做了什么事情。因为我们有那个 learning story，老师会在上面写孩子做的事情。但是通常都是很好的事情。他们都是 always talk about positive。 (赵)

They only tell you that the child is doing very well today and what the child did (during the day). We have that learning story, the teacher will write about what the child did (in the kindergarten). But usually, they write about good things. They always talk about the positive side. (Zhao)

The excerpt above demonstrates that Zhao thinks both verbal and written communication from the teachers are only about positive aspects of the child. She believed this to be problematic and expected teachers to tell her what her child was not good at so that she could provide assistance at home. The communication from the teacher did not meet Zhao's expectations. This brings about considerations of the different ways in which teachers communicate with parents about children in China and New Zealand. In China, teachers tend to stress children's shortcomings when communicating with parents (Sy, 2006). On the other hand, teachers in New Zealand prefer not to be critical about children. The mismatch between what teachers told

Zhao and what Zhao would prefer to hear could also be influenced by the different positioning of teachers in the two cultures. In China, teachers are constructed as experts who possess unquestionable knowledge about children's education while teachers in New Zealand are expected to collaborate with parents to foster children's learning (Wu, 2009). From an ecological perspective, Zhao's dissatisfaction about the teacher-parent communication might be influenced by the mix of national educational beliefs and the content of teacher-parent communication. In Zhao's story, the Chinese cultural belief that teachers being the experts is disrupted by the New Zealand's cultural ways of teacher-parent communication.

Like Zhao, Feng and Chen expressed that they did not receive much information from the teachers. Feng normally initiated communication with teachers when dropping off and picking up his child by asking teachers about his child's daily life in school. However, the teachers did not response much.

我觉得新西兰这边没有教材，父母根本不知道孩子在学校里学什么做什么，所以就比较迷茫。和孩子以及老师聊学校的事情，都是 good。（陈）

Parents don't know what the child learns and does at school because they don't have textbook. So, I feel quite confused. Sometimes I talk to the teacher about my child's learning at school. They always say everything is good. (Chen)

The absence of textbooks in primary schools in New Zealand limited Chen's understanding about her child's learning. Chen initiated communication with teachers about her child's learning in school but felt the responses she received back were vague. Because she did not get the desired information from her child's teachers Chen expressed that she had to help her son based on her own understanding about him. Such parenting practices may mean that the child's experiences in school are not extended and reinforced at home. This may influence children's continuity of learning which has been identified as a key element for school transition (OECD, 2017; Peters, 2010).

One possible explanation of Feng and Chen's experience is that teachers and Chinese migrant parents understand children's learning in the institution differently. When teachers expressed that the child was doing well in school, they might mean

that the child was happy, building relationships with peers, and engaging in learning which are valued in New Zealand context (Ministry of Education, 2007, 2017a). The parents, on the other hand, expected to know about the child's academic performance that was emphasised in the Chinese culture (Chan, 2014; Zhang, 2012). In this sense, the different national beliefs and the two parties' disparate understanding of the concept of learning may influence Chinese migrant families' experiences of school transition.

The discussions above demonstrate that the participants were eager to support their children's learning and school transition at home based on children's learning in the centre and school, and they expected teachers to offer suggestions. Moreover, the participants expected to know about their children's shortcomings so that at home they could help them improve. However, the way in which New Zealand teachers talk to parents about children may make Chinese migrant parents feel confused. This might be caused by the cultural differences between China and New Zealand. Based on the participants' experiences, teachers did not provide the information they needed. This sheds light on the need for educators' enriched cultural understanding of Chinese migrants so that they can engage in culturally responsive communication with Chinese parents.

This study finds that Chinese migrant parents are willing to communicate with teachers to enrich their understanding about children's learning in centres/schools in time of school transition. This contradicts existing research (Guo, 2010; Yang, 2011; Zhang, 2012) which suggests that Chinese migrant parents are unwilling to communicate with teachers. According to the participants in this study, they sometimes do not get informative responses from teachers when they actively seek advice. This may negatively influence these Chinese parents' willingness to communicate with teachers. The implication for teachers is that they need to deliver understandable and informative information when parents ask them for suggestions. When parents initiate communication, teachers can use this as opportunities for building relationships with parents. Parent-teacher relationships are valued in the New Zealand context (Ministry of Education, 2007, 2017a) because they enable teachers to better understand children and families which is found being beneficial for children's school transitions (Griebel et al., 2017).

Teacher Initiated Communication

Some participants indicated that teachers did initiate communication with them in times of school transition. For example, the ECE teachers provided parents with suggestions regarding children's school transitions. The primary school teachers asked parents to provide information about their children.

那通过和老师的交流中，就会告诉我你在小学可能会遇到的一些问题啊，你在小学会做的一些事情啊。（吴）

*Teachers would tell parents what we might encounter after the child starts primary school, and what children will do in primary school.
(Wu)*

Wu considered that ECE teachers value children's school transition because of teacher-initiated communication. Teacher-parent communication enriched Wu's understanding about school transition and contributed to her preparedness about school transition. Being told about the factors and challenges that parents and children may experience in primary school, Wu became more prepared to make her own transition. She was also able to communicate with her child about what to expect during transition. In Wu's case, teacher-parent communication may have contributed to the perceived positive school transition experiences.

*我们在上学之前学校会问家长孩子的兴趣爱好以及家长的期望。
(王)*

*Before the child started school, primary school teachers asked parents about their expectations and their children's hobbies and interests.
(Wang)*

In Wang's case, teacher-parent communication may have helped schoolteachers to better understand children and families. Such communication allows teachers to understand what children and families bring to school transition, laying the foundation for responsive practices that build on children's previous learning, and catering for children's individual needs and parents' cultural expectations.

The collaboration between different parties involved in school transition, for instance, ECE centres, schools, and families contribute to children's transition experiences (Brooker, 2008; Dockett, 2014; Dunlop & Fabian, 2007; OECD, 2017;

Peters, 2010; Wilder & Lillvist, 2018). The excerpts above demonstrate that ECE centres and primary schools were collaborating with Chinese migrant families in times of school transition, however, there was no indication that ECE centres and primary schools were communicating with each other.

小学老师我个人感觉是完全和幼儿园老师脱节的。他们会通过问家长了解孩子的性格和兴趣。（冯）

I think primary school teachers are disconnected with ECE teachers. They would ask parents about children's characteristics and interests. (Feng)

According to Feng, primary school teachers did try to know more about the child before starting school, nonetheless, this was achieved through communicating with parents and the understanding that ECE teachers held about the child was overlooked. Parents certainly have rich understanding about their own children, however, the ECE teachers also hold valuable information about children, especially about children's learning experiences in the centre. A shared understanding about children can be developed when schools collaborate with ECE centres. The New Zealand's *strategic plan for early learning 2019-29* indicated that shared understanding about children's and their learning between ECE teachers and primary school teachers facilitates children's successful transitions from ECE to school (Mātauranga, 2018).

A range of literature has suggested that collaboration between the two educational sectors involved in school transition benefits children's transition experiences (see for instance, Besi & Sakellariou, 2019; Bond et al., 2019; Dockett & Einarsdóttir, 2017; Mātauranga, 2018; Ministry of Education, 2017a; OECD, 2017; Peters, 2010). Nonetheless, the Chinese migrant parents in this study perceived that there was very little collaboration between these two sectors. This situation sheds light on the need for ECE services and primary schools to develop connections so that they can communicate and collaborate with each other for the purpose of developing deeper understanding about children and families who are making school transitions.

Primary school teachers' understanding about children's previous learning experiences enables them to offer individualised support that promotes children's learning continuity in school transition. This understanding can be developed by

primary school teachers communicating with ECE teachers and they can refer to children's early childhood portfolios which document children's experiences in ECE centres (Peters et al., 2009a, 2009b).

The Portfolio: Precious for Parents, but not Used in Transition

In ECE in New Zealand, children's learning is documented in portfolios which include "annotated photographs, children's art, recordings or transcripts of oral language, kaiako observations and learning stories" (Ministry of Education, 2017a, p. 63). Research in New Zealand (Peters et al., 2009a, 2009b) found that using portfolios as a tool to support transition is beneficial for both children and teachers. For children, their portfolios give them the confidence to communicate with their peers about their past learning experiences. For teachers, children's portfolios enable them to understand children's prior learning in the ECE that they can build upon. The participants in this study valued children's early childhood portfolios because they provided rich information about their children's learning experiences in the ECE centres. However, none of them saw the use of portfolios in children's school transitions.

我觉得这个(成长档案)内容对于我来说很好, 也很珍贵。我可以看到孩子每一个成长的瞬间。(王)

I think the content in the portfolio is very good for me. It is precious. I can see the process of my child growing up in it. (Wang)

通过这个我可以看一下幼儿园都在做什么, 我自己的孩子在学什么。我觉得挺好的。(陈)

I think the portfolio is very good. I can know what my child learns in the centre through reading it. (Chen)

Children's early childhood portfolios were seen by Wang and Chen as precious as they help parents to know more about children's experiences in the ECE centre. However, these participants did not experience the use of portfolios in their children's school transition. Primary school teachers did not use children's portfolios as a way to understand children's past learning experiences and funds of knowledge. In this sense, the function of the portfolios is limited to a collection of children's experiences, rather than an empowering tool that enhances children's identity as learners and that

enables teachers to understand the rich experiences and funds of knowledge that children bring to transition (Hartley et al., 2014; Peters et al., 2009a).

那个 portfolio 是挺有用的，我觉得幼儿园和小学可以建立一个系统，分享信息。（冯）

The early childhood portfolio is quite useful. I think ECE and primary school can establish a system to share information. (Feng)

Feng noticed that the communication between ECE and school was limited. He suggested that ECE and school can share information with each other, for example, by using children's early childhood portfolios. Information sharing between the two education sectors enables teachers to develop shared understanding about children's characteristics, interests, and past learning experiences (Peters et al., 2009a). Such understanding empowers teachers to support children continuous learning by building upon their previous learning.

Research in New Zealand (Hartley et al., 2014; Peters et al., 2009a) has identified the benefits of utilising children's early childhood portfolios to support children's school transitions. However, none of the participants in this study saw the use of portfolio in their children's school transitions. The inference is that teachers/centre managers/school principals may not have known the research regarding the use of portfolio. This calls for more opportunities for professional development that enables education practitioners to enrich their understanding about school transition. Such professional development helps educators to adjust their practices to better support children and families making school transitions.

One thing to consider when using portfolios as a tool to support school transition is that portfolios should contain authentic information about the child. The Chinese migrant mothers who participated in Wu (2009) study expressed that the content of portfolios is sometimes irrelevant to their children's actual experiences. One participant in Wu (2009) stated that "although theories and intentions were always good, but it was hard to tell how theories and intentions were realised in reality" (p. 161). Wu (2009) argued that portfolios are sometimes developed for the purpose of complying with the government's requirement of documenting children's learning, and thus, are arguably, political products. Such critique reminds ECE teachers to document

children's real experiences in portfolios. Failing to do so may mislead primary school teachers about children's funds of knowledge, when portfolios are utilised in the process of school transition.

8.6 Challenges Encountered by Participants

Some participants expressed that they experienced challenges in their child's school transition. The challenges include children having difficulty in establishing relationships with teachers, children feeling unhappy, and the participants' own communication with teachers.

最大的困难就是和老师表达自己的想法，因为他很慢热，而且刚换了老师。（冯）

The biggest problem is how to let the child express himself to the teachers. Because he is a slow-type child, and they just changed a new teacher. (Feng)

Before his son started school, Feng was concerned about his communication with teachers. After his child started school, his concern continued as the child got a new teacher not long after he started school. Based on his understanding of his child's characteristics, Feng was worried that he would not express his feelings to the new teacher because he had not established a stable relationship with the teacher. Feng's own understanding about his child and the change of teacher contributed to this concern. Feng's concern about his child's school transition implies that primary school teachers can support transition by encouraging new entrants to express themselves and to establish relationships with children. Children's relationships with others are influential elements in school transition because they influence their feelings about school and the support they can get (Murray, 2014). At the institutional level, principals should consider about the negative influence that changing teachers might cause for children's learning. If it is necessary to assign a new teacher, it may be better to allow the new teacher the time to develop an understanding of each child, so that the teacher can construct relationships with children quickly after they take over the class.

可能孩子适应新环境的时候都会有这个。可能因为孩子还小，对分离有种恐惧。（王）

Perhaps children all experience this (separation anxiety) when entering a new environment. Because children are still young, they feel scared to leave parent. (Wang)

Wang recalled a negative experience that she and her child experienced when the child made the transition from ECE to school. The child was doing fine in the first two months after school entry. After a school holiday, the child experienced separation anxiety and did not want to go to school. Wang felt frustrated about this because she did not know what happened to the child and what she could do to help. She talked to the teachers about this situation and did not get an effective solution. Both Wang and the teacher did not know what caused the child's anxiety. The key element in this event was probably the school holiday when the child was mainly interacting with the family members. These interactions may have contributed to the child's attachment to the family and his unwillingness to go to school where possibly he had not yet established relationships. A few weeks after the school holiday that anxiety disappeared. Although Wang expressed that she did not know the reason, it is reasonable to speculate that the child's interaction and relationship with peers in school influenced his sense of belonging and schooling liking that counteracted his anxiety.

Wang and her child's experiences indicate that school transition is a dynamic and unpredictable process. Even when the child's school transition seems positive in the beginning, they may later experience negative feelings. This cautions teachers and parents to pay attention to children's emotional wellbeing in the process of school transition. School transition is not a one-off event, it is a process which can last for months (OECD, 2017). Having friends and peers to play and interact with contribute to children's emotional wellbeing (Ackesjö, 2013). Teachers can support this by designing activities that encourage peer interactions which foster children's friendships with each other.

我们老大有一点，他英文不是很好，导致他总是和华人孩子在玩，和班里的洋人孩子都玩不到一块，他就非常悲观。我特意给他报了一些体育课，那种洋人比较喜欢参加的课外活动。然后就可以和洋人孩子能一起玩了，虽然技术一般。现在已经好很多了。（陈）

For my first son, his English was not very good, and he always played with Chinese kids. He did not get along well with his local classmates. He was unhappy every day. I purposefully enrolled him in some sports activities that were interested by local kids. After that, although he could not play well, he could play with local kids. Now he is feeling better. (Chen)

Like Wang, Chen's child experienced emotional issues when transitioning to school. Chen believed that her child's limited English proficiency negatively influenced his interactions with English-speaking peers and this led to her child's unhappiness. Chen talked to the teacher about this but received no feasible advice. She believed that her insufficient English influenced communication with teachers. She had expected schools to offer language support for parents whose first language is not English. To help her child, Chen came up with her own solution, and it worked. This experience indicates that Chinese migrant parents are willing to communicate with teachers to help children to solve problems, however, their English proficiency and a lack of language support may prevent them from engaging in deep conversations with teachers.

Chen expressed that when there was a language barrier, no attempt was made by the primary school to solve the issue. Such experiences may lead to parents' negative views on primary schools and teachers. A number of studies have suggested that teachers need to understand school transition as opportunities for relationship building (see for instance, De Gioia, 2017; Griebel et al., 2017; Wilder & Lillvist, 2017b). In Chen's case, the difficulty her child encountered offered a perfect opportunity for teachers to collaborate with parents. Such collaboration can increase parents' trust in teachers and enable teachers to understand the social and cultural resources that families bring to transition which help to design culturally responsive practices (Woodhead & Moss, 2007).

跟老师之间的沟通有一点问题。和学校这个老师，一个法国老师，他呢，是那种50岁，有一点old school那种，像中国老师，有一点严厉那种感觉，他不喜欢家长来参与学校的教学的内容。因为我是中国人，我们第一次家长会是不太愉快的，因为他觉得我在家里会教中国的课程。（郑）

We had problem with communicating with one teacher in the primary school. He is a French, around 50 years old, an old-school teacher. He

was like Chinese teachers, quite strict. He did not like parents to get involved in the content of education in school. Our first parent-teacher meeting did not work very well. He thought I taught the child Chinese lessons because I am a Chinese. (Zheng)

Zheng's negative experience, influenced by the teacher's assumptions about Chinese migrant parents, impacted on the teacher-parent communication and relationship. Zheng's experience cautions teachers to be aware of their own cultural assumptions. Both *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017a) and the *New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007) require teachers to respect the diverse social and cultural backgrounds of children and families. In times of school transition, the cultural values held by Chinese migrant parents can be used as resources to be included in teaching practices. Such culturally responsive practices facilitate children's sense of belonging and development of cultural identity (Ministry of Education, 2017a).

8.7 Influences of the Pandemic on School Transition

This study took place when the Covid-19 was widespread all over the world. In New Zealand, all the ECE centres and primary schools were closed because of the pandemic. According to the participants, the pandemic and the lockdown in Auckland had both positive and negative influences on their experiences of children's school transitions. Children had to take online classes during the time of lockdown, and this led to increased level of parental involvement at home. During the lockdown, parents had to take on both parent and teacher roles. This study found that the increased level of parental involvement led to parents' richer understanding about children's learning and New Zealand's education system. For children, the participants believed that the pandemic negatively impacted on their relationships building with teachers and peers, and their English language development.

According to Zheng, online study required more parental support for children as they sometimes could not understand the instructions offered by the teacher on their own. Similarly, Wu expressed that online learning required more parental involvement as parents needed to help children to utilise computers to finish the tasks assigned by the teachers.

有影响啊，首先就是他没有办法去学校了，那么幼小衔接的学习就全部停滞了，所以只能全部在家里教。（吴）

The pandemic has definitely influenced my child's school transitions. His study is negatively impacted because he could not go to the ECE centre. Therefore, I have to teach him at home. (Wu)

Wu's son was about to make the transition from ECE to primary school. The ECE centre that Wu's son attended did not have any online classes during the lockdown. Wu believed this negatively influenced her son's learning. In order to compensate the perceived negative influences, Wu taught his son at home and purchased educational materials to help with his learning. Wu's experiences demonstrates that the pandemic led to increased level of parental involvement at home.

According to Feng, the pandemic has influenced the nature of parent-child interactions. Parents need to take both the caregivers' and the educators' roles.

疫情期间就是我变成了老师，我从家长变成了老师，我要教他数学英文这些东西。对孩子的影响就是，本来他和那个新老师要混熟了，但是一个 lockdown 之后又要重新开始了。（冯）

My role changed from a parent to a teacher during the period of pandemic. I need to teach him mathematics and English. It also influenced the child; he was about to get familiar with the new teacher and the pandemic stopped this. He will have to restart to build relationship with the teacher after lockdown. (Feng)

The pandemic influenced both Feng and his son's experiences regarding school transition. For Feng, his interaction with his child became more academic oriented. For the child, studying at home meant no face-to-face communication with his teachers and peers. This negatively impacted on his relationships building with his classmates and teachers that are identified as being crucial for their school transition experiences (Murray, 2014; OECD, 2017; Peters, 2010).

According to Chen, the lockdown in Auckland had negatively influenced children's English language development because the child had to stay at home and the parents mostly spoke Chinese. This might be applicable to most Chinese migrant families since they mainly speak Chinese at home.

这次 lockdown，因为大家都在家学习，所以才了解到他们上课的形式和学习的一些内容。（陈）

The lockdown...because children are studying at home, so I got to know what my son studies. (Chen)

The lockdown also had positive influences. For example, Chen expressed that the lockdown enabled her to understand more about education and the school curriculum in New Zealand because she got the chance to observe her child taking online classes. The discussions in the previous section indicate that Chinese migrant parents' understanding about New Zealand's education might be limited because of their English proficiency and the problem of teacher-parent communication. The lockdown provided an opportunity for Chinese migrant parents to enrich their understanding about their children's learning in New Zealand's ECE centres and primary schools.

This section indicates that the pandemic had both positive and negative influences on Chinese migrant families' experiences of school transition. Because of the lockdown, children had to study online at home, and this meant that parents needed to take both the roles of both educators and caregiver. Moreover, the lockdown negatively influenced children's relationships building with peers and teachers because of a lack of face-to-face communication and interactions. The discussion in this section argued that school transition is influenced by the interactive ecological systems that surround children. The pandemic, which belongs to the chronosystem, impacted on the behaviours of children, parents, and teachers, as well as the relationships and interactions among these parties.

8.8 Summary

The participants experienced their children's school transition differently, in terms of the parenting practices that they engaged in to support school transition, the transition practices delivered by ECE centre and schools, and the challenges encountered in the process of school transition. Most participants helped their children with academic preparation before starting school. The ways in which participants support children's learning of academics differed; some utilised a traditional adult-led approach while others employed a child friendly approach. This

difference provides evidence that the participants' macrosystem, which consists of both Chinese and New Zealand's cultural and educational beliefs, influenced them differently.

Most participants expressed that the ECE centre and primary school delivered transition practices to support children's school transition, however, the transition practices delivered by institutions seemed to be general and applicable to children and families from all cultural backgrounds. Such practices fail to address the individual needs of Chinese migrant families. Based on the interviews with participants, it is found that there is a lack of communication and collaboration between ECE and schools which may negatively influence children's school transition (Besi & Sakellariou, 2019; Bond et al., 2019; Wilder & Lillvist, 2017a).

The pandemic had both positive and negative influences on participants' school transition experiences. On the one hand, the pandemic led to increased level of parental involvement at home and hindered children's relationship building with teachers and peers; on the other hand, the increased parental involvement enriched participants' understanding about their children's learning and about New Zealand's education philosophy.

Chapter 9 Conclusion

This research set out to investigate Chinese migrant families' perspectives and experiences of children's transition from ECE to primary school in New Zealand. Specifically, it aimed to explore the contextual elements that may have influenced these families' perspectives and experiences. My interest in this topic was informed by the apparent difference between my own and my niece's childhood experiences, and my experience of receiving education in both China and New Zealand. My childhood in China was joyful as I was allowed to play and explore the environment freely, even after I started primary school. My niece, on the other hand, had a rather academic-oriented childhood since she attended a school-like kindergarten and was tutored a lot at home by her parents. My niece was far more academically prepared at school entry than me, however, she experienced emotional issues as she found that learning in school was nothing new. This led to my interest in children's transition from ECE to school. Living and studying in both China and New Zealand made me aware of the cultural and educational differences in education between the two countries. As a member of the Chinese community in New Zealand, I started to wonder about how school transition is perceived and experienced by Chinese migrant families in New Zealand.

This study employed a qualitative interpretive methodology. Ten Chinese migrant parents were recruited utilising purposive sampling and snowball sampling methods. All the participants were born in mainland China and then migrated to New Zealand in their adulthood, except for one participant (Zhou) who came to New Zealand at high school. These parents were interviewed to gather their perceptions and experiences regarding their children's school transition. The technique of thematic analysis was employed to analyse research data and identify key themes which were then discussed in relation to the five systems of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) and the four principles of *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017a).

Through analysing the participants' interpretations of their own perspectives and experiences regarding school transition, this research unpacked the complexity of

Chinese migrant families' school transition. The parents in this study expressed different perspectives on education and school transition. They had individualised concerns for, and expectations of, their children and the institutions, based on their family circumstances and their understanding of their children. These different views meant they used different parenting practices when supporting their children's school transition. This chapter firstly reports the key findings of this research and provides responses to the research questions. Second, the contributions of this research to literature and theory will be highlighted. Third, pedagogical implications of this research will be discussed. This is followed by a discussion of the limitations of this research. Finally, recommendations for future research will be made.

9.1 Key Findings

The overall finding of this research is that Chinese migrant families' perspectives and experiences regarding children's school transition in New Zealand are not universal. Understanding and supporting transition necessitates an individualised approach that takes account of the individual child and family. Teachers cannot predict parental beliefs and needs based on their cultural origins. It is essential to recognise the diversity within a group and not to homogenise certain groups of people.

The research findings emphasised the Chinese educational belief that place importance on children's academic excellence which may have narrowed some participants' understanding of education in New Zealand. The education philosophy of New Zealand includes ideas such as teacher-parent partnership, and learning through play which were not fully accepted by the Chinese migrant parents who participated in this research. This finding is consistent with previous research (Guo, 2012; Wu, 2009; Zhang, 2012) which found that Chinese migrant parents found it hard to understand the educational benefits of play and were unwilling to engage in constructing relationships with teachers. The idea of learning through play has limited acceptance and value in China where the emphasis is on adult-led teaching and children's hard efforts (Ding, 2021; Wu, 2009). For some participants, accepting play involves a complex negotiation of different educational philosophies. In Zhao's words, "I don't expect much from public primary schools and kindergartens here in New Zealand, you need to go to private schools if you really want your child to learn." Some participants in this study questioned the educational benefits of play, and they asked teachers to

adjust their practices. However, they found that their requests were somewhat neglected by the teachers. Based on the Chinese culture which promotes harmonious relationships, and the respect for teachers, they did not want to challenge teachers. Thus, they had to accept play as the predominant experience of learning for children in ECE in New Zealand.

Not all Chinese migrants were unwilling to build relationships with teachers, some parents were very active in getting guidance for school preparation from their child's early childhood teachers. For example, Zhou asked the teachers about ways to support her child's learning at home. Primary school education was perceived by the families as the start of children's formal education, and they expected children to be academically ready so that they could achieve academic excellence. This focus on academic success is seen as a means of ensuring upward social mobility (Chan, 2014; Zhang, 2012). For the participants, their transition-related parenting practices focused on helping their children with learning of literacy and numeracy. These parenting practices are reflective of the school readiness agenda which has been critiqued for its focus on a narrow range of skills and competencies that are expected to be achieved by children before entering school (as noted in section 4.3) (Arnold et al., 2007; Crnic & Lamberty, 1994; Dockett & Perry, 2017).

However, academic learning was not the only factor that was perceived by the participants as important for school transition. Some participants believed that children's emotional wellbeing, personalities, sense of belonging, and social skills are also important for children's school transition. These participants aspired for a hybrid approach that combines the perceived merits of the educational systems in both China and New Zealand, to offer their children best possible education. While they expressed a preference towards academic-oriented and teacher-led institutional practices reflective of the Chinese approach, they also understood the importance of the New Zealand education approach of promoting children's wellbeing, independence, creativity, and social skills.

All the participants in this study valued children's school transition, some directly expressed that school transition is significant while others exhibited this by their engagement in supporting children's school transition. The participants showed a clear

understanding about the different demands and expectations that ECE and school have towards children. Some expected their children to adapt to the new role as school children and to put effort in the learning of academics in primary schools even though they cannot send their children to private institutions due to the influence of the families' financial status. The participants expressed different concerns and expectations towards their children's school transition, due to their individual understanding of their own children, past experiences, social networks, and broader cultural influences. The participants' understanding of school transition seemed to focus on children themselves. One participant did recognise that parents also need to establish relationships with new teachers and parents after children start primary school.

In terms of children's perspectives of school transition, almost all of the participants' children were excited because starting primary school offered them opportunities to build relationships with new peers and to reunite with old friends who commenced school before them. Another element that contributed to their excitement was their belief that being school children means they can exercise greater control over their lives, for instance, by carrying big schoolbags and bringing their own lunch. One child (Zhao's daughter) was unwilling to make the transition from ECE to a primary school because she did not want to lose her existing relationships with people, places, and things in ECE. She had also observed how the nature of parent-child interaction became adult-led and academic-oriented after her older brother started school. This girl's experience highlights the need for adults to listen to children's voices and to provide targeted support during transition. Moreover, the girl's observation of her older brother's experience illustrates how the child's birth order may influence their school transition.

The participants engaged in a variety of activities to support their children's school transition, such as direct teaching, playful interactions, purchasing online learning resources, hiring private tutors, talking to children about primary school, and showing children the primary school (some parents asked their older children to do so). The prospect of school transition influenced the nature of parent-child interactions and lead to the participants' academic-oriented parenting practices. For instance, many participants reported that they focused more on teaching children's learning of

literacy and numeracy at home when they were near school entry. Moreover, some parents reiterated about their plan of sending their children's to after-school classes after they start primary schools.

Institutions play a crucial role in supporting children and families to make the transition from ECE to primary school (Ahtola et al., 2016; LoCasale-Crouch et al., 2008; White et al., 2021). Most participants were aware of the transition practices carried out in the institutions to support children's school transition, while three participants expressed that they did know what transition activities the institution had. According to the participants, the transition practices the institutions had included organising pre-entry school visits, helping children with literacy and numeracy, familiarising children with activities that they will experience in primary school, and arranging a buddy to help the new entrant to settle in the new environment in primary school. In terms of supporting family, two participants expressed that they received support from institutions, including receiving information about things to expect in school and teachers sharing information with parents regarding children's daily activities and experiences.

Chinese migrant voices - both children's and parents' - were not accounted for in the design of transition practices and programmes. The transition practices that institutions delivered seemed to be applied to children and families from all backgrounds with no specific arrangements made to address the unique concerns and expectations that different families may have. As discussed earlier, this study found parental perspectives on transition are not universal, so it is important for teachers to understand the cultural factors that influence Chinese parents, but not to presume those factors are going to result in particular behaviours.

Family-institution communication and the communication between ECE and school positively influences school transition as it helped to develop shared understanding of children. This study found problematic communication between the participants and educators, and between ECE and school. Some participants initiated communication with teachers to ask about their children's learning at school so that they could help their children at home. However, they found that the responses were ambiguous because teachers always talked about children in positive ways, and this

made the participants unsure about how to support children at home. This finding provides teachers with a provocation to understand the complexity of different cultures. In terms of the communication between ECE and school, the participants in this study perceived no connection between the two education sectors. Moreover, despite New Zealand research (Peters et al., 2009a) which has identified the benefits of using children's early childhood portfolios to support children's school transition, none of the participants saw this happening in practice.

Some participants experienced challenges during school transition in terms of children's relationship building with peers and teachers, parent-teacher communication, and children's reluctance to make school transition. The participants expressed that Chinese migrant children mostly interact with Chinese peers in ECE centres and they may experience difficulties in building relationships with peers from other backgrounds in primary schools. Wang's son's school transition was perceived positively in the beginning, however, the boy experienced separation anxiety two months after he started school. One participant (Zheng) had a negative experience of communicating with the child's primary school teacher who assumed that all Chinese parents teach children literacy and numeracy at home before they start primary school. These challenges reinforce the need for teachers to understand school transition as an unpredictable process, be mindful about their own assumptions about children and families, support children's relationships building, and work collaboratively with families to support children's individualised learning and transition trajectory.

This section has summarised the key findings of this research. Based on these findings, I provide tentative responses to the research questions:

What are the perspectives and experiences of Chinese migrant families regarding children's transitions from ECE to primary school in New Zealand?

Chinese migrant families' perspectives on school transition are dynamic in nature. They typically value children's school transition but have individual concerns and expectations about transition. For Chinese migrant families, school transition is a complex and unpredictable bi-cultural process in which they interact with children and

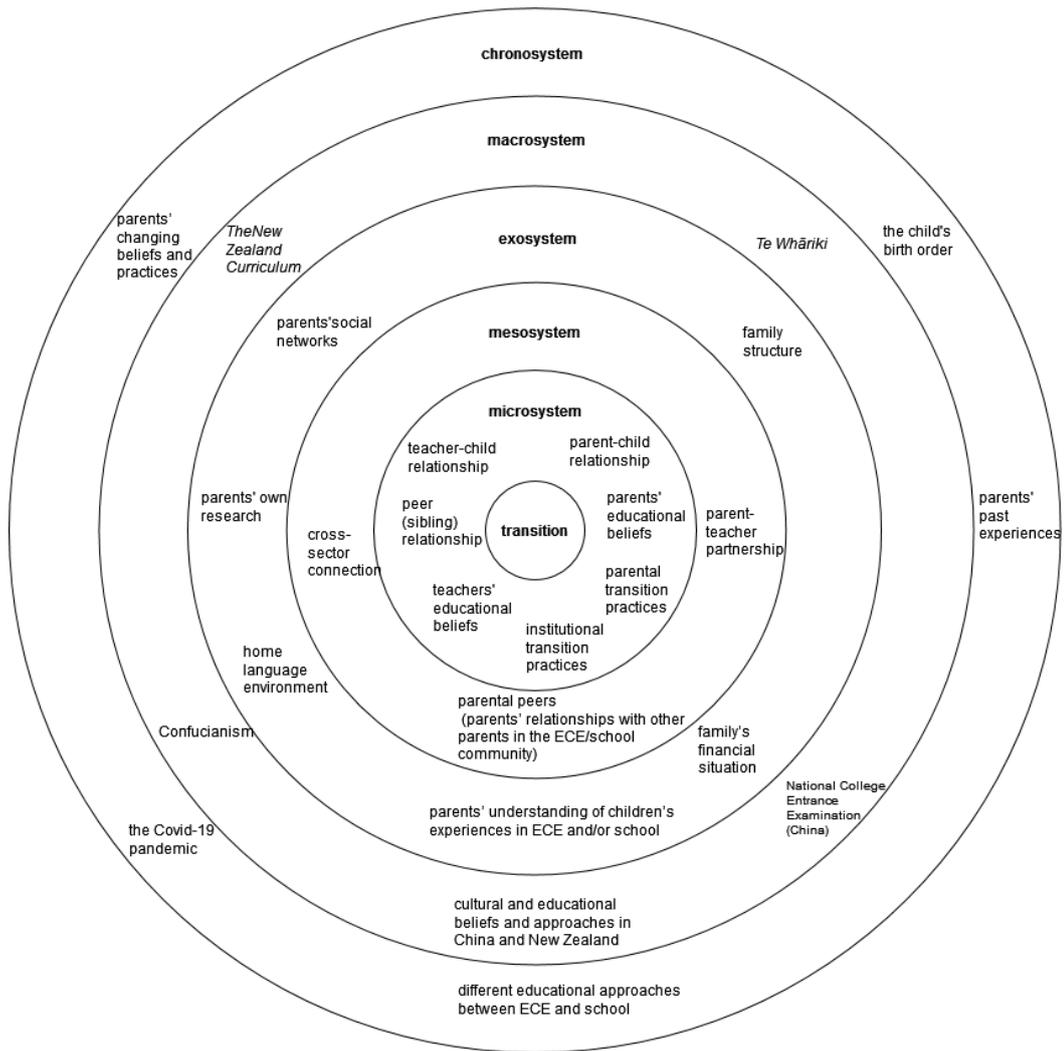
institutions based on their understanding of children, cultural and educational beliefs, and unique family circumstances.

What contextual elements influence Chinese migrant families' perspectives and experiences regarding school transition?

Chinese migrant families' perspectives and experiences regarding school transition are influenced by multiple contextual elements, including perceived personalities and characteristics of children, dynamic parental educational beliefs, parents' past experiences, parent-teacher communication, the connection between ECE and school, family environments, financial status, parents' social networks, and the broader social and cultural contexts of both China and New Zealand.

Based on the findings of this research, this study provides an ecological system graphic to visualise the complex contextual elements that may influence Chinese migrant families' school transition in New Zealand (see Figure 1). When using this model to understand Chinese families' school transition, teachers need to comprehend not only Chinese families' contexts, but also the way in which they make sense of these contexts.

Figure 1. *The Contextual Elements That May Influence Chinese Migrant Families' School Transition in New Zealand*



9.2 Contributions

This is the first New Zealand study to investigate Chinese migrant families' perspectives and experiences regarding children's transition from ECE to primary school in New Zealand. This study contributes to the body of literature on school transition by providing empirical evidence regarding Chinese migrant families' dynamic perspectives on and complex experiences of children's school transition in New Zealand. The findings of this research may also contribute to education practitioners' and policy makers' enriched understanding of Chinese migrant families' perspectives and experiences of school transition. Understanding the complexity and unpredictability of school transition for this cultural group can enable them to develop responsive practices and policies to support Chinese migrant families and their school transition in New Zealand. To develop this understanding, educators need to be given more opportunities to attend professional development programmes that are related

to school transition. Teachers can also develop an understanding of the complexity of transition by reading existing literature on school transition. Moreover, reading transition literature can enrich educators' knowledge about what strategies can be used to support transition, for example, the use of an early childhood portfolio has been found being beneficial for not only children, but also teachers and parents. However, none of the participants in this doctoral study recognised its utilisation in transition.

In terms of the practical strategies, educators can develop a general understanding of Chinese migrant families by self-study, for example, to learn about Chinese culture, such as Confucianism and collectivism, as well as Chinese views on education and teachers. This can lay the foundation for individualised support. They can then have one-to-one meeting with Chinese migrant parents, to ask about their specific needs, concerns, and expectations. The most important thing is for teachers to have an interest and commitment to culture. Such practices are encouraged in New Zealand as *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017a) emphasises that children's learning is promoted when their cultures are valued in the institutions and when teachers respect and are "responsive to their cultural ways of knowing and being" (p. 12). However, some participants in this study perceived little cultural inclusiveness and responsiveness in practice. During the interviews, some participants expressed a frustration towards the public education system in New Zealand because they believed that children learn very little. These parents exhibited a strong desire to send their children to private schools as they believed these schools focus on children's learning of academics and this they believe is the key purpose of education. This finding contributes to education practitioners' thinking and reflection on the inconsistency between the promoted philosophies and the educational practices.

This study also contributes to the existing research in its application of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1994) to investigate the participant's experiences of school transition. The ecological perspective on school transition directs exploration of how the interrelated systems of microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem impact on how transition is perceived and supported. The data revealed that the influences that these interactive systems have on school transition are not universal, and thus understanding of the

contexts of families is essential when supporting school transition. This study showed Chinese migrant families transition experiences and perceptions exist within a complex macrosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1994) of Chinese and New Zealand's cultural beliefs and suggests that people within the same macrosystems may also have different beliefs. When investigating cultural minority groups' school transition, it is important to explore the individual influences that complex cultural elements have on people's beliefs. In this study, cultural beliefs impacted on the participants' differently. Some participants appreciated a hybrid approach, some preferred the Chinese approach, and others appreciated the New Zealand approach. This finding brings about consideration of the utilisation of ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1994) to investigate school transition. The five systems provide theoretical tools to understanding the complexity of school transition. We should not assume a within-systems consistency because these systems do not influence school transition in a standardised manner (as noted in section 2.4). In other words, to understand and support transition, teachers are expected to meet with Chinese parents as with all parents, and to understand their contexts as well as their own ways of making sense of those contexts, this avoids teachers making crass assumptions based on cultural stereotypes that undermine the teacher-parent relationship.

This is the first empirical study to use the four principles of *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017b) to explore school transition in New Zealand. It shows how the principles of Whakamana (empowerment), Ngā Hononga (relationships), Whānau Tangata (family and community), and Kotahitanga (holistic development), can be applied to explore school transition. The Whakamana (empowerment) principle was used to show how parenting and institutional practices encourage/discourage children to take control of their own lives in times of school transition, for example, how the parents decided what learning activities should children engage in at home without considering children's voices and how the teachers fostered children's independence through transition practices. The Whakamana (empowerment) principle also led to investigation of how the parents felt disempowered by the teachers' vague responses when they asked teachers for information about their children's learning experiences in the institutions. The Ngā Hononga (relationships) principle guided the analysis of the impacts that peer relationships, parent-child relationship, parent-teacher partnership,

and the relationship between teachers from ECE and school have on the participants' school transition experiences. For instance, in section 7.6, this principle was employed to analyse how children's desire to build peer relationships contributed to their excitement about school transition, and how Zhao's daughter's willingness of maintaining existing relationships with ECE influenced her attitude about school transition.

The Whānau Tangata (family and community) principle was utilised to explore how parents engaged in interactions with children and communication with educators to support transition and how family circumstances influence transition. Moreover, it also led to investigation of how institutional transition practices respond to the special needs, concerns, and expectations of Chinese migrant families. The Kotahitanga (holistic development) principle was employed to show the emphasis that the parents placed on child development in times of school transition (as discussed in 7.3). This principle was also used to compare the different educational beliefs being promoted in China and New Zealand, and explore how these differences might influence Chinese parents' views on education and school transition. For example, in section 6.3, the principle of holistic development was employed to show how Chen's understanding of learning focused on children's hard efforts that is different from the educational belief being promoted in New Zealand where children's enjoyment and interests are emphasised.

9.3 Implications

The findings of this research have significant pedagogical implications. The participants' child-focused perspectives on school transition implies that ECE services and schools can enrich Chinese migrant families' understanding of school transition by actively communicating with them about the collective and contextual nature of transition. The problems of play and parent-teacher communication expressed by the participants suggest that teachers need to consider the content of communication. For example, teachers can enrich Chinese migrant parents' understanding of children's learning experiences in institutions by explaining the educational benefits of children's play and by telling them about the specific learning that has occurred in the institutions. Such communication can help parents to engage in responsive home-based practices that build on and extend children's learning in institutions, and may

contribute to parents' increased willingness to communicate and build partnerships with teachers. In developing communication, it is important that teachers consider Chinese parents' English proficiency. For those whose English is limited, institutions can ensure understanding by having a translator or bilingual staff. Alternatively, institutions can collaborate with Chinese communities to seek language support.

The participants expressed a lack of support for families and absence of children's and parents' voices in transition practices. This implies that Chinese migrant families' school transition can be better supported by the institutions designing transition programmes so that take accounts of the voices and needs of children and families. Including Chinese migrant children's and families' voices in transition planning and practices can help teachers to recognise the rich cultural experiences and resources that these families bring to school transition. Such recognition lays the foundation for teachers to deliver culturally responsive practices to support both children and families (White et al., 2021).

ECE and schools may be under wider pressure. For instance, Wu (2009) argued, portfolios are sometimes developed for the purpose of complying with the government's requirement of documenting children's learning, and are not reflective of children's real experiences. With this pressure, ECE and schools may not focus on strategies that help to include the voices of children and families in transition planning and practices. The Ministry of Education and regional councils can play a role in assisting to develop family-institution connections. For example, they can reach out to local communities to learn about their cultural ways of knowing and being, and pass this information to institutions. Moreover, they can provide these communities with the language and cultural resources they may need to enrich their understanding of the mainstream educational philosophies and approaches. ECE and schools can, then, develop responsive practices that foster the development of family-institution relationships, and learn about the uniqueness of each family in the process of relationship building.

The participants' perception that ECE and school are disconnected, points to the need for enhanced cross-sector collaboration and opportunities for professional development to enable educators to become familiar with the latest research so that

they can refine their practices, for instance, by using children's ECE portfolios, to support children and families to make school transition. Zheng's undesirable experience of teacher-parent communication caused by the teachers' assumptions about Chinese parents implies that it is important for teachers to engage in regular reflections to examine their personal beliefs and assumptions about certain groups of children and families and understand that Chinese migrant parents are not homogeneous. There is a tendency to portray families as homogeneous in some literature. For instance, Sy (2006), in an article titled "Rethinking parent involvement during the transition to first grade: A focus on Asian American families", explored how Asian American's parenting practice of structuring the child's time facilitates continuity in school transition. This study seems to regard the Asian American group as uniform in managing children at home. Even *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017a), categorises families into Māori, Pākehā, Pasifika, and other cultures. Teachers, then, may learn to generalise families due to the way in which families are described in the national curriculum and some literature.

This study provides a framework (see Figure 1 on p. 205) for educators to understand the complexity of Chinese migrant families' school transition. When utilising this framework to support Chinese migrant families' school transition, teachers are expected to understand not only the broader social, cultural, political, and historical influences, but also the individual context in which transition is understood and experienced.

9.4 Limitations

Because of the research methodology and research design employed in this study, there are two limitations of this research. Firstly, due to the small number of participants involved in this study, the findings of this research cannot be generalised. Qualitative researchers aim to understand the meaning individuals ascribed to the researched phenomenon or problem within real life contexts (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The aim of this research was to understand the complexity of Chinese migrant families' perspectives and experiences regarding children's school transition in New Zealand. Rather than predicting this cultural groups' perspectives and experiences, this study set out to unpack their perspectives and experiences, and to explore the multiple ecological elements that may have influenced their school transition

experiences. By analysing the participants' own voices utilising the ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) and the four principles of *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017b), this study offers a way to understand Chinese migrant families' school transition.

Secondly, because this study only involved parents as direct participants, the understanding of transition described in this thesis could be incomplete as existing research has indicated that school transition is a co-constructed process that might be perceived differently by children, parents, and teachers (Besi & Sakellariou, 2019; Dockett & Perry, 2004a; Eskelä-Haapanen et al., 2017; Hellblom-Thibblin & Marwick, 2017). These studies point to the need to take account of the voices of multiple parties, in order to develop a comprehensive understanding of school transition. This research was initially designed to involve all these parties as participants. Moreover, I planned to observe transition in practice, for example, observe children's experiences in both ECE and school and attend school visits with children and their parents. Due to the influence of the Covid-19 pandemic, only Chinese migrant parents were participants. Although children's and teachers' perspectives on school transition were explored by interviewing the participating parents, the information they provided reflects their subjective understanding of children and teachers.

9.5 Future Research

This study finds that Chinese migrant parents and their children tend to have different views on school transition. It would be useful for future research to investigate Chinese migrant children's perspectives on school transition by listening to their voices. Observing their actual experiences in times of school transition could be extremely important to enrich researchers, educators, and policy makers understanding of Chinese migrant children's school transition experiences.

Future research on Chinese migrant families' school transition in New Zealand can draw upon multiple data sources. For example, interviewing teachers can provide insights about how teachers understand this cultural group and how they support Chinese migrant families' school transition. Moreover, attending transition activities organised by institutions alongside with families and children offers first-hand information about how school transition is supported.

Another direction for future research is to investigate the impacts that grandparents have on Chinese migrant children's school transition in New Zealand. In China, it is common that grandparents take care of children when the parents are in paid work. For Chinese migrant families in New Zealand, some grandparents would come over to help with child rearing (Chan, 2014; Wu, 2009). In this study, however, due to the closure of the New Zealand's border, all the participants' parents were looking after their children by themselves. Thus, I was unable to explore the influences that grandparents may have on children's school transition. Future research can make valuable contribution to richer description of Chinese migrant families' transition experiences by including grandparents' voices and exploring their influences on school transition.

Before I commenced this study, I anticipated that some Chinese migrant families may have concerns regarding their children's school transition in New Zealand, as I understand that the focuses of education in New Zealand and China are different, and this difference might cause parents' concern regarding their children's learning and school transition. In the process of collecting and analysing data, I felt the frustration and negative attitude that some of the parents have towards the public education system in New Zealand. I then considered how the educational practices might have marginalised these parents and perhaps put them in an impossible position. When studying the education philosophy of New Zealand, I was amazed by its inclusiveness and cultural responsiveness. So why did the Chinese migrant parents in this study feel helpless within the New Zealand education system in? Although this thesis may have provided some insights in response to this question, it is important for us, as researchers, education practitioners, and policy makers to continue to look deeply at this challenge.

In the end, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the Chinese migrant parents who participated in my study. Thank you for sharing your thoughts and experiences with me. With your contribution to this study, I hope this thesis can provoke some thinking about current education practices in New Zealand, and about ways to better support Chinese migrant families and children.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Invitation letter (Chinese version)

诚征研究课题参与者

您好，

我叫仲光明，我是奥克兰理工大学的教育学博士在读学生，我的导师是 Dr Andrew Gibbons 和 Dr Chris Jenkin。我现在在做一个研究课题，题目是：“幼小衔接中的家庭参与：中国移民家庭在新西兰的关于孩子幼小衔接阶段的经历”。现在，我在寻找中国移民家庭来参加我的研究课题。

参与这个课题，您首先需要是在中国出生的华人并且在过去 10 年内移民到新西兰。此外，您的孩子需要在未来四个月左右离开幼儿园开始入读（或已经开始小学约四个月）。作为一个课题参与者，您将被邀请参加一个 40 到 60 分钟的访谈。如果您对我的课题有兴趣或者想要参与到我的课题当中来，请您联系：

研究发起人：仲光明 (Kevin)

Email: azgmi@163.com

本课题导师：Dr Andrew Gibbons: agibbons@aut.ac.nz, 09 921 9999 ext 7929.

Dr Chris Jenkin: chris.jenkin@aut.ac.nz, 09 921 9999 ext 7911

非常感谢您的参与。如果您希望，我将在课题完成之后发送给您一份本课题的研究报告。谢谢您考虑这个邀请。

Appendix B – Invitation letter

Invitation for Participation

Hello,

My name is Guangming (Kevin) Zhong and I am doing Doctor of Philosophy in Education at Auckland University of Technology under the supervision of Dr Andrew Gibbons and Dr Chris Jenkin. I am currently undertaking a research project named “Family involvement in school transition: Chinese migrant families’ experiences of children transitioning from early childhood education to primary school in New Zealand”. I am looking for Chinese migrant families to participate in my research.

To participate in this research, you need to be born in mainland China and have migrated to New Zealand within the past 10 years. Secondly, you need to have at least one child who will start primary school in about four months (or has started school for about four months). Being a participant of this research means that you will be invited to attend one interview which will last 40-60 minutes. If you are interested in my research project or wanting to be one of my research participants, please contact:

Student researcher: Guangming (Kevin) Zhong

Email: azgmi@163.com

Supervisors: Dr Andrew Gibbons: agibbons@aut.ac.nz, 09 921 9999 ext 7929.

Dr Chris Jenkin: chris.jenkin@aut.ac.nz, 09 921 9999 ext 7911

Your interest and participation will be highly appreciated. You will be sent a copy of the final findings of this research project if you wish. Thank you for considering this invitation.

Appendix C – Participant information sheet (Chinese version)

研究参与者需知

日期：

11/07/2018

课题名称：

幼小衔接中的家庭参与：中国移民家庭在新西兰的关于孩子幼小衔接阶段的经历

研究邀请：

亲爱的家长，您好，

我叫仲光明，目前在奥克兰理工大学就读教育学博士。我想邀请您和您的孩子参与到我的博士课题中来，您的参与将帮助我完成我的博士学位论文。在研究过程中，您可以在任何时间选择退出，您的退出不会对您造成任何损失和影响。

课题目标：

此课题的目的是要探究中国移民家庭在新西兰的关于孩子幼小衔接的经历。此课题完成后，我将获得博士学位。

这项研究的结果将使幼儿园，小学，以及政策制定者更加了解中国移民家庭的幼小衔接经历，从而制定有针对性的措施来支持中国移民家庭和儿童的幼小衔接。

作为课题参与者，您将有机会表达您对于幼小衔接的观点。此课题研究结果将帮助不同的参与方（儿童，父母，教师，园长，校长）协同工作，以支持中国移民儿童的幼小衔接。

我是怎样被选中的？为什么我被邀请参加这个课题？

您被选中并邀请参加这个课题因为您的孩子将在未来几个月内离开幼儿园开始就读小学（或者已经开始入读小学几个月）。此信息是由我的朋友提供的（幼儿园老师或者中国移民家长）。

我如何同意参与这个课题？

我将提供给您一份研究访问同意书，请您阅读之后在上面签字之后交还给我。

签完同意书之后，您可以扫描或者拍照发给我；或者，您可以把同意书上面的内容复制到邮件里，并且注明您同意参加我的课题，然后发送给我。

您参与本课题是完全自愿的，您是否选择参与既不会有利于您也不会不利于您。您可以随时选择退出。如果您选择退出，您将可以自己决定您提供给我的信息是否可以被继续使用。如果您不同意我使用您提供的信息，我将立刻删除。但是请您注意，您提供的信息在我的论文完成后将不能被删除。

研究过程中会发生什么？

您有以下两种选择。

如果您只想接受一次采访，您将被邀请参加一次大约 40 到 60 分钟的访谈。因为疫情影响，我可能会通过视频通话的方式对您进行采访。在采访开始之前，我会发给您一份同意书，您可以用您的电子签名来签，同时，您需要口头同意参加我的课题（我需要进行录音）。访谈过程中我们将讨论您对幼小衔接的看法和经历。访谈的时间和地点我们讨论之后决定。我们之间的谈话将被录音，随后我会把录音转录出来。如果您希望的话，我将把我们访谈的文字记录发送给您，以便您可以根据需要做任何修改。此后，我将分析我们访谈的文字记录并将其用作我论文的研究数据。您的身份特征在论文中不会被提及。如果您希望的话，我将在论文完成之后发送给您一份研究总结。此外，我会向您询问您孩子所在幼儿园/小学的名字。如果您同意的话，我将邀请您孩子的老师来参加我的课题。

如果您愿意为我的研究做更多的贡献，我邀请您和您的孩子一起参加。在您和您的孩子同意参加我的课题后，我会向您询问您孩子所在幼儿园/小学的名字。如果您同意，我将邀请您孩子的幼儿园老师，园长，将要去的小学的老师和校长来参加我的课题。

在这种情况下，您将被邀请参加三次访谈（分别发生在开始小学三个月前，开始小学的时候，开始小学三个月后），每次大约 40 到 60 分钟。访谈过程中我们将讨论您对幼小衔接的看法和经历。访谈的时间和地点我们讨论之后决定。我们之间的谈话将被录音，随后我会把录音转录出来。如果您希望的话，我将把我们访谈的文字记录发送给您，以便您可以根据需要做任何修改。此后，我将分析我们访谈的文字记录并将其用作我论文的研究数据。您的身份特征在论文中不会被提及。如果您希望的话，我将在论文完成之后发送给您一份研究总结。

对于您的孩子，我将分别在幼儿园（开始小学前一个月）和小学（开始后一个月）四次观察他/她的日常经历，包括他/她参与的活动，与老师和其他小朋友的互动，以及在自由活动时间他/她的行为。每次观察大约持续一小时。观察过程中我会做一些记录，以便进行分析。

此外，如果您和您的孩子以及老师同意，我希望能和您一起参加由幼儿园或者小学举办的幼小衔接相关的活动，比如家长会和学校访问；我还需要从您孩子所在的幼儿园和小学收集和幼小衔接有关的文件的复印件，比如学校或者幼儿园给您的报纸，幼小衔接政策，幼小衔接活动的策划资料，以及您孩子的成长档案（portfolio）。

请参考下面关于您、您孩子以及老师需要参与的活动的活动的时间轴：

开学前三个月：	家长参加第一次访谈
开学前三到一个月：	收集幼小衔接相关文件，参加幼小衔接活动
开学前一个月：	儿童观察，采访幼儿园老师和园长
开学时：	家长参加第二次访谈
开学后一个月：	儿童观察，采访小学老师和校长
开学后三个月：	家长参加第三次访谈

参与此课题会不会让我感到不适或者产生风险？

在访谈期间，我可能问您对于新西兰教育的看法。您有可能对此类问题感到不安，因为您可能有不同的教育理念。

如何降低风险和不适的感觉？

访谈过程中，如果您有任何的身体、情感和心理学上的不适，您可以随时要求我结束这次访谈。或者，如果某个问题让您感到不适，您可以选择不回答这个问题。

此课题的益处？

非常感谢您的参与，您的参与将帮助我完成我的博士学位。

此课题是第一个调查新西兰中国移民家庭幼小衔接经历的课题。您的参与将帮助教育从业者以及政策制定者更好的理解中国移民家庭的幼小衔接经历。您将有机会表达您关于幼小衔接的看法和经历。此课题研究结果将帮助幼儿园，小学，以及中国移民家庭协同合作，从而支持儿童的幼小衔接。

我的隐私怎样被保护？

您的个人信息不会在论文中出现。论文中会使用假名字。您提供的信息只会被用在本课题的最终论文，或者有关本课题的学术出版物或者演讲中。但是，在研究过程中，如果我发现您的孩子遭受虐待，或者认为您的孩子生活在不可接受的环境中，或者受到骚扰或者暴力，我将需要将此信息传递给相关部门。

因为我可能会邀请老师参加我的课题，他们将会知道您在参与我的课题。所以，我只能保证一定程度的隐私。但是，您分享给我的信息不会泄露给他们。

参与这个课题我需要付出什么？

参与本课题您不需要支付任何费用。您将需要花费大约 40 到 60 分钟的时间参加一个访谈。此外，在访谈被转录之后，您将被邀请检查我们的访谈文字记录。

我有多长时间来考虑是否参加？

如果您想参加我的课题，请您在收到这个研究参与者需知**两周内**与我联系。如果您有其他问题，请随时和我联系。

我可以了解到研究结果吗？

如果您感兴趣，我将发送给您一份本课题的研究总结。

如果我对这个课题有疑虑应该怎么办？

如果您对此课题有任何疑虑，请联系本课题导师， Professor Andrew Gibbons: agibbons@aut.ac.nz, 09 921 9999 ext 7929.

如果您对此课题的研究过程有任何不满，请联系奥克兰理工大学研究委员会， *ethics@aut.ac.nz* , (+649) 921 9999 ext 6038

我应该联系谁如果我需要更多的关于此课题的信息？

请保留此研究参与者需知和研究访问同意书，以备将来参考。您也可以通过如下方式联系本课题团队：

研究者本人:

Guangming (Kevin) Zhong: azgmi@163.com

课题导师:

Professor Andrew Gibbons: agibbons@aut.ac.nz, 09 921 9999 ext 7929.

Dr Chris Jenkin: chris.jenkin@aut.ac.nz, 09 921 9999 ext 7911.

Appendix D – Participant information sheet

Participant Information Sheet

Date Information Sheet Produced:

11/07/2018

Project Title

Family involvement in school transition: Chinese migrant families' experiences of children transitioning from early childhood education to primary school in New Zealand

An Invitation

Hello,

I am Guangming (Kevin) Zhong and I am currently doing a Doctor of Philosophy in Education at AUT. I would like to invite you and your child to participate in my research project which will contribute to my doctor's degree. You can withdraw from this research at any time without any consequences.

What is the purpose of this research?

This study investigates Chinese migrant families' experiences of their children transitioning from ECE to primary school in New Zealand. I will obtain a doctor's degree after completing this research.

The findings of this research may enable the wider education community to understand Chinese families' transition experiences, and to develop responsive practices to support Chinese children and families in transition processes.

As research participants, you will have your experiences and perspectives regarding school transition heard. The outcomes of this study may help the different participating parties (the child, parent, and teacher) work collaboratively to support children's school transitions.

The findings of this research may be used for academic publications and presentations.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You are invited to participate in this research because your child is about to make (or has just made) the transition from ECE to primary school in the next (past) few months. You are identified by my personal contacts (either ECE teachers or Chinese parents) who know that your child is starting/has just started primary school.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

You agree to participate in this research by signing and returning a Consent Form which will be provided by me.

When you have signed the Consent Form you can scan or photograph and return to the researcher or copy the content of the Consent Form into an email and send that to the researcher with a sentence indicating your agreement.

Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice) and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You are able to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

What will happen in this research?

You can choose how much you want to be involved in my study.

If you only want to be interviewed once, you will be invited to participate in one interview which will last 40–60 minutes. The interview may be conducted by video call due to the current situation of Covid-19. You will be asked to sign the consent form electronically and give oral consent before the interview starts. During the interview, we will talk about your perspectives and experiences regarding your child's school transition. The time and place for the interview will be discussed between us. The interview will be audio recorded and then transcribed into written form. If you wish, the interview

transcript will be sent to you so that you can make any change if you want to. Subsequently, I will analyse the interview transcript and use it as research data in my thesis. Your identity features will not be mentioned in the thesis. If you wish, you will be sent a summary of this study after this research is completed. Additionally, I will ask you for the name of the centre/school that your child is attending. If you agree, I will approach the teachers to invite participation.

If you are willing to commit more to my study, I invite you and your child to participate together. After you and your child have agreed to participate, I will ask you for the name of the centre/school that your child is attending/will be attending. If you agree, I will approach your child's ECE teacher, centre manager, primary school teacher, and principal to invite participation.

In this instance, you will be invited to participate in three interviews (three months before transition, at the point of transition, and three months after transition), each lasting 40–60 minutes. During the interview, we will talk about your perspectives and experiences regarding your child's school transition.

If the child, yourself and teachers agree, I will go to the centre (one month before transition) and primary school (one month after transition) eight times (four times in each setting) to observe the child's daily experiences, including their engagement in activities, interactions with peers and adults, and their choice of activity during 'free play' time. Each observation will last about one hour. Field notes will be taken for future analysis. I will talk to your child (informal interview) to explore their views on and experiences of school transition. I will audio record the conversation between your child and me, if you and your child agree.

Additionally, if the child, yourself and teachers agree, I would like to attend any transition activities organised by the ECE centre and primary school (such as teacher-parent meetings and school visits) with you, and to collect copies of transition documents (such as newsletters to parents, policy documents, planning material relating to transition, and your child's portfolio) from the centre/school.

Please see below the timeline of the involvement required from you/child/teacher:

Three months before transition:	The first interview with parent/s
Three to one month before transition:	Collect transition documents, attend transition activities
One month before transition:	Child observation, interview ECE teacher and manager
At the point of transition:	The second interview with parent/s
One month after transition:	Child observation, interview school teacher and principal
Three months after transition:	The third interview with parent/s

What are the discomforts and risks?

During the interview, you might be asked questions regarding your perceptions of education in New Zealand. You might feel uncomfortable about this kind of questions as you might not agree with the educational philosophy and practice in New Zealand.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

If you do experience any physical, emotional, or psychological discomforts during the interviews, you can ask the researcher to stop the interview at any time. Or, you can choose not to answer questions that make you feel uncomfortable.

What are the benefits?

Your participation will be highly appreciated as it will contribute to my further understanding of research and doctor's degree.

The study is the first research investigating Chinese migrant families' experiences of school transition in New Zealand. Hence, your participation will help not only me, but other education practitioners/policy makers to understand Chinese migrant group's transition experiences. You will have your experiences and perspectives regarding school transition heard. The outcomes of this study

may help ECE, primary school, and family work collaboratively to support children's school transitions.

How will my privacy be protected?

No identifying features will be mentioned in the thesis so that you will not be identified. Pseudonyms will be used in the thesis. The information provided by you will only be used in the final thesis of this research or other academic publications or presentations regarding this study. However, I will need to pass information on to authorities if, for instance, I discover child abuse, or believe that your child is living in unacceptable circumstances or is subject to harassment or violence.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

There is no cost for you to participate in this research except the time you spend attending one interview. You will be asked to check the interview transcripts after the interview recordings have been transcribed.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

If you would like to participate in this research project, please get in touch with me within **2 weeks** after receiving this Participant Information Sheet. Please feel free to ask me any questions regarding this research.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

You will receive a copy of the summary of the final thesis if you wish.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Professor Andrew Gibbons: agibbons@aut.ac.nz, 09 921 9999 ext 7929..

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEK, ethics@aut.ac.nz , (+649) 921 9999 ext 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

Researcher Contact Details:

Guangming (Kevin) Zhong: azgmi@163.com

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Professor Andrew Gibbons: agibbons@aut.ac.nz, 09 921 9999 ext 7929.

Dr Chris Jenkin: chris.jenkin@aut.ac.nz, 09 921 9999 ext 7911.

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on **26 March 2019**, AUTEK Reference number **19/49**.

Appendix E – Consent Form (Chinese version)

研究访问同意书

课题名称: *幼小衔接中的家庭参与: 中国移民家庭在新西兰的关于孩子幼小衔接阶段的经历*

课题导师: *Dr Andrew Gibbons. Dr Chris Jenkin*

研究者: *Guangming (Kevin) Zhong*

- 我已经通过阅读**研究参与者需知 (11/07/2018)** 了解到此课题的信息。
- 我已经获得机会去问关于此课题的问题，并且已经得到回答。
- 我知道我孩子的成长档案 (portfolio) 的复印件会被收集。
- 我知道在访谈过程中研究者将做记录，并且访谈过程将被录音而后由研究者转录成文字形式。
- 我知道参加此课题是自愿的 (我的选择)，我可以随时选择退出此课题并且不会造成任何后果。
- 我知道如果我选择退出，我可以决定我提供的信息是否继续被使用。但是，论文完成之后，我提供的信息将不能被删除。
- 我同意通过以下方式参加这项研究 (请选择您同意参加的项目)：
- | | |
|---------------|-----------------------|
| 一次采访 | <input type="radio"/> |
| 三次采访 | <input type="radio"/> |
| 儿童观察 | <input type="radio"/> |
| 研究者邀请或者采访老师 | <input type="radio"/> |
| 研究者观察幼小衔接相关活动 | <input type="radio"/> |
- 我想要得到一份研究报告 (请选择一项)： 是 否

参与者签字:

参与者姓名:

参与者联系方式 (如果可以提供)：

.....

.....

.....

.....

日期:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 26 March 2019 AUTEC Reference number 19/49

注意: 研究参与者需要保留一份此文件

Appendix F – Consent Form

Consent Form

Project title: *Family involvement in school transition: Chinese migrant families' experiences of children transitioning from early childhood education to primary school in New Zealand*

Project Supervisor: *Dr Andrew Gibbons. Dr Chris Jenkin*

Researcher: *Guangming (Kevin) Zhong*

- I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 11/07/2018.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- I understand that a copy of my child's/children's portfolio will be collected.
- I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
- I understand that if I withdraw from the study then I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.
- I agree to take part in this research by attending/allowing (please tick as many as you are consenting to):
- | | |
|--|-----------------------|
| One interview | <input type="radio"/> |
| Three interviews | <input type="radio"/> |
| Child observations | <input type="radio"/> |
| Teacher/s being approached/interviewed | <input type="radio"/> |
| Observing transition activities | <input type="radio"/> |
- I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one): Yes No

Participant's signature:

Participant's name:

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 26 March 2019 AUTEK Reference number 19/49

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

Appendix G – Oral Consent Protocol (Chinese version)

研究访问口头同意书

课题名称: *幼小衔接中的家庭参与：中国移民家庭在新西兰的关于孩子幼小衔接阶段的经历*

课题导师: *Dr Andrew Gibbons. Dr Chris Jenkin*

研究者: *Guangming (Kevin) Zhong*

参与者加入视频会议

您同意我录制您的口头同意书么？

如果同意，录音功能将启动，参与者将被问以下问题：

- 您是否已经通过阅读**研究参与者需知（11/07/2018）**了解到此课题的信息？
- 您对此课题有什么问题么？
- 您知道在访谈过程中研究者将做记录，并且访谈过程将被录音而后由研究者转录成文字形式么？
- 您知道参加此课题是自愿的，您可以随时选择退出此课题并且不会造成任何后果么？
- 您知道如果您选择退出，您可以决定您提供的信息是否继续被使用么？但是，论文完成之后，您提供的信息将不能被删除。
- 您同意参加此课题么？
- 您想得到一份研究报告么？ (请选择一项): 是 否
- 您希望我发给您一份口头同意书的录音么？ 是 否
- 请确认您的姓名和联系方式

参与者姓名:

参与者联系方式（如果可以提供）:

.....

.....

.....

.....

我现在将停止录音，然后开始单独录制我对您的访谈。

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 26 March 2019 AUTEC Reference number 19/49

Appendix H – Oral Consent Protocol

Oral Consent Protocol

Project title: **Family involvement in school transition: Chinese migrant families' experiences of children transitioning from early childhood education to primary school in New Zealand**

Project Supervisor: **Dr Andrew Gibbons. Dr Chris Jenkin**

Researcher: **Guangming (Kevin) Zhong**

The participant joins the videoconference

Do you agree to my recording your consent to participate?

If they agree, then the record function will be activated and they will be asked the following:

Have you read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 11/07/2018?

Do you have any questions about the research?

Do you understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that the interview will also be audio-recorded and transcribed?

Do you understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (your choice) and that you may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way?

Do you understand that if you withdraw from the study then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used? However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

Do you agree to take part in this research?

Do you wish to receive a summary of the research findings? (please tick one): Yes No

Do you want me to send you a copy of the audio recording for this consent? Yes No

Please confirm your name and contact details

Participant's name:

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....

.....

.....

.....

I will now turn off the recording of the Consent and then will start a separate recording for the interview.

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 26 March 2019 AUTEK Reference number 19/49

Appendix I – Indicative interview questions

请做一下自我介绍，包括您的移民时间、教育和工作背景。

Please introduce yourself, like your length of migration, education, and employment history.

您对教育的看法有改变吗？

Has your view on education changed after migration?

是什么因素影响了您的教育观呢？

What have influenced your educational belief?

您对于幼小衔接是怎么看的？

What do you think about children's school transition?

您希望孩子在幼儿园/小学学习什么？

What do you want your child to learn in ECE/primary school?

为了帮助孩子的幼小衔接，您在家里会做些什么？

To help with your child's school transition, what did you do at home?

您孩子对于幼小衔接是什么感觉？

How does your child feel about school transition?

您觉得幼儿园/小学老师对于有限衔接是什么看法？

What do you think about teachers' (both ECE and primary school) perspectives on school transition?

幼儿园老师和小学老师之间有哪些沟通和合作吗？

What are the communication and cooperation between ECE teachers and school teachers, based on your knowledge?

幼儿园/小学提供了哪些幼小衔接方面的帮助？

What did ECE/primary school do to support your children's school transition?

幼小衔接阶段，孩子在幼儿园的 portfolio 是怎样应用的？

How was the portfolio being used in school transition?

对于孩子的幼小衔接，您有哪些困难和问题？

Did you experience any challenges in times of children's school transition?

这些困难和问题是怎么解决的？

How were these challenges dealt with?

疫情对幼小衔接有什么影响？

How did the pandemic influence school transition?

幼儿园孩子家长和小学生家长有什么不同？

What is the difference of being a parent of an ECE child and primary school child?

关于幼小衔接，您还有其他想和我分享的吗？

Is there anything else you want to share with me about school transition?