University Library

A gateway to Melbourne's research publications

Minerva Access is the Institutional Repository of The University of Melbourne

Author/s:
Baker, Lisa Maree

Title:
Wellbeing literacy and early childhood education: A qualitative examination of pedagogy, practices and policy in Australia

Date:
2025

Persistent Link:
https://hdl.handle.net/11343/363609

Terms and Conditions:
Terms and Conditions: Copyright in works deposited in Minerva Access is retained by the copyright owner. The work may not be altered without permission from the copyright owner. Readers may only download, print and save electronic copies of whole works for their own personal non-commercial use. Any use that exceeds these limits requires permission from the copyright owner. Attribution is essential when quoting or paraphrasing from these works.

Wellbeing literacy and early childhood education: A qualitative examination of pedagogy, practices and policy in Australia.

Lisa M Baker

Lisa M Baker (0000-0001-9006-0661) - ORCID

Doctor of Philosophy

August 2025

Centre for Wellbeing Science

Faculty of Education, University of Melbourne

Submitted in total fulfilment for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy (Education)

Advisory Committee

Professor Lindsay Oades (Principal Supervisor)

Professor Bridie Raban (Co-supervisor)

Professor Wee Tiong Seah (Chair)

ABSTRACT

Early childhood education and care (ECEC), encompassing education from birth to formal schooling, plays a critical role in children's learning, development, and wellbeing. Research highlights both short-term and long-term benefits arising from children's participation in quality ECEC settings, including improved socio-emotional, communication and cognitive skills.

In Australia, the National Quality Framework, including the *Early Years Learning Framework*, mandates ECEC services and professionals to teach for Learning Outcomes focused on children's wellbeing and effective communication. Within this context, the concept of wellbeing literacy offers a novel approach to understanding and promoting child wellbeing. Defined as the mindful language use about and for wellbeing, wellbeing literacy is conceptualised through a Capability Model of wellbeing literacy (CM-WL) comprising five key components: wellbeing vocabulary and knowledge, comprehension and composition of multimodal texts, context awareness and adaptability, and intentionality for wellbeing. While explored in adult, secondary, and primary education contexts, wellbeing literacy has not been researched in ECEC settings, representing a significant gap in the literature.

This thesis examines the application of wellbeing literacy to ECEC in Australia, addressing this gap at the intersection of wellbeing science and early education. This study is timely, aligning with international trends reimagining education's purpose beyond academic goals towards wellbeing outcomes, and contemporary views of literacy as multimodal and socio-cultural. Underpinned by systems theories and sociocultural perspectives, this research examines wellbeing literacy in relation to ECEC policy, pedagogy and teaching practices.

Employing a qualitative, sequential three-study design, a content analysis of ECEC documents, surveys with ECEC teachers (n=76) and focus groups with ECEC professionals (n=28) have been conducted. Findings reveal varied usage of the term 'wellbeing' across ECEC contexts, a nuanced view of child wellbeing among ECEC professionals, and the potential of wellbeing literacy as a shared language and planning tool. This research demonstrates how wellbeing literacy can underpin relational and

place-based pedagogies, inform teaching practices, and expand quality educational approaches in ECEC.

In evidencing wellbeing literacy as a relevant and valuable concept in ECEC, this thesis contends that CM-WL may provide a structured approach to understanding and promoting child wellbeing that aligns with existing pedagogies and practices. It contributes to literature by offering a contextualised perspective on child wellbeing in ECEC and pioneering the examination of wellbeing literacy in this educational context. By providing a bridge between wellbeing science and early education, this research contributes to the evolving landscape of ECEC, emphasising the importance of intentional, adaptable, and multimodal approaches to fostering children's wellbeing language and communication. This thesis provides a foundation for future research and practical applications of wellbeing literacy in early childhood settings, potentially influencing policy, pedagogy, and practices to enhance children's wellbeing outcomes and contribute to long-term societal benefits.

Key words: child wellbeing, early childhood education and care, pedagogy, practices, policy, wellbeing literacy.

DECLARATION

This declaration is to certify that:

The thesis comprises only my original work towards the Doctor of Philosophy, except where indicated in the preface.

Due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used.

The thesis is fewer than 100,000 words limit in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies, and appendices.

Lisa M Baker

01.08.2025

PREFACE

This thesis includes five published articles. They have been included in their entirety as the respective chapters listed below, either as published or author-accepted manuscript versions but formatted to align with the thesis (including the numbering of figures and tables). Note, for flow of the thesis, manuscript/publication references have been integrated into the References on p. 198 rather than at the end of each publication.

These articles were collaboratively produced with co-authors and PhD supervisors, Professor Lindsay Oades and Professor Bridie Raban. The PhD candidate, Lisa Baker, is the first author on each of these publications and undertook the majority of the related work. References for these articles, indicating publication dates, journals, and authorship contributions of each party are listed below. *Declaration for Publication Incorporated in a Thesis* and *Research Authorship Agreement* documents have been signed and provided to the University as part of this thesis submission.

Peer reviewed papers presented at conferences and other submission that have informed the work of this these are also listed in this preface.

Peer reviewed publications forming chapters of this thesis

Chapter Four

Baker, L. M., Oades, L. G., & Raban, B. (2021). Wellbeing literacy and early childhood education. *New Zealand International Research in Early Childhood Education*, *23*(2), 4-19. https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/informit.404572037365614

Article preparation and writing %	Baker	Oades	Raban
Planning	80	10	10
Conceptual links/ aims	60	20	20
Data analysis/ results	NA	NA	NA
Discussion	70	20	10

Chapter Six

Baker, L. M., Raban, B., & Oades, L. G. (2025). What does 'wellbeing' mean? A content analysis of early childhood education pedagogy and practice documents in Australia. *Educational Research for Policy and Practice*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10671-025-09396-9

Article preparation and writing %	Baker	Raban	Oades
Planning	90	5	5
Conceptual design/ aims	60	20	20
Research Design	50	25	25
Data Analysis	80	15	5
Results	70	25	5
Discussion	70	20	10

Chapter Seven

Baker, L. M., Raban, B., & Oades, L. G. (2025). Constant crossings: Teachers' definitions of child wellbeing in early education, a reflective thematic analysis. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*. https://doi.org/10.1177/18369391251337791

Article preparation and writing %	Baker	Raban	Oades
Planning	90	5	5
Conceptual design/ aims	60	20	20
Research Design	50	25	25
Data Analysis	80	15	5
Results	70	20	10
Discussion	70	20	10

Chapter Eight

Baker, L. M., Raban, B., & Oades, L. G. (2025). How wellbeing literacy reflects and supports wellbeing practices in early education - A directed qualitative content analysis of teacher practices. *International Journal of Wellbeing*, *15*(4) https://doi.org/10.5502/ijw.v15i4.4739

Article preparation and writing %	Baker	Raban	Oades
Planning	90	5	5
Conceptual design/ aims	60	20	20
Research Design	50	25	25
Data Analysis	80	15	5
Results	70	20	10
Discussion	70	20	10

Chapter Nine

Baker, L. M., Raban, B., & Oades, L. G. (2025). "This is the crux of what we do" – Early education perspectives of how wellbeing literacy can underpin, expand and

inform wellbeing practices and pedagogy. *Journal of Early Childhood Research*. https://doi.org/10.1177/1476718X251369233

Article preparation and writing %	Baker	Raban	Oades
Planning	90	5	5
Conceptual design/ aims	60	20	20
Research Design	50	25	25
Data Analysis	75	20	5
Results	70	20	10
Discussion	70	20	10

Peer reviewed publications not included in this thesis

The following publications (co-authored articles and invited book chapters) were written and produced during PhD candidature. These publications informed the evolution of thinking and application of ideas during candidature but are not directly included in the thesis:

Baker, L. M. (2025). Language, literacy and wellbeing in the early years – What happens early matters. In L. G. Oades, N. Lemon, J. Francis, & T. Lomas (Eds.), *Wellbeing literacy: Theory and practice through multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary lenses*. Routledge.

Francis, J., & **Baker**, L. M. (2025). Moving to the beat and with the times: Arts and wellbeing literacy education. In A. Giraldez-Hayes, M. Seligman & J. Bourke (Eds.), *Routledge International Handbook of Wellbeing Arts*.

Routledge.

Green, S., Dulagil, A., & **Baker**, L. M. (2025). Wellbeing literacy and its role in evidence-based coaching. In L. G. Oades, N. Lemon, J. Francis, & T. Lomas (Eds.), *Wellbeing literacy: Theory and practice through multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary lenses*. Routledge.

Roache, A., George, J., & **Baker**, L. M. (2025). Connection, momentum, and growth: Exploring the benefits and challenges of 'Shut Up & Research' for researcher wellbeing. In N. Lemon, A. Bozle, M. Sanata Cruz, & R. Saunders (Eds.), *Cultivating Wellbeing and Community through Writing in Academia: Shifting the Culture with Shut Up & Write!* Routledge.

Lemon, N., Francis, J., & **Baker**, L. M. (2024). Well-being literacy in the academic landscape: Trioethnographic inquiry into scholarly writing. *Brock Education Journal, 33*(1), 27-48. **DOI:** https://doi.org/10.26522/brocked.v33i1.1120

Oades, L., Hou, H., Francis, J., **Baker**, L. M., & Huang, L. (2022). Well-being literacy: Language use as a way to contextualize the process of positive education. In K. Allen, M. Furlong, D. Vella Broderick, & S. Suldo (Eds.), *Handbook of positive psychology in schools: Supporting process and practice* (3rd ed., pp. 91-103). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003013778

Conference Presentations

During this PhD candidature, opportunities arose to present insights and potential applications from this thesis at national and international conferences. These occasions allowed for testing and refining ideas in different contexts, to different audiences, and to communicate research findings in professional arenas:

Baker, L.M. & Oades, L. G. (2025, July 2-5). *Introducing 'WellMet' - a Wellbeing literacy Vignette Method for analysing wellbeing language interactions in your context*. [Workshop - abstract accepted]. IPPA World Congress, Brisbane.

Baker, L.M. (2025, July 2-5). *Framing early wellbeing pedagogy and practice – an early education framework adapted from the Capability Model of Wellbeing literacy*. [Rapid Fire presentation]. IPPA World Congress, Brisbane.

Oades, L. G., **Baker**, L.M., Lemon, N., Francis, J. & Huang, L. (2025, July 2-5). *Wellbeing literacy: A Bridge Between Language, Learning, and Flourishing*. [Round Table Provocation]. IPPA World Congress, Brisbane.

Baker, L. M. (2023, October 4-7) *Wellbeing literacy - A contemporary lens on child wellbeing pedagogy and practice.* [Workshop Presentation]. Early Childhood Australia National Conference, Adelaide.

Francis, J. & **Baker**, L. M. (2023, September 28). *Replenishing educational possibilities through wellbeing literacy* [Workshop Presentation]. Positive Education Schools Australian, Melbourne, Wellbeing in Education State Conference

Baker, L. M. (2023, July 20-23). *Wellbeing and early education - are we literate?* [Podium Presentation]. IPPA World Congress on Positive Psychology 2023. Vancouver, Canada. IPPA World Congress

Baker, L. M. (2023, 23 - 25 March). *Wellbeing literacy: Wellbeing for children beyond health and safety!* [Workshop Presentation]. Inspire Conference 2023. Sydney.

Baker, L. M. (2023, February 9 - 10). *Do we really know what wellbeing is? How we conceptualise 'wellbeing' in policy and practice in ECEC in Australia* [Roundtable presentation]. 2023 AJEC Research Symposium: Early childhood knowledges, generations, and time**.** Online. 2023-AJEC-Research-Symposium-Program.pdf (earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au)

Baker, L. M. (2022). *Conceptualisations of wellbeing in early childhood education and care: Where is literacy?* In S. McLeod, C. Gregoric & S. Sikder, (Eds.). Early Childhood Voices 2022 Conference Proceedings (pp. 113). Charles Sturt University. https://earlychildhoodresearch.csu.domains/early-childhood-voices-conference-2022

Baker, L. M. (2022, October 5-8). *Wellbeing literacy: An essential capability for contemporary early childhood pedagogy and practice* [Paper Presentation]. Early Childhood Australia National Conference, Canberra. https://www.ecaconference.com.au/2022/

Baker, L. M. (2022, February 10-11). *Wellbeing and the NQF - what do we convey and Understand?* Embracing Challenge: Research in Early Childhood, [Roundtable presentation]. 2023 AJEC Research Symposium: Research in early childhood. Online. https://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/events/

Submissions and contributions

Further to the above publications and conference presentations, communication of the work of this thesis during candidature occurred across multiple avenues:

- UoM Talking Teaching **Podcast** (May 2025) - Wellbeing literacy – Teachers and Students using language to enhance wellbeing. Talking Teaching
- Early Childhood Australia, 'The Spoke' **online publication**. *Children's wellbeing and literacy – how they go hand in hand*. https://thespoke.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/childrens-wellbeing-and-literacy-how-they-go-hand-in-hand/

- **Submission** to the Australian Government's *Early Years Strategy* (Baker, Oades & Raban, 2023). *Towards A Wellbeing Literate Australia*. *CENTRE-FOR-WELLBEING-MELBOURNE-UNIVERSITY-17383-New-submission-from-Early-Years-Strategy-Public-Submissions_Redacted.pdf*
- **Invited Delegate** at the invitation of the Minister for Early Childhood Education and Minister for Youth at *The National Early Years Summit* (Australian Parliament House, Canberra), to contribute to the development of the Australian *Government's Early Years Strategy*. 17 February 2023. National Early Years Summit | Department of Social Services

No other work in this thesis has been prepared prior to candidature or submitted for other qualifications. As indicated above with reference to authorship, assistance with content and structure of this thesis, including editing, language precision and completeness, was provided by supervisors, Lindsay Oades and Bridie Raban. No third-party assistance was provided with the content of this thesis and no material within this thesis was created or substantially altered by digital editorial assistance or generative AI (GenAI) tools. The secure University of Melbourne developed GenAI platform (Spark) was used during the completion of the discussion chapter, limited to support with language expression (clarity, grammar, spelling and completeness). Perplexity was utilised as an AI aided search engine during literature review updates and NotebookLM for selected literature summarisation.

This research was supported by the Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship (RTP) Scholarship. No other grants, scholarships, or funding were used in the preparation of this thesis.

Writing, research and production of this thesis was undertaken on the unceded lands of the Wadawurrung people. The unique placed held by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Isander peoples as original owners and custodians of the lands and waterways across Ballarat, Victoria and the continent of Australia is acknowledged. Respect is paid to Elders past, present and future and acknowledge their excellence in caring for and educating children for more than 60,000 years.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It has been said that it takes a village to raise a child. The same must be said for 'raising' a thesis. I could not have undertaken this huge project, and certainly not completed it, without the support, input and sheer will of many people. Villagers of both an academic and personal kind have stood beside me during this PhD, and I thank every one of them enormously.

First and due credit to my supervisors, Professor Lindsay Oades and Professor Bridie Raban. Lindsay and Bridie, you offered unwavering support, guidance and levity from the very first day. Lindsay, I may never be the fully-fledged philosopher or methodologist you hoped for, but I'm closer than I've ever been, that's for sure! Your belief in the central claim of my thesis, and my ability to bring it to life was a constant driver for me. You told me to start writing on day one and I'm still going. I hope to never stop. And regarding any intellectual or writing pursuit going forward, you can bet I'll keep hearing your reminder to hurry up and get to the 'so what?'

Bridie, I can never thank you enough for the hundreds of pages you read over and over, or your keen and intelligent eye for detail. You have been enthusiastically available for conversations, support, editing, reassurance and critique since the beginning. I am indebted to you for what I have been able to produce and publish - your feedback and deep knowledge of early childhood pedagogy were key in continually refining my thinking. And a four-legged thank you to Toby too! My appreciation also to Professor Wee Tiong See as Advisory Panel Chair – I valued your wise counsel and positive regard at each milestone and review.

Continuing on the academic front, thanks to colleagues and friends within the *Research in Effective Education in Early Childhood (REEaCh) Centre*, and *Centre for Wellbeing Science* at the University of Melbourne. As academic role models, critical friends, research and education superheros and thoroughly good people, you have directly and indirectly supported my work over many years. Having colleagues with integrity, drive and good humour has sustained and inspired me no end. Special thanks to Jacqui, Rachel and Jessica. Jacqui, your empathy for elephant eating, chapter writing and all phases of academic life has uplifted me in more ways than I can count. Long may we collaborate, QF. Rachel, you have championed and inspired me since the MAPP, and I

want to acknowledge your subtle and constant support. Jessica, beach retreats and Moira memes will get us both there in the end, I know it.

I also want to thank my writing and research secret weapon, the *Research Accelerator* crew. To everyone who I have zoomed with for 7.30am SU&R sessions, celebrated and lamented alongside in Welo and on virtual retreats, thank you - you RAs absolutely rock. Shout out to the ever-marvellous Annalise for showing me the RA way and being a wellbeing legend.

On a personal front, there are many villagers to thank but not enough pages in this thesis to do them justice. A couple cannot go unmentioned though. Bec, there will be a significant content change now that PhD-life is off the podcast, but I'm sure we can fill the gap with other rants and rambles. You know and hear me probably more than you want, but I'm crazy grateful for your constant support. Damien and Chris, you are quietly in the background picking up my Main Road slack, checking in and understanding. I appreciate that you two are always at the end of a text.

Turning homeward: Jamie, Emily and Georgia. We did it! You got me to the end. George and Ems, you may not remember what it's like to have a mother who isn't studying but I am so grateful for the dinners, shows, walks, cat and dog pics, messages, gifs, platters and coffees you make me stop for. Every one of those moments, large and small, has been fuel in my tank. You both inspire me constantly with the way you get out into the world, go places you want to go and be the people you want to be. Thanks for raising each other the last few years; you've done good. And Jamie! You are the absolute bedrock of my existence. None of my professional or academic endeavours now, or over the last 40 years (yep, 40) would have been possible on my own. You have listened, cooked, driven, cleaned, arranged, parented, supported, ducked, weaved, helped, martini-ed, loved and laughed in the most unconditional way that surely cannot be the work of a mere mortal. Kosioskums, over and over.

Now this thesis has been 'raised' and is about to leave the nest. I'm grateful, proud and a wee bit tired. To everyone above and many others who were here with me for some or all of the way, please know the work I have been able to do is all the better for having you in my village.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One: '*Roadmap*' - General introduction and thesis overview 1

Thesis aim and research questions 4

Overview of thesis structure 5

Chapter summary 8

Chapter 2: '*Context*' - Early Childhood Education and Care, Wellbeing and Literacy 9

Early childhood education 10

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) – history, policy, quality, pedagogy and practice 12

Early education brief history and policy drivers 12

What does 'quality' mean in ECEC? 13

What does 'pedagogy' mean in ECEC? 15

What does 'practice' mean in ECEC? 16

ECEC – the current Australian context 16

Wellbeing 20

Varied historical perspectives on wellbeing 20

Wellbeing as multi-dimensional 22

Wellbeing as dynamic and malleable 24

Wellbeing as contextual and cultural 24

The complexity of child wellbeing 26

Child wellbeing in ECEC policy and pedagogy 27

Australian ECEC wellbeing policy 27

Literacy 28

Language and language development 28

Varied and evolving views of literacy 29

Multiple and multimodal literacies 30

Literacy in the *Early Years Learning Framework* (EYLF) 31

Chapter summary 32

Chapter 3: '*Concept*' - A literature review of wellbeing literacy 33

Wellbeing literacy origins and definition 33

Capability Model of wellbeing literacy 34

Vocabulary and knowledge about wellbeing 35
Wellbeing comprehension of multimodal texts 37
Wellbeing composition of multimodal texts 37
Context awareness and adaptability 38
Intentionality for wellbeing 38
Review of wellbeing literacy research **40**
Laying claim to wellbeing literacy in early childhood education and care **43**

Chapter Four: '*Claim*' - Wellbeing literacy and early childhood education **45**

Abstract **45**
Introduction **45**
Education in the early childhood years **46**
Wellbeing and early childhood 47
Wellbeing science for child wellbeing – wellbeing literacy **49**
Wellbeing literacy - A Capability Model 50
Vocabulary and knowledge about wellbeing 51
Multimodal comprehension 51
Multimodal composition 51
Context awareness and adaptability 52
Intentionality for wellbeing 52
Benefits of wellbeing literacy in the early childhood education context **54**
Contextual relevance of wellbeing literacy 54
Clarification of best practice in ECEC 55
Benefits for ECEC educators 55
Benefits beyond ECEC services 56
Future directions, research and practice **57**
Insight into wellbeing gains 57
Future research 58
Conclusion **58**

Chapter Five: '*Methodology*' - Theoretical framework, research methodology and study design **59**

Theoretical framework **59**
Systems theories within the theoretical framework 60
The bioecological model 61
Worlds of Influence Framework of child wellbeing 63

The value of two systems perspectives for this thesis 64
Sociocultural theories within the theoretical framework 65
Integration of the theoretical framework 66
Methodology 67
Philosophy 68
Approach to theory development 71
Methodological choice 73
Strategies, Time horizon, Techniques and Procedures 75
Study 1 – summative content analysis of ECEC practice and pedagogy documents 76
Study 2 – online survey of ECEC teachers working in Victorian kindergarten programs 76
Part A – a reflexive thematic analysis. 79
Part B – a directed content analysis. 79
Study 3 – focus groups with ECEC teachers and professionals 80
Chapter summary 81

Chapter Six: *'Landscape'* – A content analysis of early childhood education pedagogy and practice documents in Australia 82

Abstract 82
Introduction to child wellbeing 83
The context of child wellbeing discourse and descriptions in pedagogy 84
The current study: What does 'wellbeing' mean? 85
Methods 86
Data acquisition and sample 86
Data analysis 88
Results 89
UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 90
Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (authorised version no. 038) 91
Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 (Cth) 91
Education and Care Services National Regulations (Cth) 91
Guide to the National Quality Framework 91
National Quality Standard 2018 92
Belonging, being and becoming: the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia V2.0 92
Educators' guide to the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia 93
ACECQA information sheets 94

Discussion 94
Wellbeing usage is multifold and disparate 94
Wellbeing definitions are rare and lack contemporary perspectives 96
What practice and/or policy implications arise from 'wellbeing' positioned as a Learning Outcome? 98
Future directions 99
Conclusion 100

Bridge – Linking information between published articles of Chapters Six and Seven 101

Chapter Seven: '*Perspectives*' - Teachers' definitions of child wellbeing in early education 105

Introduction 105
What is 'wellbeing'? 105
Australian early childhood education context 107
The current study 107
Methodology 108
Theoretical framework 109
Participants 110
Materials and methods 111
Data analysis 111
Ethical considerations 113
Findings 113
Key Themes 113
Theme 1*: 'Seeing who you are'* 114
Subtheme: *'Healthy and whole'* 115
Subtheme: *'Sensing and feeling'* 115
Subtheme: *'Actively engaged'* 115
Theme 2: 'We *are here for you'* 116
Subtheme: *'Community and connections'* 116
Subtheme: *'Visibility and value'* 116
Theme 3: '*Let's learn'* 117
Overarching theme of 'constant crossings' 117
Discussion 118
Implications 119

Strengths, limitations and future directions 121
Conclusion 121

Bridge – Linking information between published articles Of Chapters Seven and Eight 123

Chapter Eight: '*Synergies*' - How wellbeing literacy reflects and supports wellbeing practices in early education 124

Abstract 124
Introduction 125
Wellbeing literacy 126
The early childhood education context 128
The context of Australia 129
The current study 129
Method 130
Qualitative study design 130
Participants 130
Data collection 131
Researcher reflexivity 132
Ethical considerations 132
Data analysis 132
Trustworthiness 136
Findings 136
Predetermined category - 'Vocabulary and knowledge about wellbeing' 137
Emergent subcategory - 'Practice and pedagogy importance' 138
Emergent subcategory - 'Wellbeing words, topic areas and concepts taught' 138
Predetermined category - 'Comprehension of multimodal text related to wellbeing' 139
Emergent subcategory - 'Comprehension - practice and pedagogy importance' 139
Predetermined category - 'Composition of multimodal text related to wellbeing' 140
Emergent subcategory - 'Composition - practice and pedagogy importance' 140
Emergent subcategory – 'Composition - wellbeing expression, communication and signs' 141
Emergent subcategory - 'Composition - non-verbal communication avenues are important' 141

Predetermined category - 'Context awareness and adaptability' 142
Predetermined category - 'Intentionality for wellbeing' 143
Predetermined category - 'Other than the model' 143
Discussion 144
Implications 146
Limitations and future directions 146
Conclusion 147
Bridge – Linking information between published articles of Chapters Eight and Nine 149

Chapter Nine: *'Opportunities' - Perspectives of how wellbeing literacy can underpin, expand and inform wellbeing practices and pedagogy* 151

Abstract 151
Influences on early childhood education and care 152
ECEC and wellbeing 153
Wellbeing literacy 153
The current study 155
Methodology 155
Qualitative study design 155
Participants 155
Data collection 156
Researcher reflexivity 158
Ethical considerations 158
Data Analysis 158
Findings 160
Theme one – 'A Shared Language and Lens' 161
Theme two – 'A Learning and planning tool' 162
Theme three – 'Another layer – going deeper, further, expanding 163
Theme four – 'Applicability and value' 164
Integrative themes 165
Discussion 166
Strengths, limitations and future directions 167
Conclusion 168

Chapter 10: '*Integration*' – Overarching thesis discussion and conclusion 169

Overview of this chapter 169

Revisiting the overview of this thesis and findings from its three sequential studies 169
Specific contributions of this thesis' studies in relation to the research aim and question. 171
Wellbeing conceptualisations – synergies, opportunities and contributions 173
Informing contextualised perspectives. 173
Wellbeing literacy as a focused view of wellbeing. 174
Expanding wellbeing conceptions beyond emotions. 175
Informing views of wellbeing as a capability that can be taught and learned. 176
Early childhood education pedagogy and practices - synergies, opportunities and contributions 176
Underpinning pedagogies. 177
Informing teaching practices of the *Early Years Learning Framework*. 178
Expanding quality educational practices for children's development 180
Australian early childhood education and care policy – synergies, opportunities and contributions 182
Implications arising from this thesis 184
Implications for literature 184
Implications for practice 185
Implications for policy 186
Limitations of this thesis and the studies conducted 188
Future directions arising from this thesis 189
Future research opportunities 190
Articulation of practical applications and wellbeing literacy training 191
Emergent insights for further exploration and elaboration 191
Key Recommendations 193
Conclusion 196
REFERENCES 198

APPENDICES 234

APPENDIX A - Full Qualtrics Survey Questions for Online Survey (Study 2) 234
APPENDIX B - Human Ethics Approval 238
APPENDIX C - Plain Language Statement (Online Survey - Study 2) 240
APPENDIX D - Participant Consent Form (Online Survey - Study 2) 242
APPENDIX E - 'Miro' Board Samples Illustrating Components of the Reflexive Thematic Analysis of Survey Data (Study 2) 243
APPENDIX F - Plain Language Statement for Focus Groups (Study 3) 245

APPENDIX G - Participant Consent Form for Focus Groups (Study 3) 247

APPENDIX H - Consolidated Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Studies (COREQ): 32-Item Checklist..... 248

APPENDIX I - Template Analysis Initial Template (V1) Including A-Priori Themes (Study 3)..... 251

APPENDIX J - Miro' Board Samples Illustrating Components of the Thematic Analysis of Focus Group Data (Study 3) 253

APPENDIX K - Template Analysis Final Template (V5) Including All Hierarchical Levels (Study 3)..... 255

APPENDIX L - Sample of NVIVO Reflexive log demonstrating evolution of data analysis methods (Study 2)..... 257

APPENDIX M - Vignettes Shared with Focus Group Participants (Study 3) 258

APPENDIX N - Full description of Focus Group Themes and Sample Participant Quotes (Study 3) 260

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1 Connections between multi-dimensional aspects of wellbeing, dimensions, literature and the ECEC context of this thesis. 22

Table 3.1 *The CM-WL (adapted from Oades et al., 2020)* *34*

Table 4.1 *Five Component Model of wellbeing literacy (Oades, Jarden et al, 2021)* *47*

Table 4.2 *Conditions and skills to build wellbeing literacy capability - as applied to ECEC* (adapted from Oades, Baker et al., 2021). ..... *50 - 51*

Table 5.1 *The theoretical framework underpinning this thesis*..... *57*

Table 5.2 *Three study design and research questions of this thesis*..... *69*

Table 6.1 *Themes found in Australian ECEC documents expressing underlying meanings of 'wellbeing'* *87*

Table 7.1 *Participant Demographics*..... *107*

Table 7.2 *Themes and Subthemes About Child Wellbeing Generated from the Survey Data*..... *110 - 111*

Table 8.1 *The CM-WL* (adapted from Baker et al., 2021) *123*

Table 8.2 *Demographics of Survey Participants* *128*

Table 8.3 *Structured Categorisation Matrix (of predetermined Categories and Emerging Subcategories) used For and During Coding* *131*

Table 9.1 *The CM-WL* (adapted from Baker et al., 2021; Oades et al., 2021) *151*

Table 9.2 *Final thematic analysis template table from focus group data (levels 1 and 2 only), including integrative themes* *157*

Table 10.1 *Synergies, Opportunities and Contributions Arising from The Studies of This Thesis* *169*

Table 10.2 *The frequent representation of components of the CM-WL* *189*

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1 *Study design of this thesis* *5*

Figure 2.1 *Thesis conceptual framework of ECEC, showing existing connections between the concepts of wellbeing, literacy and wellbeing literacy, and policy, pedagogy and practices* *9*

Figure 2.2 *The National Quality Framework for ECEC in Australia* *17*

Figure 2.3 *Diagram from the EYLF illustrating the integrated Learning Outcomes, Principles, Practices and the elements of Belonging, Being and Becoming.* *19*

Figure 5.1 *Bioecological Model with the child at the centre and ECEC system examples related to this thesis (adapted from Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007)* *59*

Figure 5.2 *The Methodology 'onion' applied to this thesis (adapted from Saunders, et al., 2019)* *64*

Figure 7.1 *Multi-level child wellbeing framework (Gromada et al., 2020, p. 6)* *106*

Figure 7.2 *Reflexive Thematic Data Analysis Process Undertaken (adapted from Braun & Clarke, 2022)* *109*

Figure 7.3 *Representing Themes and Subthemes as 'Constant Crossings' in the ECEC Context* *115*

Figure 8.1 *Example of Participant Response Coded for Components of the wellbeing literacy Model from the Dual Perspectives of the Teacher and the Child* ..... *132 - 133*

Figure 10.1 *Study design of this thesis* *167*

LIST OF FREQUENTLY USED ACRONYMS

ACECQA - Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority

CM-WL - Capability Model of Wellbeing Literacy

DCA - Directed Content Analysis

ECEC - Early Childhood Education and Care

EYLF - Early Years Learning Framework NQF - National Quality Framework

NQS - National Quality Standard

OECD - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

RTA - Reflexive Thematic Analysis

TeA - Template Analysis

UN - United Nations

UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNICEF - United Nations Children's Fund

WHO - World Health Organization

CHAPTER ONE: '*ROADMAP'* - GENERAL INTRODUCTION AND THESIS OVERVIEW

This chapter presents the *Roadmap* of this thesis. It outlines the thesis background and introduces the aim, research questions and study design. A brief overview of each chapter is provided, and the overall structure of this thesis' literature review sections, publications, chapters and bridging sections are outlined.

Thesis background

Quality education for young children is crucial. Early childhood is a critical life stage for children's learning, development and wellbeing (Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs [MCEECDYA], 2010; National Scientific Council on the Developing Child [NSCDC], 2007). Neuroscience highlights brain growth at its highest in the first five years of life, laying critical foundations for the future (Knudsen et al., 2006; Kong et al., 2020; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Being well in these years puts children on a positive trajectory of development and success in multiple life domains (OECD, 2021). The heart and drive of this thesis lies in this potential for wellbeing, through the power of early childhood education and care (ECEC).

Children's learning, development and wellbeing can be supported during the years before school, while they attend ECEC settings. Early childhood teachers, educators, services and experiences have been noted as some of the most important influential factors in a young child's development (Cagliari, et al. 2016; Hattie, 2008). The benefits of ECEC experiences are many, including improved social, emotional, language and cognitive skills (Shuey & Kankaraš, 2018; Yoshikawa et al., 2016). These benefits are evident both proximally and distally, developing children's immediate skills and influencing their ongoing prospects of educational attainment, future earnings and overall wellbeing (Duncan et al., 2023; García et al., 2020; Heckman & Karapakula, 2019; OECD, 2021). This thesis is concerned with early education settings and what skills children can acquire and be taught to specifically support their wellbeing. Expressly, the aim of this thesis has been to examine how the concept wellbeing literacy can be applied to the ECEC ecosystem in Australia and how it may expand, focus, inform and/or underpin ECEC policy and professional's pedagogy and practices.

Wellbeing literacy, simply defined, is the "mindful language use about and for wellbeing" (Oades, et al., 2020, p. 697). Originating in wellbeing science, wellbeing literacy is concerned with people's wellbeing communication capabilities. Wellbeing literacy encompasses the ability to communicate both *about* and *for* wellbeing, using language skills effectively in different situations for the direct purpose of wellbeing creation. These skills are presented by Oades, Jarden and colleagues (2021) as a Capability Model of wellbeing literacy (CM-WL) with five key components:

- wellbeing vocabulary and knowledge
- wellbeing comprehension of multimodal texts
- wellbeing composition of multimodal texts
- context awareness and adaptability, and
- intentionality for wellbeing.

Conceptualising wellbeing literacy as a capability and a relational process suggests that the associated wellbeing knowledge, vocabulary, and skills can be learned and developed (Hou et al., 2021). The teaching and learning of wellbeing related language skills is of specific interest to this thesis.

The first descriptions and definition of wellbeing literacy are recent (see Hou et al., 2021; Oades & Johnston, 2017; Oades, et al., 2020) and conceptual and empirical literature has followed. For example, wellbeing literacy has been explored in adult samples in higher education (Huang et al., 2020; Serini et al., 2024) and lay (non-expert) populations (Chng et al., 2022). Hou and colleagues (2021) have developed and empirically tested a wellbeing literacy measure in an education context with secondary students, parents and staff. However, despite some examination with children of primary school age (Francis et al., 2020; Waters et al., 2022), no empirical studies have been undertaken to date applying wellbeing literacy in early education settings or with children under school age.

As education settings are increasingly called upon to focus on wellbeing, wellbeing literacy resonates with contemporary pedagogical thinking. Educators, governments and institutions internationally are reimagining the purpose of education, beyond purely academic goals and towards wellbeing outcomes (Duraiappah et al., 2022; Norrish et al., 2013; White et al., 2023). Early childhood education discourse is also

increasingly focusing on the wellbeing and potentiality of children with a desire to reconceptualise pedagogy away from the impacts of neoliberalism (Malaguzzi, cited in Cagliari et al., 2016; Mayor et al., 1997; Moss, 2017). Agreement has mounted that early education should target not only traditional, academic outcomes (such as literacy and numeracy) and physical, social, emotional, language and cognitive development processes, but also wellbeing (Jalongo, 2004; Norrish et al., 2013; OECD, 2017).

Similarly, a rethinking of what constitutes literacy has been prevalent in education and other disciplines. Contemporary literacy approaches, sociocultural theories and 'new' literacy scholars have expanded conceptions of literacy from an individual, cognitive process to a socio-cultural one, that occurs between people and within a context (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Gee, 1991; Street, 2014). Literacy scholarship now recognises the necessity of being literate across multiple knowledge areas and modalities, giving rise to the notions of multimodal literacy and multiple literacies (Cope & Kalantzis, 2013; Gee, 1991; Jewitt, 2005; Schull et al., 2021). Furthermore, as both language acquisition and literacy development occur organically and rapidly in the early years (Schull et al., 2013) literacy is a focus in early education curricula, strategies and outcomes (Department of Education, Skills and Employment, 2021; Saracho, 2019).

This thesis is timely in applying the nascent concept of wellbeing literacy to early education and within a context of contemporary views of literacy. Moreover, there have been significant and continual ECEC policy reforms in Australia in the last two decades (Fenech, 2012) and a recent whole of government focus has produced policy prioritising and monitoring of children's education and wellbeing. 2021 saw the landmark launch of the *National Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy* specifically targeting support for the mental health and wellbeing of children aged 0-12 (National Mental Health Commission [NMHC], 2021). Most recently, the *Early Years Strategy 2024-2034* established a long term, co-ordinated national strategy to support children from birth to 5 years of age, focusing on outcomes including child wellbeing and education (Commonwealth of Australia [CoA], 2024). A stated objective of the *National Quality Framework* (NQF) which monitors and regulates early education is to ensure the "safety, health and wellbeing of children" (NQF, 2023, p. 9). In addition, "Children have a strong sense of wellbeing*"* is a key Learning Outcome of the national *Early Years Learning Framework* (Australian Government Department of Education [AGDE], 2022, p. 29).

In this context, where education's renewed purpose is "the flourishing of human beings" (De Ruyter, 2022, p. 125), literacies are multiple and multimodal and children are navigating an increasingly complex world, this thesis finds a compelling rationale. It contends examining wellbeing literacy in early education is timely, valid and exciting. Opportunities for continued interdisciplinary discourse between wellbeing science and early education exist (Baker et al., 2017; Shoshani & Sloane, 2017; Waters, Dussert et al., 2022). Furthermore, the under-explored nature of wellbeing literacy in ECEC is ripe with pedagogical possibilities and contributions to practices, policy and literature.

Thesis aim and research questions

The aim of this thesis is therefore:

To examine how wellbeing literacy can be applied to the context of early childhood education and care in Australia.

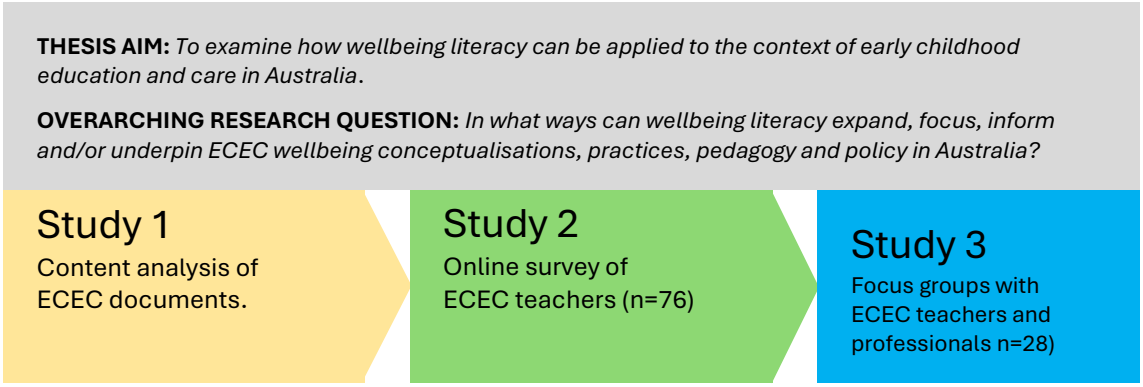
The overarching question is:

In what ways can wellbeing literacy expand, focus, inform and/or underpin ECEC wellbeing conceptualisations, practices, pedagogy and policy in Australia?

To this end, a sequential three study design has been employed to examine pedagogical and practice realities, synergies and possibilities within the ECEC wellbeing and policy landscape. See Figure 1.1

Figure 1.1

Study design of this thesis.



Overview of thesis structure

Including this introductory chapter, which serves as the *Roadmap*, this thesis contains ten chapters. These illuminate the research *Context*, *Construct*, *Claim*, *Methodology*, *Landscape*, *Perspectives*, *Synergies*, *Opportunities* and *Integration*. Chapters two to ten are briefly summarised below. They evidence the evolution and examination of thinking that has taken place over the course of this PhD research.

Chapter Two: '*Context*' - Early childhood education and care, wellbeing and literacy

Chapter 2 is a review of ECEC elements that form the conceptual framework of this thesis, including areas of ECEC history, policy, pedagogy, practices and quality; wellbeing; language and literacy.

Chapter Three: '*Concept*' - A literature review of wellbeing literacy

Chapter 3 focuses on the concept of wellbeing literacy, examining current studies, gaps and opportunities. The five published articles of this thesis explain and contextualise wellbeing literacy to varying degrees, however Chapter 3 provides an introductory overview of the concept and the Capability Model of Wellbeing literacy (CM-WL).

Chapter Four: '*Claim*' - Wellbeing literacy and early childhood education

Chapter 4 is a position paper on wellbeing literacy and ECEC published in the *New Zealand International Research in Early Childhood Education Journal*. Having explored the literature related to this thesis' context and concept, and established the wellbeing literacy gap in ECEC, this chapter articulates the claim of this thesis in a published article. It makes conceptual links between ECEC and wellbeing literacy and calls for empirical research.

Chapter Five: '*Methodology*' - Theoretical framework, research methodology and study design

Chapter 5 discusses the theoretical perspectives guiding this thesis, including the ontology, epistemology and methodology in which this research is situated. Details are also provided for the three qualitative studies undertaken and the research design is explained, noting that Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9 include specific methods sections as they form part of each published/accepted article.

Chapter Six: '*Landscape*' – A content analysis of early childhood education pedagogy and practice documents in Australia

Chapter 6 is an article published in the *Educational Research for Policy and Practice* Journal. This article presents results of the first study of this thesis – a qualitative summative content analysis of key ECEC documents that inform conceptions of child wellbeing.

Bridge – Linking information between published articles of Chapters Six and Seven

The short section offers a bridge between Chapters 6 and 7, both of which are publications. It highlights the connections between Study 1 and the first results from Study 2; offering insight into the process and decision-making between these consecutive studies.

Chapter Seven: '*Perspectives*' – ECEC teachers' definitions of child wellbeing in early education

This chapter shares the first results from Study 2, specifically focussing on teachers' perspectives about child wellbeing in the ECEC context. It has been published in the *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*.

Bridge – Linking information between published articles of Chapters Seven and Eight

This section offers a bridge between Chapters 7 and 8, the two publications that present results from Study 2.

Chapter Eight: '*Synergies*' - How wellbeing literacy reflects and supports wellbeing practices in early education

Chapter 8 comprises an article accepted for publication in the *International Journal of Wellbeing*. Reflecting results generated through Template Analysis, this chapter shares focus group results about ECEC pedagogy and practices that support children's wellbeing, and how this aligns with wellbeing literacy and CM-WL.

Bridge – Linking information between published articles of Chapters Eight and Nine

This final bridging section provides a link between Study 2 and Study 3. Specifically, bridging the published articles of the previous two chapters from the survey data (Study 2) to the next chapter that discusses results from the focus groups (Study 3).

Chapter Nine: '*Opportunities*' - *Perspectives of how wellbeing literacy can underpin, expand and inform wellbeing practices and pedagogy*

Chapter 9 is the final publication of this thesis, presenting data from Study 3. Accepted for publication in the *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, it shares results from focus groups and discusses the opportunities of applying wellbeing literacy to ECEC pedagogy and practices.

Chapter 10: '*Integration*' – Overarching thesis discussion and conclusion

Finally, Chapter 10 steps back from the outputs of the three studies and offers an integration of the key findings of the whole thesis. As a meta-discussion, this chapter argues the overall findings within the literature and theoretical framework discussed in previous chapters. Implications for research and practice are considered along with overall insights, implications and contributions of this thesis.

Chapter summary

Combined, the ten chapters of this thesis detail a novel and robust process of examining the potential application of wellbeing literacy to ECEC. Through review of relevant literature, sequential qualitative studies, consultation with ECEC professionals, academic peer-review and evolving understanding, gaps have been identified and scholarly contributions offered.

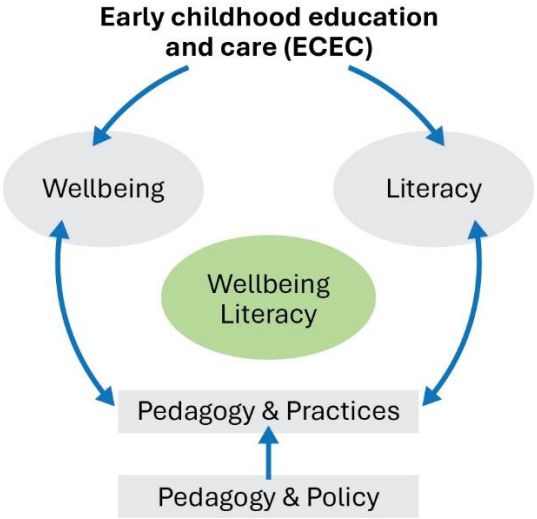
CHAPTER 2: '*CONTEXT*' - EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE, WELLBEING AND LITERACY

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) is the context in which this thesis has examined the concept of wellbeing literacy. This chapter reviews relevant literature and is presented in three parts. First, a broad view of ECEC with examination of its historical origins, supranational policy, and concepts of *pedagogy*, *practices* and *quality*. A discussion follows about ECEC in Australia as the specific context of this thesis. Second, a review of the literature relevant to conceptualising *wellbeing*, with consideration of *child wellbeing* as an important component of this thesis. Third, literature on *language* and *literacy* in early childhood is examined.

Upcoming chapters included as published/accepted articles offer brief reviews of ECEC literature, however this chapter provides an extended contextualisation of this thesis' central concepts. Presented as the conceptual framework of this thesis, these broad areas are *early childhood education and care*, *wellbeing*, *literacy* and, in Chapter 3, *wellbeing literacy*. The connections between ECEC, wellbeing and literacy, and the reciprocal relationships between these areas and policy, pedagogy and practices, have been established in the literature. How these areas and concepts impact or are impacted by wellbeing literacy is currently theoretical as links have not been established (see Figure 2.1)

Figure 2.1

Thesis conceptual framework of ECEC, showing existing connections between the concepts of wellbeing, literacy and wellbeing literacy, and policy, pedagogy and practices.



The first the higher order areas presented in Figure 2.1 (ECEC, wellbeing and literacy) are now discussed. Wellbeing literacy, as the key concept for application is discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

Early childhood education

'Early childhood' and 'early education' are variously described as the period between birth and 5 years; birth and compulsory schooling; or birth and 8 years of age (OECD, 2015; Shuey & Kankaraš, 2018). Recognising that school entry age varies across countries and regions, and in accordance with local policies, traditions and education systems, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) declares early childhood as below the age of 8.

Education provided to children out of their homes prior to formal schooling is called 'early childhood education' (OECD, 2024). The *International Standard Classification of Education* (ISCED), adopted by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) member states as the cross-national reference for education programs and qualifications, classifies 'early childhood education' as Level 0. These are intentional education programs "typically designed with a holistic approach to support children's early cognitive, language, physical, social and emotional development and introduce young children to organized instruction outside of the family context." (OECD, 2015, p. 20). A body of knowledge and theories about children's learning, development and wellbeing underpin early childhood education which notably focus on the development of children's independence, skills and behaviours through play, exploration and responsive curriculums (Nolan & Raban, 2015; Nutbrown & Clough, 2014; Wood & Hedges, 2016).

Subsidiary criteria for ISCED Level 0 'early childhood education' classification includes staff having pedagogical qualifications and the provision of a regulatory framework recognised by relevant national authorities (e.g. a ministry of education) to guide learning opportunities (OECD, 2015). Such early education settings and services are known by various names dependent upon context, policy and discourse, including 'childcare', 'preschool', 'kindergarten', 'long day care', 'reception', 'pre-primary', 'early childhood care and education'. However the umbrella term 'early childhood education

and care' and its frequently used acronym 'ECEC' captures the international literature and will be used throughout this thesis.

The first five years of life have been evidenced as a critical period during which the foundation for learning, development, health and wellbeing is established (Gromada et al., 2020; MCEECDYA, 2010; NSCDC, 2007). Neuroscience evidences the capacity for neural circuitry development and skill acquisition are at their highest in these years and that this brain growth lays critical future foundations (Knudsen et al., 2006; Kong et al., 2020; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Furthermore, an expanding body of research highlights benefits of ECEC experiences for children in this period, including improved social, emotional, language and cognitive skills (Shuey & Kankaraš, 2018; Yoshikawa et al., 2016). These benefits are particularly evident for children from disadvantaged backgrounds (Bakken et al, 2017; Hewitt & Walter, 2014).

Additionally, gains from ECEC manifest in both the short and long term, playing a crucial role in shaping children's prospects with a lasting impact on future earnings, educational attainment, academic performance and wellbeing (Duncan et al., 2023; García et al., 2020; Heckman & Karapakula, 2019; OECD, 2021). In fact, the *Education at a Glance OECD Indicators* (2024) report states that, in promoting such longer-term outcomes, ECEC benefits go beyond the individual child to society at large by reducing social, gender and academic inequities.

It is important to note here that while organisations such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), who produce significant research on child development and education, strive for international representation, they have faced criticism regarding Western-centric approaches (Sjøberg, 2015; Woodhead, 2006). This thesis is situated in a WEIRD context (western, educated, industrialised, rich, democratic; Henrich et al., 2010) and despite growing emphasis on embedding indigenous perspectives into ECEC practices (AGDE, 2022; Miller & Petriwskyj, 2013), sources such as OECD, UNESCO and others cited within this thesis remain influential.

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) – history, policy, quality, pedagogy and practice

ECEC is a part of the broad canopy of 'education'. Culturally, education has been understood variously as a system, institution and/or activity for living in a democratic society, for enlightenment, socialisation, individuation, training and knowledge transmission (Brighouse, 2006). Theoretically, education is a space where teaching, learning and evaluation evolve within human relationships (De Ruyter et al, 2022). Historically, the purpose of education has included maintaining social order, equipping students for employment and economic participation, teaching '21st century skills', enhancing adaptability for a volatile and complex future and, most recently, for human flourishing (Ergas, 2022; González-Pérez & Ramírez-Montoya, 2022).

Early education brief history and policy drivers

ECEC exists and evolves under the education umbrella. Contextual and historical influences play various roles in policy, education and society. Economic, academic, political and social drivers impact education provision in formal, informal, public and private offerings and settings (Penn, 2009; Prochner, 2000). Historical and contemporary drivers that are relevant to this thesis exist, compete and cohabitate in the space of ECEC. These include but are not limited to:

- Child outcome orientations for learning, development, wellbeing, citizenship and rights
- Human capital concepts of setting foundations for lifelong skill acquisition; school readiness; poverty reduction and workforce participation,
- Welfare perspectives of serving disadvantaged children and supporting those who are at risk in their home environments
- Socio-political investment agendas for gender equality and increasing female workforce participation (Moss, 2015, 2017; Barnett & Boocock, 1998; Heckman, 2011; Morgan, 2002; Urban et al., 2012; United Nations, 1989).

Since the late 20th century, ECEC has come under the gaze and development of supranational organisations including the European Union (EU), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Asia Development Bank (ASB) and United Nations

Children's Fund (UNICEF). For example, in 1989 the United Nations (UN) ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, declaring education from birth as a fundamental human right (UNCRC, 1989). In 2000 the World Education Forum adopted the *Dakar Framework for Action* committing to expanding and improving ECEC (UNESCO, 2000). In 2015 the UN adopted Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) which target access to quality ECEC (OECD/Eurostat/UNESCO, 2015). Furthermore, in 2022 at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education, *The Tashkent Declaration and Commitments to Action for Transforming Early Childhood Care and Education* was declared, reaffirming every child's right to ECEC and setting out guiding principles and strategies (UNESCO, 2022). These macro-level influences of supranational organisations continue to impact ECEC policy[1], standards and practices through research, funding and global attention. They increase recognition of ECECs multi-faceted impact on and importance for children, economic growth and social equity and impact the delivery of ECEC in Australia and internationally (Campbell-Barr & Nygård, 2014; Guevara, 2022).

Well-established accord exists regarding the need for the connection of research, policy and practice across ECEC. However ECEC systems are complicated and 'messy' (Urban, et al., 2012; Kagan, 2019). Separate and differing policies, programs, initiatives, regulation and funding systems are in place across countries, states, territories and regions around the globe, including in Australia. As such, ECEC pedagogies, practices and levels of quality also differ across the globe. Pedagogy, practices and quality are related in ECEC; however they are different concepts and worthy of distinction at this point given this thesis' conceptual framework (see p. 9) and assertion that they may be informed by wellbeing literacy.

What does 'quality' mean in ECEC?

A unifying factor underlying the benefits of ECEC and the goals of supranational policies around the globe is 'quality' (OECD, 2015a). 'Quality' in ECEC is complex; it has no universally accepted definition and is a debated, multifaceted, value, context and

[1] The term 'policy' is broadly construed within this thesis as plans and actions adopted and pursued by governments and organisations to assist in decision making and to guide towards desired outcomes (Collins, n.d.)

culture-based concept, meaning different things to different people (OECD, 2015a; Raban et al., 2003).

While there is no definitional consensus, literature argues determinants and areas of quality can be leveraged for optimal child development, growth, learning and wellbeing outcomes in ECEC (OECD, 2015a; Tayler et al., 2016; Torii et al., 2017). These include areas of *structural*, *process* and *system* quality. *Structural quality* includes ECEC features that can be measured and regulated, such as the physical learning environment, teacher training, child-educator ratios and learning frameworks that guide pedagogy and practice (Eadie, et al., 2022). *Process quality* refers to the quality of children's activities, experiences and interactions, including social-emotional support, educator-child and peer-to-peer interactions (Torii et al., 2017). *System quality* concerns the overarching governance structures, policies, frameworks and macro-level systemic mechanisms that enable structural and process quality, including funding, workforce development, stakeholder engagement, and regulatory standards (Torii et al., 2017). Together these three domains conceptualise ECEC quality (Eadie, et al., 2022) and are important avenues through which children's wellbeing, language and literacy outcomes can be impacted (Von Suchodoletz et al., 2023). For example, the pedagogical interactions, activities and knowledge of ECEC professionals (process quality) as well as their qualifications (structural quality) are linked to children's wellbeing (OECD, 2015). Furthermore, language and literacy outcomes for children are shaped by the structural quality of interactions between ECEC professionals and children (Eadie et al., 2019; Tayler, 2016).

Impacting these processes and outcomes is not solely reliant on the skills and knowledge of individual ECEC professionals however as pedagogical competence is interdependent with ECEC system competence (Eadie, et al, 2022). System quality factors, such as investment in ECEC service provision, regulatory and monitoring mechanisms, impact a competent ECEC system. This in turn supports or thwarts process and structural quality and therefore potential wellbeing, language and/or literacy outcomes for children (OECD, 2015a; Torii et al., 2017). This thesis does not extend to researching areas of quality or systems competence; however these areas impact the ECEC ecosystem in which wellbeing literacy and this thesis' findings could be applied.

What does 'pedagogy' mean in ECEC?

ECEC pedagogy is notably different from that in primary and secondary education sectors and is important to distinguish (Rogers, 2015). The ages, developmental skills and trajectories of young children in ECEC settings – their executive functions, social and emotion learning, mathematical thinking, physical development, language and communication – necessitate specific pedagogical approaches to achieve learning, development and wellbeing outcomes (Australian Education Research Organisation [AERO], 2023).

Definitions of 'pedagogy' include: the art, craft and science of educating (ADGE, 2022); the behaviour of teaching - what educators do and think (Moyles et al., 2002); and an interactive, instructional process between a teacher and learner that includes the provision of the learning environment (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2002). Gupta (2012) suggests pedagogy is not just the practices and techniques of teaching but a way of *being* with children. Furthermore, pedagogy can "be construed as a theoretical stance that informs methods and practice" (p. 150) that does not exist in isolation or without human interaction (Gupta, 2012). Additionally, Rogers (2015) speaks to the complexity of pedagogy, asserting it involves not only the act of teaching, but the skills to make and justify decisions and values around teaching and within the surrounding dominant discourse. As such, pedagogy is not just a collection of teaching strategies, but an art informed and underpinned by theories, values, beliefs and philosophies.

Various pedagogical approaches and methods can be found in ECEC, differing across contexts and time. These include play-based, relational, place-based and culturally responsive pedagogies; developmentally appropriate practice; constructivist and socio-cultural approaches and theorist-specific pedagogies i.e. Reggio Emilia approach or Montessori method (AGDE, 2022; Bredekamp & Copple, 1997; Isaacs, 2018; Rigney & Kelly, 2023; Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2002).

Understanding the overarching concept of pedagogy is relevant to this thesis, regardless of the approach or methods adopted by an individual ECEC setting. As wellbeing literacy is conceptualised as a capability and a relational process (Oades, Jarden et al., 2021; see also Chapter 3), it can arguably be applied to any educational setting, regardless of pedagogical approaches. However, pedagogical views and assumptions shape teaching and learning techniques, tools and strategies, and therefore

impact how teachers engage with children, what they provide for them in everyday ECEC settings and interactions (Nutbrown, 2014). Application of any specific model, concept or theory requires pedagogical considerations.

What does 'practice' mean in ECEC?

Practice, or practices, in ECEC refers to the techniques, actions, methods, planned and spontaneous experiences and interactions undertaken by professionals in their day-to-day work with children (Nutbrown, 2014). Moyles and colleagues (2002) state 'practice' is "all that a pedagogue does within the teaching and learning context on a daily, weekly and longer-term basis to promote effectiveness." (p. 5). This includes observing, planning, anticipating, evaluating and assessing children's learning, indoors and outdoors, and maintaining effective relationships with children and adults. As with pedagogy, practices differ between contexts and people, informed by individual philosophies, values and assumptions (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2002). Practices are a relevant concept to this thesis as they are the actions taken and judgements made by ECEC professionals in their everyday work and therefore open to change informed by new concepts and models.

ECEC – the current Australian context

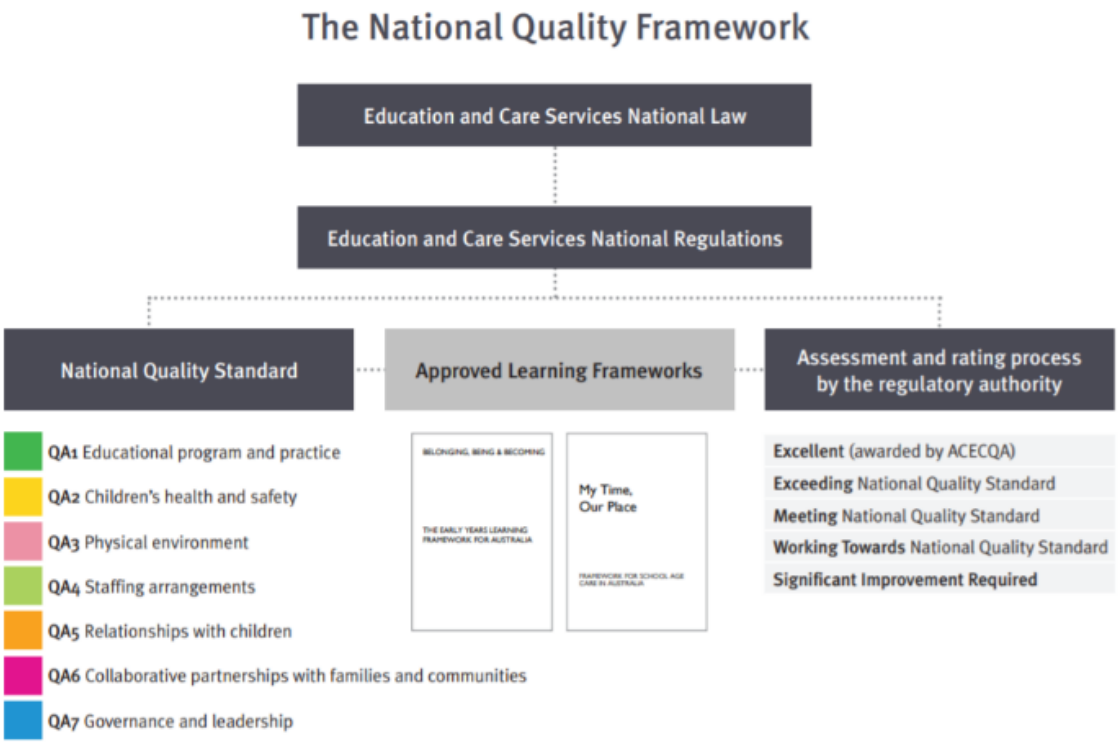
As discussed, ECEC polices, settings, professionals, quality, pedagogies and practices are various, changing with time and context. ECEC in Australia has its own structure, delivery, governance, pedagogies and practices which continue to undergo change and reform (Raban & Kilderry, 2019; Wong & Press, 2020). At this point it is important to note Australia's current ECEC system predominantly reflects that of other Western, federated countries and neo-liberal views (Press et al., 2018; Tayler, 2016). This has not always been the case. Significant distinctions exist between Indigenous ways of being, knowing, and educating young children as compared to today's settler-colonial education system (Martin, 2007; Wolfe, 2006). However, the boundary and focus of this thesis is the prevailing ECEC system incorporating the frameworks, laws and policies as they are currently implemented across the nation (Kitson & Bowes, 2010).

In Australia, as a whole nation and within each state and territory, non-compulsory ECEC services are delivered for children from birth to school entry subsidised by the Australian government. A key component of Australian government policy for ECEC

is the National Quality Framework (NQF). Administered by the *Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority* (ACECQA), the NQF combines relevant regulations, laws and frameworks that govern ECEC policy, quality, pedagogy and practices. Within the NQF's suite of regulations and frameworks, ECEC professionals and services are provided with theories, definitions, pedagogies, principles, practices, outcomes, policies, assessments, ratings, operational requirements, compliance and approvals (ACECQA, 2020; see Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.2

The National Quality Framework for ECEC in Australia (ACECQA, 2023, p. 7).



Note. This figure has been reproduced from the *Guide to the National Quality Framework* with permission under the terms specified by ACECQA. The material is used for non-commercial, educational purposes, and this acknowledgement is retained as required by the copyright holder. Copyright 2023 Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority.

While programs under the broad ECEC banner are often assumed to be homogeneous, Australian ECEC services are varied and operate in an organisationally complex system. There are marked differences from community to community, and across Australian states and territories regarding location, provision of hours, philosophical, pedagogical and educational approaches (Warren et al., 2016).

ECEC Services are offered through a mixed market model including private, for profit, not-for-profit, community-based and government providers and within Australia's culturally and socio-economically diverse population (Understanding ECEC). Services are categorised by the Australian Government Department of Education as:

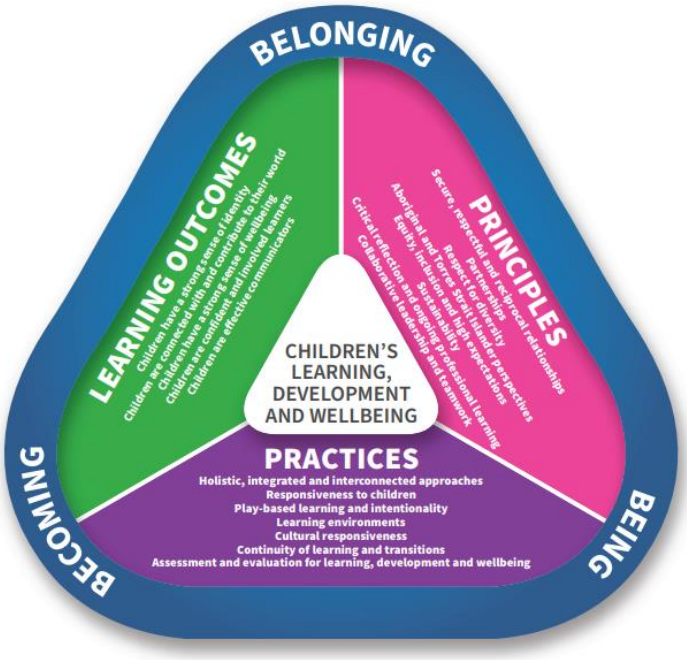
- 'preschool' - play-based educational programs delivered by an early childhood teacher for children aged 3-6 years, also known as 'kindergarten', and
- 'ECEC services' for children from birth to school attendance (including *Centre Based Day Care* provided in regulatory approved centres; *Family Day Care* based in an educator's home; *Outside of School Hours Care* for preschool and school-aged children in centres and outside of normal preschool/school hours; and *In Home Care*, a restricted service provided by an educator in the child's home (Early Childhood - Department of Education, Australian Government).

These programs are delivered by ECEC professionals - teachers, educators and leaders with various roles and qualifications from trainee, certificate, diploma, bachelor and/or master's degrees, all of whom are mandated to follow and enact elements of the NQF and approved educational framework/s (Grieshaber & Graham, 2017). The term 'ECEC professional' is used throughout this thesis to encompass these various roles and responsibilities.

Two nationally approved learning frameworks (see Figure 2.2 above) along with several approved state-based frameworks serve as the guiding documents and policy for curriculum decision making in ECEC. The predominantly relevant curriculum document for this thesis is *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* (EYLF; AGDE, 2022). Originally developed by the Council of Australian Governments in 2009, the EYLF aims to maintain the objectives and principles of the NQF and "support early childhood providers, teachers and educators to extend and enrich children's learning from birth to 5 years and through the transition to school" (AGDE, 2022, p. 4). The EYLF is an outcomes-based curricula, nominating five key Learning Outcomes, eight Principles and seven Practices which interconnect to promote children's learning, development and wellbeing (AGDE, 2022, p. 10; see Figure 2.3).

Figure 2.3

Diagram from the EYLF illustrating the integrated Learning Outcomes, Principles, Practices and the elements of Belonging, Being and Becoming. (AGDE, 2022, p. 10)



Note. This figure has been reproduced from "Belonging, Being and Becoming: The *Early Years Learning Framework* for Australia" by the Australian Government Department of Education (AGDE, 2022). CC BY 4.0 (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

The EYLF Learning Outcomes, Principles and Practices are broadly relevant to this thesis as they directly impact pedagogy and practice in Australia. In the EYLF, 'pedagogy' is defined as: "the art, craft and science of educating… the foundation for educators' professional practice, especially those aspects that involve building and nurturing relationships, curriculum decision-making, teaching and learning." (AGDE, 2022, p. 67). Play, play-based learning and intentionality are specifically emphasised in the EYLF as key practices and pedagogical approaches. Relational pedagogy (the way educators build trusting respectful relationships) and place-based pedagogy (how educators' knowledge of the setting and context influences practices) are also explicitly included and referenced in the EYLF (AGDE, 2022).

Most significantly, two of the five Learning Outcomes are central to the research aims of this thesis - Learning Outcome 3: *Children have a strong sense of wellbeing* and Learning Outcome 5: *Children are effective communicators* (AGDE, 2022, p. 29). These will be explored further throughout the thesis. However, it is now important to discuss the

remaining concepts in this thesis' conceptual framework (see Figure 2.1), and those central to these two Learning Outcomes, that of 'wellbeing' and 'literacy'.

Wellbeing

The term 'wellbeing' can be found in contemporary arenas as wide-reaching as science, media, politics, marketing, education broadly and ECEC specifically (Lee & Sirgy, 2004). The concept of 'wellbeing' (or 'well-being') is regularly utilised, but its definition is unresolved, contested and inconsistent (Marbina et al., 2015; Pollard & Lee, 2003). Definitions of wellbeing are dynamic, various and ultimately depend upon one's context, purpose and perspective.

Varied historical perspectives on wellbeing

The pursuit of wellbeing understanding has a long and rich lineage (Angner, 2011). Indigenous cultures, ancient civilizations and medieval scholars sought its meaning through concepts such as Aristotle's eudaimonia and Buddhist's mindfulness and ethical living (Ransome, 2010). Modern philosophers including Locke and Rogers pursued the idea of wellbeing, while contemporary perspectives of psychological and subjective wellbeing have also been interrogated (Jarden & Roache, 2023; Kahneman et al., 1999). For example, Maslow theorised that humans strive for self-actualisation after fulfilling more basic physiological needs and deficit states (1943, 1970).

In 1948 the World Health Organisation (WHO), referred to "well-being" as "not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (pg. 1). Later, Rogers (1963) posited the fully functioning individual and Jahoda (1958) spoke of mental health characteristics including self-perception, autonomy, enjoyment of love, work and play. In 1993, Antonovsky equated wellbeing with life coherence, viewing life as meaningful and manageable. In the years following, Ryff (1989) proposed dimensions of well-being, including indicators of autonomy, self-acceptance, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relationships and purpose in life. In Ryan and Deci's (2000) theory of self-determination, wellbeing was construed as arising from the fulfilment of basic psychological needs (autonomy, competence and relatedness).

The new millennium brought a wellbeing spotlight in the form of positive psychology, aiming to refocus psychology on human thriving, flourishing, happiness, and quality of life (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). At this time a deficit model existed,

with literature focused on ill health and negative states such as illness, disease and disorder as listed in the DSM or ICD11 (*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*; American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2013; *International Classification of Diseases for Mortality and Morbidity Statistics*, World Health Organization [WHO], 2018). However a distinct and explicit call was made to revisit positive ideas of wellbeing as greater than the absence of ill-being. The provocation that science look beyond pathology and weakness, and view wellbeing in terms of strengths and virtues, sparked a wildfire of describing, defining and researching wellbeing (Seligman et al, 2000; Peterson, 2004; Wong, 2011).

Furthermore, in the early 2000's Keyes specifically addressed the idea of absence of illbeing not implying wellbeing in his mental health continuum model. Keyes brought the language of 'languishing' and 'flourishing' to current discourse with the proposition that neither a deficit nor asset approach alone can adequately describe wellbeing (Keyes, 2002, 2007). Huppert and So (2013) added to the conceptualisation of wellbeing expanding the construct of 'flourishing' and its measurement and causes. Contemporary scholars, in wellbeing science and other domains, continue the positive focus on defining and describing wellbeing away from dysfunction (Huppert, 2009). Here, WHO's definition of wellbeing that acknowledges a *lack* of disease or infirmity is again relevant as an orientation towards what is going well, rather than wrong. Relevant to ECEC and the context of this thesis is health literature and its predominant focus on childhood disorders. While it cannot be contested that health research has generated deep knowledge about children's health and welfare (Charmarbagwala et al., 2004; Kwon et al., 2018; National Research Council, 2004; World health statistics 2025), wellbeing science, and indeed this thesis, seeks to move beyond an orbit around disorders or disease.

These varied, contrasting and evolving perspectives of wellbeing indicate critiques and evolutions of wellbeing theories. The move from a focus on deficit to a focus on flourishing illustrates iteration and change. The positive psychology movement, and wellbeing science in general, has and continue to undergo critique. Its universal applicability has been questioned given its roots in Western, individualistic values (Christopher & Hickinbottom, 2008) resulting in an increase in interventions from non-Western countries and increased cross-cultural approaches (Hendriks et al., 2018; Pandey, 2011; Wong, 2013). Some scholars argue positive psychology has on

overemphasis on positivity and individual factors, neglecting broader, systems impact (Brinkley, 2011; Held, 2004; Prilleltensky, 2012). In a systematic review of challenges facing the field of positive psychology, Llewellyn and colleagues (2023) found other criticisms and challenges facing the field including a lack of proper theorising, problematic measurement and poor replication. While these specific criticisms are not the focus of this thesis, an awareness of an over emphasis on western (or WEIRD; Henrich et al., 2010) samples and values is important.

Wellbeing as multi-dimensional

Despite these centuries of fascination and waves of wellbeing science examination (Lomas, 2022), wellbeing remains a complex, intangible and multifaceted construct (Christopher, 1999; Dodge et al., 2012). Literature offers many multi-faceted definitions, descriptions, indicators and multi-dimensional frameworks. For example, various descriptions and indicators of wellbeing are proposed by Seligman (2011), Ryff (1989), Ryan and Deci (2000) and Huppert and So (2013). More broadly, the OECD's *How's Life* report aims to describe essential elements of life that impact wellbeing via eleven defining dimensions (Durand, 2015).

Literature articulating wellbeing as multi-dimensional and occurring across multiple domains has informed the context and concepts under examination in this thesis. Such research has also influenced the development of wellbeing literacy (Oades, Jarden et al., 2021). Moreover, a multi-dimensional view of wellbeing frames wellbeing within human systems, such as ECEC. A brief overview of the literature related to a view of wellbeing as multi-dimensional is therefore useful here. Wellbeing dimensions, domains and areas of research, along with their relevance to ECEC and the context of this thesis are included in, but not limited to those in Table 2.1:

Table 2.1

Connections between multi-dimensional aspects of wellbeing, dimensions, literature and the ECEC context of this thesis.

Broad domain	Examples of wellbeing dimensions and relevant literature	Relationships to the ECEC context of this thesis
Physical wellbeing	Health, welfare, sleep, rest, nutrition and safety (Hosker et al., 2019; Pollard & Lee, 2003)	ECEC pedagogy and practices in Australia seek to support children's wellbeing in these domains. For example, holistic approaches that "pay attention to children's physical, personal, social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing and cognitive aspects of learning." (AGDE, 2022, p. 20). ECEC policy via the NQS focuses on physical safety and wellbeing domains in of Law, Regulations and Frameworks. For example 'Health and Safety', 'Sleep and Rest' Divisions of the National Regulations (Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011).
Emotional wellbeing	Positive and negative affect (Fredrickson; 2013), self-regulation (Blair & Raver, 2015), attachment (Ainsworth et al, 1978; Bowlby, 1969), coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984)	
Social wellbeing	Social acceptance, actualisation, contribution, coherence and integration (Keyes, 1998; 2007), relationships (Diener & Seligman, 2002; Fowler & Christakis, 2008) and belonging (Baumeister & Leary, 1995)	
Psychological wellbeing	Skills of resilience and persistence (Ryff & Singer, 2003), executive function (Moffit et al., 2011), autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2000), and optimism (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007; Scheier & Carver, 1985)	
Cognitive wellbeing	Motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2008), mindfulness (Shapiro et al., 2006) and flow (Csikszentmihalyi et al., 2014)	
Spiritual wellbeing	Meaning (Steger, 2009), self-transcendence (Wong, 2016) and hope (Colla et al., 2022; Snyder, 2000)	
Material wellbeing	Economic concerns, material resources and macro-economic environments (Sirgy, 2018), family and societal wealth, education and inequality (Adamson, 2013; Crous, 2017; Main et al., 2019; Marshan & Pritadrajati, 2023), environmental degradation and ecosystems (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, 2005)	These factors operate at the macrosystem level of a child's environment (Bronfenbrenner & Morris,2007). They represent 'the world at large' (Gromada et al., 2020) which directly or indirectly effect a child's wellbeing.

Wellbeing as dynamic and malleable

Frameworks, multi-dimensional and multi-domain explanations of wellbeing cannot conceptualise wellbeing alone. Wellbeing science offers the perspective that wellbeing is malleable and dynamic; changing over time and influenced by external forces (Dodge, et al., 2012; Jones & Sumner, 2009). Furthermore, Headley and Wearing (1991) propose a dynamic equilibrium theory of wellbeing and Cummins (2010) a homeostasis perspective, both suggesting that wellbeing has a set or steady point that can be impacted by favourable or adverse events or challenges.

Research indicates there is a heritability and relative stability of wellbeing, influenced by genetics and inherited pre-dispositions (Lykken & Tellegen (1996). However there is also evidence that wellbeing can and does change. This is relevant given the focus on early education and wellbeing development of this thesis. Decades of scientific endeavour and advances support the theory that early childhood experiences impact the architecture of infants and children's developing brains, and their physical and mental health trajectory (Shonkoff, 2010). Dynamism is reflected in the view of some that wellbeing is not an outcome. Rather, it is a process or unfolding life project linked not only to context but to time (Hogan, 2008; Mashford-Scott et al, 2012; Thoilliez, 2011). The assertion of dynamism is important to this thesis, given its claim that wellbeing literacy offers insights into wellbeing gains for children in ECEC (see also Chapter 4).

White (2008) offers that, along with wellbeing itself changing over time, the many factors that impact one's wellbeing are also dynamic. The availability of resources versus the presence of challenges in life (for example psychological skills to meet a social difficulty) fluctuate, impacting wellbeing (Dodge, 2012). So too does an individual's expectations and evaluations of their wellbeing, from both a past and future perspective (White, 2008). In this way, wellbeing is conceived as a dynamic process as well as a potential outcome, both of which are relevant to the context of ECEC.

Wellbeing as contextual and cultural

Finally, any attempt to discuss wellbeing must also acknowledge that impervious boundaries do not exist between an individual and their environment, either internal or external. Complexity is added to any wellbeing understanding in recognising that human interaction and behaviour within their context and social systems is unique, dynamic, variable and complex (Hogan, 2008; Kern et al., 2020). McNulty & Fincham

(2012) argue that wellbeing is determined by an interplay of an individual's psychological characteristics and the social circumstances in which they operate. Eckersley (2000) suggests subjective wellbeing is impacted by cultural forces of material growth, consumerism and individualism. This is further articulated in systems and socio-cultural theories of child development and wellbeing, such as those of Bronfenbrenner & Morris (2007), Vygotsky (1978) and Gromada et al., (2020). These systems theories and wellbeing models and their relevance are further discussed as the theoretical framework of this thesis in Chapter 5.

The balance between the individual and the collective (personal needs versus collective issues such as social justice, access to resources and equality) are discussed by Prilleltensky (2008). Sen (1993) asks us to consider the wellbeing impact of not only the external assets or options available to a person (what they *have*, such as material resources, political freedoms, social opportunities, education) but also their capabilities (what they can *be* or *do* with those means). In addition, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2020a) acknowledges that different countries face strikingly different realities regarding factors that impact wellbeing. Contextual factors pertaining to relatedness also offer rich perspectives around what defines and impacts wellbeing. Relationships one has with others, from early attachments (Kochanska, 2001) to belonging (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), feeling valued and favourably compared (Shin & Johnson, 1978), loneliness (Golden et al, 2009) and exclusion (Roffey, 2013) to name a few, have been shown to indicate and impact wellbeing.

Culture is also vital in defining and describing wellbeing. Not only is wellbeing *influenced* by contextual factors such as those discussed above, but it is also *understood* differently by those in diverse cultures (White, 2008). Communities and cultures understand wellbeing differently, have different conceptualisations of how it manifests, and differing starting points in their pursuit of it (Prilleltensky, 2008; UN, 2013). Additionally, different cultures do not prioritise and/or prize wellbeing in the same way. For example, variations occurr between individualist and collectivist cultures and contexts (Suh & Koo, 2008). The concept of promoting or valuing individual wellbeing comes with tensions between a focus on self versus others and "culturally distinct ways of being" (Ryff & Singer, 2006, pg. 33).

It is important to note wellbeing science theories and research have been critiqued for being heavily shaped and situated in western culture and individualistic moral visions (Christopher, 1999; Christopher & Hickinbottom, 2008). For example, relevant to this thesis, the EYLF (DEEWR, 2009 and AGDE, 2022) has included Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives (Barblett, Bobongie-Harris, et al., 2021) for pedagogy and practices. However tensions and complexities remain in integrating wellbeing knowledge systems and providing culturally strong ECEC programs that are relevant for all children (Guilfoyle et al., 2010; Miller, 2015; Nakata, 2007). Notwithstanding the limited scope of this thesis in examining the potential application of wellbeing literacy within ECEC in Australia, the study of child wellbeing conceptualisations, pedagogy and practise is timely and contextually relevant.

The complexity of child wellbeing

Of particular interest in this wellbeing discussion and the scope of this thesis is an understanding of child wellbeing. Child wellbeing can be viewed and defined through various lenses including, but not limited to politics, economics, education, ethics, social justice, medicine, philosophy, culture and ecology (Gromada, et al., 2020). It can also be construed as:

- a right (UNCRC, 1989)
- a key outcome of pedagogy (ADGE, 2022)
- relational and emergent (Jones & Sumner, 2009; Pollard & Lee)
- a moral and pragmatic imperative (UNICEF Office of Research, 2013).

Jones and Sumner (2009) argue complexity is added by the distinct experience of childhood, and children's developing physical, neurological and psychological capabilities. Marbina and colleagues (2015) concur in offering that rapid change and developmental trajectories in childhood make wellbeing assessment and definition complex. Furthermore, intricacy is added by the differing social and cultural constructions of childhood, children's relative vulnerability in the world, and how these factors impact expectations, opportunities and limits on children's development (Barblett & Maloney, 2010; Jones & Sumner, 2009; White, 2008). Early childhood scholars also argue that definitions and assessment of child wellbeing need, but frequently lack, child voice – input from children themselves about their wellbeing (Marbina, et al, 2015; Jones & Sumner, 2009; Lundy et al, 2024).

Child wellbeing in ECEC policy and pedagogy

That child wellbeing is a complex, contextual, multi-faceted and dynamic construct (Thomas, 2009; Pollard & Lee; Dodge, et al, 2012) is relevant to this thesis. Child wellbeing and ECEC are intertwined and bi-directional. Internationally, there is a focus on child wellbeing in education (Gromada et al., 2020; OECD, 2017; De Ruyter and colleagues (2022). Moreover, moral approaches to education, including positive education, social-emotional learning, character education and social justice education, emphasise the importance of skills related to wellbeing (Adams et al., 2007; Elias, 2009; Seligman et al., 2009). Neuroscientific advances in recent decades provide information about what neural mechanisms and social environments impact child wellbeing, promoting discourse about the impact of ECEC pedagogy and practices (Immordino-Yang, Kong, 2020; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Additionally, supranational organisations have appealed to governments to understand, facilitate and monitor systems and policies by which children experience optimal education and wellbeing (Gromada et al., 2020; Morgan, 2002; Prada & Sanchez-Fernandez., 2021; UNESCO, 2000; UN 2015, 2022).

Since the year 2000, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has produced an *Innocenti Report Card series,* reporting on children's wellbeing (UNICEF, n.d.). As a result, governments around the developed world responded with ECEC educational policy and curricula review, including the addition of explicit inclusions relevant to child wellbeing (Baker, et al., 2017; Shuey & Kankaraš, 2018). Moreover, De Ruyter et al. (2022) in the UNESCO *Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development* "*Reimagining Education*" document, captured the recommendations of 300 experts from over 45 countries and recommend wellbeing is the purpose of education: "Flourishing and education are to be understood as forms for iterative/reciprocal action… The purpose of education is the flourishing of human beings" (p. 125).

Australian ECEC wellbeing policy

Given this, it is not surprising that child wellbeing is central in Australian ECEC policy. A stated objective of the NQF is to ensure the "safety, health and wellbeing of children" (ACECQA, 2023, p. 9). As previously discussed, "*Children have a strong sense of wellbeing"* is a key Learning Outcome of the EYLF (AGDE, 2022, p. 29). Furthermore, under this wellbeing Learning Outcome, the EYLF breaks down 3 sub-outcomes, acknowledging

the multi-dimensional nature of wellbeing as incorporating physical and psychological domains:

- *Children become strong in their social, emotional and mental wellbeing*
- *Children become strong in their physical learning and wellbeing*
- *Children are aware of and develop strategies to support their own mental and physical health and personal safety* (AGDE, 2022, p. 44).

In addition, a recent whole of government focus has produced new policy prioritising and monitoring children's education and wellbeing in Australia. First, the landmark *National Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strateg*y, launched in 2021 as part of the governments long term national health policy, specifically targets support for the mental health and wellbeing of children aged 0-12 (NMHC, 2021). Second, the *Early Years Strategy 2024-2034* (EYS) has established a long term, co-ordinated national strategy aimed at supporting children from birth to 5 years old, focusing on outcomes such as child wellbeing and education (CoA, 2024).

Such policy directions and explicit NQF wellbeing outcomes, along with significant literature examining wellbeing and child wellbeing, set the context for the studies within this thesis.

Literacy

This thesis is centred around wellbeing pedagogy and practices in ECEC and the potential application of wellbeing literacy. Literacy broadly is a core component of the conceptual framework guiding this thesis (Figure 2.1) and will be discussed briefly here. However, literacy cannot occur without language skills (Snow, 2017) as in early childhood and ECEC, language and literacy are intertwined as literacy "grows out of and alongside language development" (Raban & Scull, 2023, p. 82). Effective communication is also a key Learning Outcome of the EYLF (AGDE, 2022). As such, language development will also be addressed at this point.

Language and language development

Language use is ubiquitous in society. It is a primary form of communication, a device to exchange experiences, thoughts and feelings, engage in the complexity of

human social life, construct self-identity and meaning, and transmit culture (Corballis, 2017; McAdams, 2019; Schwalbe, 1983).

Humans have an innate ability to acquire and use language (Rogers, et al., 2015). Whether spoken, signed or through the body, language skills begin in infancy; babies are predisposed to babbling, and speaking begins without being taught (Al-Harbi, 2020). From birth (and prenatally) children are surrounded by language use, impacting and facilitating their interactions, experiences, knowledge building and meaning making (McAdams, 2019; Saffran et al., 2006). Infants and young children's oral language - speaking and listening, comprehending and composing - develops at a rapid rate as they master language structures and the rules of human communication (Huttenlocher et al., 2010).

As children grow and encounter more knowledgeable others, language acquisition and the capacity to use it in all its forms – written, visual, oral and auditory – grows exponentially (Raban, 2012). In ECEC internationally and within the Australian NQS, a focus on the development of both expressive and receptive language is considered crucial (AGDE, 2022; Tayler et al., 2016; UNESCO, 2016). The areas of expressing and/or composing language and receiving and/or comprehending language are particularly relevant to this thesis as they form part of the Capability Model of wellbeing literacy (CM-WL) (see also Chapter 3).

Varied and evolving views of literacy

Along with language acquisition, literacy occurs organically and rapidly in the early years (Schull et al., 2021). Literacy is a human invention and critical for participation in contemporary society (Snow, 2017). Traditionally and narrowly defined, literacy is the singular cognitive skill of reading and writing (Gough, 1995). Traditional views of literacy have long seen it as a linear, individual and developmental outcome of formal education, where students learn to communicate though writing and extract information through reading (Razfar & Gutierrez, 2003). However conceptions of literacy have evolved, changing with time and different theoretical framings (Scull, et al., 2013). Snow (2017) explicates various literacy definitions and dimensions such as:

- *componential* vs. *holistic* - an arrange of skills versus an integrated capacity
- *solitary* vs. *social* - individual cognitive accomplishment versus a collaborative activity for social purposes

- *instructed* vs. *natural* - dependent on instruction versus naturally acquired
- *functional/technical* vs. *transformational/cultural* - functional accomplishment and print-linked versus a factor in identity and culture, and
- *singular/coherent* vs. *multiple/varied* - reading as a simple task versus a multi-literacies view of varied tasks.

These conceptions of literacy and literacy development reflect expanding and evolving views of literacy. This thesis shares the view of 'new literacy' and socio-cultural approaches to literacy. Scholars such as Barton & Hamilton (2000), Gee (1991) and Street (2014) have expanded literacy from an individual, cognitive process, with reading and writing seen as an internal, mental practice, to a socio-cultural one, occurring between people and within a context.

Multiple and multimodal literacies

Importantly, in a contemporary world that is virtual, technological and globalised, the ability to read and write is no longer the sole required form of literacy. The screen, rather than the page, has become the dominant text structure and what it means to be literate has expanded (Jewitt, 2005). As such, literacy scholarship now recognises the necessity of being literate across multiple modalities and knowledge areas, giving rise to the notions of multimodal literacy and multiple literacies (Cope & Kalantzis, 2013; Gee, 1991; Jewitt, 2005; Schull et al., 2012). Viewed through these contemporary lenses, literacy employs a multiplicity of modes extending beyond traditional written and oral forms and it encompasses a range of communication methods, including:

- *visual* - static or dynamic images; observation
- *auditory* - music, sounds; listening
- *sensory* - tactile representations of touch, smell, taste
- *gestural* - facial expressions, body language; dance, rituals) and
- *spatial* - architectural design, personal space; interpersonal distances (Cope & Kalantzis, 2013).

This multimodal understanding of literacy reflects the diverse ways in which information can be generated, received, and interpreted.

Additionally, a multi-literacies perspective recognises literacy across multiple domains and the ability to comprehend, analyse and apply information from specific

subjects and areas of life (Cope & Kalantzis, 2013). As such, terms like 'reading literacy', 'scientific literacy', 'emotional literacy', 'health literacy' and 'mathematical literacy' are increasingly found in western vernacular. Each of these literacies fall under Cope & Kalantzis' (2013) definition of subject specific literacies whereby a literate person can understand an apply knowledge from particular domains. Moreover, they reflect the pluralistic, context specific and functional understanding of what it now means to be literate (Berkman, et al., 2010; OECD, 2019; Steiner, 2003). Such contemporary views of literacy not only impact literacy scholarship, but ECEC discourse and practice (Jewitt, 2015). For example, Wohlwend (2016) argues for pedagogical approaches in ECEC that recognise play, reading, design and writing literacies. Despite the potential relevance of each of these and other evolving literacies to ECEC writ large, the aim of this thesis is the examination of wellbeing literacy.

Literacy in the *Early Years Learning Framework* (EYLF)

In the EYLF, being literate is described as "the capacity, confidence and disposition to use language in all its forms through written, oral, visual and auditory" (AGDE, 2022, p. 57). The EYLF also asserts that a strong oral language foundation is key to ongoing and sustainable literacy. Literacy is mentioned exclusively under Learning Outcome 5 "Children are effective communicators" (AGDE, 2022, p. 57) and is frequently positioned alongside numeracy. The EYLF glossary term however combines 'Languages and Literacy' offering that literacy in the early years includes "a range of modes of communication including music, movement, gesture, dance, song, drama, storytelling, visual arts, digital literacies, and media, as well as listening, talking, signing, viewing, reading and writing" (AGDE, 2022, p. 66). This view of literacy reflects multimodal theories; however the concept of multi-literacies is not elaborated on in the EYLF other than a single undefined usage of "digital literacies" (p. 66) and "home/family and community literacies" (AGDE, 2022, p. 58).

These perspectives, descriptors, locations and mentions of literacy in the EYLF are important as they not only inform ECEC professionals' knowledge of literacy but also impact pedagogy and practices. Furthermore, the EYLF position and assumptions about literacy, explicit or implicit, are relevant as this thesis explores contemporary literacies as they relate to wellbeing literacy and ECEC policy, pedagogy and practices.

Chapter summary

This chapter has discussed the context, history, pedagogy and practices of ECEC. These concepts and context inform the claim of this thesis that wellbeing literacy, a contemporary, multimodal and socio-cultural literacy, has a place in ECEC policy, pedagogy and practices for children's wellbeing.

This chapter has also explored varied historical perspectives on wellbeing, examining it as multi-dimensional, dynamic, contextual and cultural. The complexity of child wellbeing was reviewed along with child wellbeing in ECEC policy and pedagogy in Australia. Literacy, language development and the varied and evolving views of literacy, multiple and multimodal literacies and the EYLF were also discussed.

From several perspectives as reviewed in this chapter, there are links between wellbeing and literacy - language and literacy as means to communicate experiences, feelings and identity; multimodal, multi-domain and socio-cultural views of literacy and wellbeing; and theories of wellbeing and literacy as avenues for realising one's potential, belonging, social integration and navigating complex, cultural and contextual human interactions.

The concept of wellbeing literacy and CM-WL will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3: '*CONCEPT*' - A LITERATURE REVIEW OF WELLBEING LITERACY

Following Chapter 2 which reviewed the *Context* of this thesis, this chapter discusses the *Concept* of wellbeing literacy. This chapter begins by introducing wellbeing literacy specifically and examining current studies, gaps and opportunities.

Chapters 4, 6, 7, 8 and 9 are published articles and therefore additionally explain and contextualise wellbeing literacy as relevant. However, this chapter provides a more detailed review of wellbeing literacy. This is important at this point given wellbeing literacy's prominent place in the conceptual framework and aim of this thesis.

Wellbeing literacy origins and definition

'Wellbeing literacy' was recently proposed in 2017 by Oades and colleagues. First as a necessary but undefined missing element in positive education (Oades & Johnston, 2017) and then as a conceivable future to elaborate on wellbeing, recovery and mental health (Oades et al., 2017). This was followed by a concept paper defining wellbeing literacy as the "mindful language use about and for wellbeing" (Oades, et al., 2020, p. 697). The formal concept and construct of wellbeing literacy was then expanded as "a capability to comprehend and compose wellbeing language, across contexts, with the intention of using such language to maintain or improve the wellbeing of oneself, others or the world" (Oades, Jarden et al., 2021, p. 1).

Wellbeing literacy originated in wellbeing science, the interdisciplinary and evidence-informed study of processes, systems and dimensions of collective human and planetary thriving (Kemp & Edwards, 2022; Lomas, 2022). Oades, Jarden and colleagues (2021) also acknowledge the influence of other disciplinary and intellectual fields on wellbeing literacy including contemporary literacy, constructivism and contextualism. Like contemporary literacy theories discussed in the previous chapter, wellbeing literacy draws attention to the languages and multiple literacies people have and employ for the purpose of wellbeing. Additionally, wellbeing literacy adopts a socio-cultural and constructivist view of language and literacy as constructing and making meaning and reality within and between people (Burr, 2003; Oades, Jarden et al., 2021).

Wellbeing literacy is comprised of the ability to communicate intentionally about and for wellbeing involving language skills used in context, and for the direct purpose of wellbeing creation (Hou et al., 2021). This ability includes skills of developing words and

knowledge about wellbeing, being able to understand and express wellbeing languages, being aware of and adapting to context and having an intention for wellbeing (Oades, Jarden et al., 2021). Combined, these skills are the components that form the Capability Model of wellbeing literacy (CM_WL).

Capability Model of wellbeing literacy

Wellbeing literacy encompasses the ability to communicate purposefully both *about* and *for* wellbeing, using language skills effectively in different situations for the purpose of wellbeing creation. Wellbeing literacy is conceptualised as a *linguistic capability* (Oades et al., 2020). Defined briefly, a capability is what people can be and do (Sen, 1993). Wellbeing literacy refers to what a person can be and do, and what agency they have, regarding wellbeing related language (Oades, Jarden et al., 2021).

Further to this, wellbeing literacy is a *relational process* between a person and their environment providing options to transform wellbeing 'opportunities' to wellbeing 'achievements' (Oades, Jarden et al., 2021; Oades, Taylor et al., 2021). Conceptualising wellbeing literacy as a *linguistic* capability and *relational* process posits that the knowledge, vocabulary, and skills associated with using wellbeing language can be learned and developed (Hou et al., 2021; Waters, Dussert et al., 2022). This is relevant to this thesis as ECEC pedagogy and practices are employed with the aim of children learning and developing. Additionally, as discussed in Chapter 2, the EYLF includes relational pedagogical practices and a focus on children's learning, development and wellbeing (AGDE, 2022).

There is no order or hierarchy of the wellbeing literacy components, other than they may be perceived as graduating from the most to least tangible skills (Oades et al., 2025). While the components are frequently tabularised, they can also be construed of as the 'what', 'how', 'who, when, where' and 'why' of wellbeing literacy (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1

The CM-WL (adapted from Oades, Jarden et al., 2021)

	Component	Description
The WHAT? of wellbeing literacy - about *wellbeing*	1. Vocabulary and knowledge about wellbeing	Words, information about wellbeing
The HOW?	2. Wellbeing comprehension of multimodal texts	Listening, reading, viewing about and for wellbeing
	3. Wellbeing composition of multimodal texts	Speaking, writing, creating about and for wellbeing
The WHO? WHEN? WHERE?	4. Context awareness and adaptability	Awareness of adapting language to context
The WHY? of wellbeing literacy - for *wellbeing*	5. Intentionality for wellbeing	Habit of intentionally communicating for the purposes of wellbeing – a belief, desire, awareness and intention to use language to maintain or improve wellbeing for self and others

The five components of the Capability Model of wellbeing literacy (CM-WL) are examined and theorised in the context of ECEC in Chapter 4 as part of the published position paper, "Wellbeing literacy and Early Childhood Education" (Baker et al., 2021). The five components are further contextualised in Chapter 9 in relation to data collected in Study 3. However they will be addressed here, with consideration given to avoiding repetition across the thesis as much as possible. The five components of the CM-WL will now be discussed:

Vocabulary and knowledge about wellbeing

The 'what' of wellbeing literacy is *Vocabulary and knowledge about wellbeing* (see component 1, Table 3.1). This component represents having words and information *about* and *for* wellbeing that are consistent with one's values and social context.

Wellbeing literacy requires vocabulary, knowledge and language skills relevant to wellbeing. A wellbeing literate person will have proficiency in their wellbeing knowledge and vocabulary, i.e. they are aware of wellbeing principles and can speak about things that they value (Oades, Jarden et al., 2021). Hou et al. (2021) further explains that

'vocabulary' means a person can clearly express things that matter to them. Furthermore, that 'knowledge' ensures language used is about something relevant to the person. To illustrate, a person who values and understands that their wellbeing can be related to social support and connectedness may express their desire to maintain relationships to avoid loneliness and isolation (Oades, Baker et al., 2021).

In their study of wellbeing language and perceptions of Chinese international university students, Huang and colleagues (2020) examined differing conceptions of wellbeing between English and Chinese languages, and how cultural differences can impact how these wellbeing words are used and understood. This study asserted a need to better understand languages used about and for wellbeing given the wellbeing literacy assumed by health and education systems may not match that of individuals within those systems (Huang et al., 2020).

Of note in this *Vocabulary and knowledge* component of CM-WL is potential confusion with emotional literacy (Steiner, 2003). 'Emotional literacy' is the ability to recognise, understand, manage and appropriately express emotions (Sharp, 2014). This could be perceived as similar to 'wellbeing literacy' regarding the use of vocabulary and knowledge related to emotions. While emotions are a domain of wellbeing (Sun et al., 2020), this does not equate to the broader scope of wellbeing literacy. Rather, emotional literacy could be considered a domain or element within wellbeing literacy (Francis et al., 2020). In the same way, literacies such as health literacy and mental health literacy could be argued as literacies particularly relevant wellbeing literacy and this thesis. However health and wellbeing, while related, are not interchangeable. Health literacy focuses primarily on physical health (Nutbeam, 2008). Mental health literacy is defined as s "knowledge and beliefs about mental disorders, which aid their recognition, management, or prevention" (Jorm et al., 1997, p. 396). Each of these literacies – emotional, health and mental health – are pluralistic, subject and life domain specific (Cope & Kalantzis, 2013). Wellbeing is a multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary concept, sitting across many disciplines and not exclusive to health discourse or applications. Wellbeing literacy is conceptualised as "a multitude of fundamental knowledge and skills pertinent to wellbeing" (Francis et al., 2020, p. 2) rather than simply emotion or health words and concepts. Beyond the scope of emotional literacy and health literacies, wellbeing literacy also includes the CM-WL and its components of multimodality, context adaptability and intentionality (Table 3.1).

Wellbeing comprehension of multimodal texts

The 'how' of wellbeing literacy, *wellbeing comprehension* is being able to understand wellbeing relevant texts in many ways. This includes listening, reading, viewing (see Table 3.1). In today's contemporary, digital society 'text' goes beyond the page and includes all spoken, written, visual, gestural or audio material that can be seen, interpreted or have meaning assigned to it. This may include:

- written words e.g. from a traffic sign to a letter or book
- oral conversations
- digital messages such as social media posts, texts, gifs, emojis or video clips
- music and/or
- something physically and spatially created or performed e.g. a drawing, sculpture, visual arts or dance (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009).

A person with high wellbeing literacy may therefore use a range of modalities to understand wellbeing, such as comprehending through listening, reading and/or viewing. For example, consuming wellbeing relevant books, YouTube clips, podcasts or blogs about wellbeing related topics (Oades, Jarden et al., 2021).

Wellbeing literacy adopts a real-world view of literacy as a socio-cultural phenomenon happening between people, rather than as a private cognitive possession (Gee, 1992). As such, wellbeing literacy could be exercised by viewing street art which provokes a sense of social justice, or listening to up-beat music to boost one's mood (Oades, 2020). In a study with Victorian primary schools, Francis and colleagues (2020) reported engaging students' wellbeing literacy comprehension skills through reading books, watching videos, viewing other children's work and listening to audio descriptions to intentionally capture, share and build the children's emotional vocabulary.

Wellbeing composition of multimodal texts

Also the 'how' of wellbeing literacy, *wellbeing composition* represents a productive element of wellbeing literacy (see Table 3.1). Composition can occur through speaking, writing and/or creating about and/or for wellbeing (Oades, Baker et al., 2021). Wellbeing language composition occurs between people and in congruence with their socio-cultural contexts and values (Gee, 1998). Hou (2021) suggests effective wellbeing

communication "requires composition that is appropriate for specific value-systems and social contexts." (p. 3) and elaborates with the analogy of how a proficient science communicator will use audience-appropriate language to convey technical-scientific research. Oades, Baker and colleagues (2021) offer wellbeing composition examples of writing a letter to long-distance grandparents to boost their sense of family connection (writing), singing your favourite song to boost your mood (speaking) or choreographing a dance to convey the joys and sorrows of life (creating).

Context awareness and adaptability

Context awareness and adaptability can be understood as the 'who, when, where' of wellbeing literacy. This represents having an awareness of one's context and being able to adapt wellbeing language accordingly (see Table 3.1). Communication modes and language-use fluctuates across contexts, influenced by place, culture and time (Huang et al., 2020; Sun et al., 2019). A wellbeing literate person therefore demonstrates a sensitivity to these differences and an ability to adapt appropriately.

Literacy scholars recognise views of multiple and social languages, and literacy as related to context (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; Gee, 1996). Wellbeing literacy involves the metacognitive skill of adjusting to context. A wellbeing literate person will effectively adapt wellbeing language comprehension and composition according to their context, evidencing "a form of bilingualism" (Oades, Baker et al., 2021, p. 329). For example, a teenager with friends at the beach may speak, text or gesture about a wellbeing related idea in way specific to their friendship group or shared experiences. This is likely to be different to how they convey the same message or concept to teachers or with their grandparents (Oades, Jarden et al., 2021). Indeed, the same words may carry various meanings in different contexts and therefore be used in different ways for different audiences.

As a further illustration, in their article discussing the use of metaphors in conceptualising wellbeing, Vo and colleagues (2023) offer wellbeing metaphors as being able to be adapted and changed according to context. In discussing the wellbeing benefits of mindfulness with young children, for example, they suggest the metaphor of a monkey to explain a restless mind would be a useful language context adaptation (Vo et al., 2023).

Intentionality for wellbeing

The 'why' of wellbeing literacy, *Intentionality for wellbeing* is the habit of intentionally communicating for the purposes of wellbeing. This represents having an ongoing intention to improve and/or maintain the wellbeing of oneself, others, or the wider world (Oades, Jarden et al., 2021). This component is characterised by a desire, belief, intention, and awareness, as defined by Malle and Knobe (1997). It implies one's wellbeing communication is purpose driven – thus a 'skilful' or 'mindful' use of language (Oades, et al., 2020).

A wellbeing literate person actively prioritises wellbeing, adapting their language and communication modes to suit different contexts and to serve their wellbeing goals. This intentionality involves being aware of *why* certain language is used and *how* it can be adapted to meet specific needs in various situations. Importantly, intentionality distinguishes wellbeing literacy as a practice with purpose, rather than an autonomous skill. This aligns with the conception of literacy as *what* people do with reading, writing, and texts in real-world contexts and *why* they do it (Perry, 2012). The CM-WL *Intentionality for wellbeing* component underscores that wellbeing literacy is not just about comprehension or creation of language, but about its skilful and purposeful application in the service of wellbeing.

Intentionality acts as a key differentiator between wellbeing-related actions and true manifestations of wellbeing literacy capability. Oades (2020) offers the consideration "Does the sender or receiver of communication aim for wellbeing outcomes?" (p. 16). An illustrative example of purpose-driven wellbeing communication comes from a hospital during the COVID-19 pandemic lock-down where medical practitioners, with their faces heavily concealed by personal protective equipment, attached photographs of their smiling faces to the front of their gowns (see The creative communications forged in the COVID-19 pandemic). These were intentional actions aimed at improving the mood and wellbeing of patients, adapted to the context of patient's fear, loss of autonomy, and lack of connection to practitioners' identity in a medical environment. The wellbeing intent of the medical practitioners in this instance was clear in desiring wellbeing outcomes for patients they treated, wishing to connect on a human level, allay anxiety and act with compassion. This aim was sought using multimodal communication suitable for the context and therefore an act of wellbeing literacy (Oades, Hou et al., 2021).

To summarise, in congruence with socio-cultural and multi-literacies views of literacy as constructing and making meaning within and between people, wellbeing literacy involves the language people have and use around their wellbeing (Oades, Jarden et al., 2021). Language is central to human experience, and an innate and powerful lever for impacting human development and wellbeing (Hou, et al., 2021). Wellbeing literacy includes the CM-WL whose five components distinguish and extend it beyond other literacies such as health or emotional literacy (Berkman et al., 2010; Steiner, 2003). These components interact to form the necessary conditions of being wellbeing literate.

Review of wellbeing literacy research

Since its first descriptions (Oades & Johnston, 2017; Oades et al., 2017) and definition (Oades, et al., 2020; Oades, Jarden et al., 2021; Hou et al., 2021) conceptual and empirical literature concerning wellbeing literacy has increased. Conceptualisation, theoretical and evidence-informed applications to various contexts and disciplines have been discussed in research articles, book chapters, conference proceedings and a forthcoming dedicated book (see Oades et al., 2025). Notwithstanding this recent scholarly interest and growth, literature and evidence from real-world application of wellbeing literacy is limited.

Wellbeing literacy has been explored in adult, lay populations (Chng et al., 2022). For example, explicitly in the workplace via digital wellbeing literacy (An et al., 2023) and in higher education settings for the wellbeing of academics (Lemon, Francis et al., 2024; Lemon, O'Brien et al., 2024) and students (Johnson et al., 2017; Serini et al., 2024). Cross national perspectives have been garnered from Chinese international students (Huang et al., 2020) and through Burns and colleagues (2024) study of 1044 adults residing in Australia, the United Kingdom, Singapore, South Africa and Malaysia investigating their mental health and wellbeing literacy discrimination skills.

In an education context, Smid and colleagues (2024) examined the nature of wellbeing literacy among secondary-school student (ages 17-18) learning English as a foreign language. Mahmic et al. (2021) case study with parents/carers and professionals in disability care, proffers the development of wellbeing literacy as impacting benefits gained from an intervention. Regarding measurement, Hou and colleagues (2021) developed and empirically tested the Well-Lit 6, a simple 6-item self-report scale for wellbeing literacy in an education context. This was administered to Australian students

(mean age 14.47 years) and adults (parents and school staff) finding the Well-Lit 6 to be a useful provisional measure of wellbeing literacy. Following this, the psychometric properties of the Well-Lit 6 were examined in Chinese military cadets (Jia et al., 2024) and Xu et al., (2025) explored wellbeing literacy as an outcome after mindfulness training, utilising the Well-Lit 6. The Well-Lit 6 has also been adapted and tested for validity in Turkish (Akalin & Işık, 2024)

Additional studies and position papers have used wellbeing literacy as a lens to examine and pair with other disciplines. For example, how we may cultivate a better relationship with nature (Lomas, 2019); transform wellbeing and resilience education (Oades, Hou et al., 2021); support participants in collaborative 'shut up and write' sessions (Roache et al., in press); focus on collective wellbeing and post-traumatic growth (Waters, Cameron et al., 2022) and couple with arts education (Francis & Baker, in press). Disciplines other than wellbeing education, such as coaching, are also interested in the application of wellbeing literacy (Green et al., 2025; Passmore et al., 2024).

Other scholars continue to engage with the concept of wellbeing literacy relevant to their own research and disciplines. For example, how positive mental health literacy may learn from the approach of wellbeing literacy (Cresswell-Smith et al., 2023); wellbeing literacy as an element of school principals' professional development (Chen et al., 2023), and wellbeing literacy to support university and college student's mental health (Guo et al., 2024).

Along with the increased scholarly interest in wellbeing literacy and contextualisation across disciplines and domains, come new questions and critiques. As has already been touched upon in this thesis, indigenous cultures have long held conceptions of wellbeing, and ways of being and knowing that differ from non-indigenous and settler-colonial views (Wolfe, 2006; Martin, 2007). Carlin and colleagues (2025) argue that current definitions of wellbeing literacy are not inclusive of the unique needs, experiences, and expressions of wellbeing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Moreover, that effective wellbeing literacy initiatives need to be culturally centred and address the social, cultural, and political determinants of health that collectively shape Indigenous people's experiences. Given the EYLF (AGDE, 2022) strong focus on embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in ECEC practices,

and the rights of children to know about Australian's First nations languages, cultures, histories and knowledge systems, this critique is a relevant one.

Additional commentary comes from Clinton and Smith (2025) who suggest that, in presenting two "inherently complex and multifaceted concepts – wellbeing and literacy" (p. 43), wellbeing literacy risks oversimplifying the intricate nature of wellbeing by implying it can be distilled into a set of acquirable skills or knowledge. Furthermore, that conceptualising wellbeing as a form of literacy may diminish the importance of lived experiences and the many external and contextual factors that impact wellbeing. That wellbeing is complex and multi-faceted is discussed in Chapter 2 and supported by literature (e.g. Christopher 1999, Dodge et al, 2021; Pollard & Lee, 2003). Within the context of ECEC, Clinton and Smith's (2025) considerations are interesting given theoretical perspectives of child development and wellbeing that acknowledge ecological systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1974; Bronfenbrenner & Morris; Gromada et al, 2020, Vygotsky, 1978). Chapter 5 of this thesis discusses these systems and sociocultural theories further.

Measurement and assessment challenges also exist as wellbeing literacy is currently largely conceptual (Clinton & Smith, 2025). Measurement tools are limited and there is a need for further validation of Hou and colleagues (2021) Well-Lit 6 in non-western contexts (Pacheco et al., 2025). The Well-Lit 6 also relies on self-reported knowledge rather than objective measures (Clinton & Smith, 2025). While it has begun to be validate in teenage and adult populations and languages other than English, for example Chinese (Jia et al., 2024) and Turskish (Akalin & Işık, 2024; Yildirim et al., 2025), its applicability for the language capabilities of young children remains unexplored.

These studies, critiques and conversations notwithstanding, many opportunities exist for continued exploration, understanding and application of wellbeing literacy across contexts, cultures and disciplines. Moreover, research relevant to different ages and stages of the lifespan are needed. Of relevance to this thesis, is the yet unexplored area of early childhood education (Waters et al., 2022). Wellbeing literacy has been studied in primary school children through visual narrative analysis of children's drawings (Waters, Dussert et al., 2022; Waters & Higgins, 2022) and via a brief online positive psychological intervention (Francis et al., 2020). However these settings were in primary schools and with children aged variously between 5 – 13 years. To date, there has been no empirical

studies undertaken regarding the application of wellbeing literacy to the context of early childhood education, with ECEC professionals or pedagogy, and/or with children under school age.

Oades et al. (2025) have stated wellbeing literacy was deliberately designed as a transdisciplinary concept and presented as a formal conceptual model with the knowledge that language use varies between contexts, cultures, ages and institutions. Moreover that education settings are relevant contexts for future wellbeing literacy research (Oades et al., 2017; Oades, Jarden et al., 2021; Oades, Hou et al.,2021). These calls, along with the established gap in literature regarding wellbeing literacy in ECEC, provide a rich opportunity for the examination of wellbeing literacy in ECEC.

Laying claim to wellbeing literacy in early childhood education and care

Given the established gap in wellbeing literacy research within ECEC contexts and the potential benefits of applying this concept to early childhood settings, the next chapter presents a position paper that lays the groundwork for exploring wellbeing literacy in ECEC. This article, *Wellbeing literacy and Early Childhood Education* (Baker et al., 2021) was published in the early stages of this thesis. It was the result of several intersecting and timely factors that allowed for an early conceptual 'claim' of this thesis to be staked in the literature:

First, the literature reviews undertaken for this thesis: Chapter 2 examined the conceptual framework of this thesis and established conceptual connections between ECEC, wellbeing and literacy (see p. 9). This chapter, Chapter 3, has presented a review of wellbeing literacy research and established a gap in knowledge.

Second, positionality as the researcher of this thesis: My breadth of experiential knowledge, prolonged professional engagement in ECEC and positionality in pedagogy and practice (Holmes, 2020) has provided depth of insight and unique perspectives on the potential intersection of wellbeing literacy and ECEC literature.

Finally, a call for abstracts for a special wellbeing issue of *New Zealand International Research in Early Childhood Education* arose while the aim and question of this thesis were being refined. This timely writing opportunity supported the articulation of this thesis' early position and claim. Thus, this thesis' scholarly trajectory commenced with a 'Wellbeing literacy and Early Childhood Education' publication. This article also

served to stake an initial claim in the literature and provide a conceptual basis for the foundation and evolution of this thesis' empirical work. The resultant article is presented in its entirety in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR: '*CLAIM*' - WELLBEING LITERACY AND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

This co-authored chapter has been published in the *New Zealand International Research in Early Childhood Education:*

Baker, L. M., Oades, L. G., & Raban, B. (2021). Wellbeing literacy and early childhood education. *New Zealand International Research in Early Childhood Education*, *23*(2), 4-19. https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/informit.404572037365614

Note - this author-accepted manuscript has been reproduced in its entirety here as Chapter 4 but formatted to align with the thesis as a whole. For consistency, in-text citations and the numbering of figures and tables have been adjusted to match the formatting of this thesis. Also, for flow of the thesis, references have been integrated into the References on p. 198 rather than at the end of this reproduced publication.

Abstract

The early years for children, between birth and 5 years, are critical years for growth and learning, with life trajectory implications. Education in these early years is key for learning, development and wellbeing outcomes. Contemporary early childhood education curricula, policy and regulations internationally mandate a focus on academic achievement and wellbeing enhancement, but child wellbeing is complex and multi-dimensional. Wellbeing literacy is proposed as a necessary and relevant construct in early childhood education to facilitate and conceptualise child wellbeing. The Capability Model of wellbeing literacy can be contextualized for early childhood education, with child, educator and family benefits. As a 'fresh' theory leveraged from wellbeing science, wellbeing literacy also offers potential insights into the process of wellbeing gains for children in the early years of education.

Keywords: wellbeing, child wellbeing, wellbeing literacy, early childhood education.

Introduction

Contemporary pedagogical thinking suggests early education should target not only traditional, academic outcomes (such as literacy and numeracy) and processes of physical, social, emotional, language and cognitive development, but also the facilitation

of wellbeing (OECD, 2017). Furthermore, COVID-19, the most significant and universal disturbance to education seen in over a century (Schleicher, 2020), has proven to be a catalyst for discourse on the role of wellbeing in education (White & McCallum, 2021).

This article responds to a provocation regarding reducing the gap between what we *know* and what we *do* for the promotion of young children's learning. Shonkoff (2010) suggests we must utilise "current best practice as a starting point and to leverage scientific concepts to inspire fresh thinking." (p. 357). In response, we argue that fresh thinking can be found in the intersection of three key areas –. early childhood education, wellbeing and wellbeing literacy.

Education in the early childhood years

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) services provide education and care for children under compulsory school age, affording experiences in the critical window for learning, development, health and wellbeing, that is the first five years of life in Australia (CDC 2007, 2009; DET, 2019; MCEECDYA, 2010; NSCDC, 2004; OECD, 2017). Education for children prior to school attendance is embedded in government policy, education practices and public debate internationally, highlighted by the 2015 UN Summit decision that one of the 10 main education-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) was to ensure that all children have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education by 2030 (Target 4.2 of the SDG project; OECD, 2017). Additionally, the revised International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 2011), expanded the first level of education (ISCED 0) to encompass educational services designed for children under 3 years of age, recognising that learning starts at birth, and that quality ECEC is critical for the very youngest of children (OECD, 2017). These measures, along with OECD indicators showing that participation is at least one year of formal ECEC (educational, intentional and curriculum-based services offered by trained pedagogues; OECD, 2015a) before the start of compulsory schooling is universal or near-universal in OECD countries, point to an international focus on and uptake of early childhood education. For example, 86.2% of 4-year-olds are enrolled in ECEC in Australia, 93.2% in New Zealand, 95.5% in Japan, 94.4% in Italy and 100% in the UK (OCED, 2021).

In addition, ECEC pedagogues, services and experiences are some of the most important influential factors in a child's development (Cagliari, et al. 2016; Hattie, 2008)

and fundamental for children not only in their early years, but for successful learning, development and wellbeing along their life trajectory (Huppert, 2009; OECD, 2017; Shonkoff & Garner, 2012). In fact, high quality ECEC services build foundations for children's cognitive skills, social and emotional development, life-long learning and health outcomes, with the number of years attending an early education service predicting later levels of performance (CDC, 2007; OECD, 2017, 2018; Page & Tayler, 2016; Shonkoff, 2010).

Wellbeing

Wellbeing is both an ancient and new construct, undergoing renewed examination in the last two decades under the umbrella of positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Despite the fact that wellbeing has been debated by experts for millennia, there remains significant ambiguity regarding its definition and conceptualisation (Adler & Seligman, 2016; Oades & Mossman, 2017). More than simply freedom from ill-being or dysfunction, wellbeing is our subjective sense of thriving (Seligman, 2011). Wellbeing can be defined across domains, such as physical, emotional or mental levels: individual to organisational; viewpoints, subjective or objective; and sectors, education, medicine, sport, business, science and the like (Oades & Mossman, 2017).

Huppert and So (2013) assert that wellbeing is defined as feeling good and functioning well. Research suggests strong wellbeing connects to a broad range of outcomes in our lives – from our capacity to function, to experiencing greater happiness, success, relationships, health and longevity (Huppert, 2009; Lyubomirsky et al., 2005). Particularly for children, strong wellbeing, while emerging and developing across their lives, enables them to capitalise on learning opportunities and engage positively with their environments (Marbina et al., 2015; Pollard & Lee, 2003). Current thinking concurs that increased wellbeing, in its many forms and definitions, and at all points along the life trajectory, is vital – most particularly in the first few years of life.

Wellbeing and early childhood

Wellbeing is a complex, intangible and multi-faceted construct that is regularly used but whose definition is unresolved, contested and inconsistent (Dodge et al., 2012; Pollard & Lee, 2003; Marbina et al., 2015). Child wellbeing specifically remains an elusive concept that changes over time (Crivello et al., 2009). Furthermore, child wellbeing can be

considered from broad standpoints, such as science, education, health, psychology, policy, government, economics and culture. Consider the following:

- The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) positions children's, and particularly infants, wellbeing as a matter of *economic sustainability* (Farquhar, 2010).
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990) refers to wellbeing as a child's *right* (UN General Assembly, Article 8).
- Child wellbeing can inform *government strategy* (as established in New Zealand's pioneering Child Wellbeing strategy (The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2019).) and recently called for by Australia's National Children's Commissioner (https://humanrights.gov.au/about/news/speeches/towards-national-child-wellbeing-strategy).
- From a *learning and development perspective*, child wellbeing is viewed as affecting life trajectory, with early childhood as a time of rapid change and learning that translates to adult habits, health and wellbeing outcomes (Marmot et al., 2008; Shonkoff, 2012).
- *Ecologically*, child wellbeing is perceived as dependent upon the elements of the child's ecosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).
- *Educationally*, early childhood pedagogy and practices in many countries globally consider children's wellbeing as a key learning outcome (CMEC, 2012; Department for Education, 2014; DET, 2019; DHHS, 2015; MCEECDYA, 2010; Ministry of Education, 2017; NAEYC, 2002).
- A *hedonic* approach to child wellbeing positions children as dependent and vulnerable to adult intervention in order to generate and maintain a 'good life' (Gibbons et al., 2017).
- *Contextually*, early childhood wellbeing is emerging and cumulative, deeply connected to children's learning, development and context (Alexandrova, 2017; Pollard & Lee, 2003).
- *Culturally*, wellbeing is not only defined, described and influenced by contextual and cultural factors, it is also understood differently by those in diverse cultures with indigenous ways of life and non-western perspectives

offering specific positive and enduring protective factors (Durie, 1985; Pulotu-Endemann, 2001; Prout, 2012; White, 2008).

- Finally, and somewhat ironically, early childhood scholars also argue that definitions and assessment of child wellbeing need, but frequently lack, *child voice* – input from children themselves about their wellbeing (Crivello et al., 2009; Marbina, et al, 2015; Jones & Sumner, 2009; Giamminuti, 2013).

Child wellbeing is a complex, contextual and multi-dimensional construct whose definition is historically, politically and pedagogically affected. There are complexities and contextual challenges when discussing and facilitating young children's wellbeing, and attempts at fresh thinking can benefit from multi-domain perspectives, such as those from science and education.

As well as the conceptualisations and fields discussed above, wellbeing is within the remit of early childhood education (OECD, 2017). For example, the declaration that early education must consider wellbeing content and outcomes can be found in various forms in Australia's *National Quality Framework* and *Early Years Learning Framework*, New Zealand's Te Whāriki, the United Kingdom's Early Years Foundation Stage and various position statements in the USA. In fact, wellbeing foci are mandated in a significant number of early childhood curriculums, educational frameworks, guiding documents and regulations internationally (CMEC, 2012; DET, 2019; Department for Education, 2014; DHHS, 2015; Ministry of Education, 2017; NAEYC, 2002).

While educators in ECEC may be guided by personal or curricula perspectives of child wellbeing, educators require not only a clear definition, but also an accountable, accessible and authentic way to conceptualise and assess it (Marbina, et al, 2015). Other contemporary pathways to, and conceptualisations of, wellbeing not currently utilised in ECEC pedagogy or practice, can and should be considered.

Wellbeing science for child wellbeing – wellbeing literacy

The application of wellbeing science to ECEC is nascent but rich, offering valid insights to ECEC and the mandate of child wellbeing (Baker et al., 2017; Shoshani & Slone, 2017). The recently proposed meta-construct, of wellbeing literacy, is herein argued as of great potential benefit for ECEC and thinking around child wellbeing. Building on wellbeing science, constructivism, contextualism and capability models, wellbeing literacy was first defined as the *mindful language use about and for wellbeing* (Oades, 2017; Oades &

Johnston, 2017). Specifically, wellbeing literacy is "the generalised capability (incorporating knowledge, vocabulary and language skills) of comprehending and composing wellbeing languages, sensitive to contexts, used intentionally to maintain or improve the wellbeing of oneself or others" (Oades, 2017, p. 12). The term *capability* is a distinct, core concept of wellbeing literacy, expressed briefly, as *what we can be and do* (Sen, 1993). Here, the concept of a *capability* (as opposed to a *skill*) is important for ECEC. Foundational skills and developmental processes for children are well understood in ECEC as vital for education, such as sound language and cognitive development, strong socio-emotional skills, and health and welfare needs being met. However, capability is built when a child is effectively able to apply these skills and knowledge in different, complex and dynamic circumstances, both within and beyond their ECEC experience (ACARA, 2020). Moreover, wellbeing viewed as a *capability* rather than an *outcome*, adds to current thinking. Wellbeing literacy, as a capability new to the realm of ECEC, thus offers extended pedagogical and practical perspectives (see also Table 4.2 below).

Wellbeing literacy - A Capability Model

Wellbeing literacy theory proposes five core conditions which can build an individual's capability to communicate *about* and *for* their wellbeing (Oades, et al, 2020). These components are (1) vocabulary and knowledge; (2) comprehension of multimodal texts; (3) composition of multimodal texts; (4) context sensitivity, and (5) intentionality (See Table 4.1). These are each discussed below in more detail.

Table 4.1.
Five Component Model of wellbeing literacy (Oades et al, 2020)

Component	Description
1. Vocabulary and knowledge *about* wellbeing	Words and basic facts about wellbeing (i.e., content that is signified).
2. Comprehension of multimodal text related to wellbeing	Reading, listening, viewing about and for wellbeing
3. Composition of multimodal text related to wellbeing	Writing, speaking, creating about and for wellbeing
4. Context awareness and adaptability	Awareness of differences across contexts and adapt use of language to fit the relevant context.
5. Intentionality *for* wellbeing	Habit of intentionally using language to maintain or improve wellbeing of self or others.

Vocabulary and knowledge about wellbeing

Wellbeing vocabulary includes language associated with the wellbeing of self and of others. Wellbeing knowledge includes declarative knowledge about and for wellbeing (refer to Table 4.1). For example, a person who has knowledge that their wellbeing is related to social support may use language to communicate this, saying they feel lonely because they are isolated and know relationships are important for health. A 4-year-old child may express that when they are alone, they feel sad, and a cuddle with Mummy makes them feel better. In ECEC this may be considered social and emotional literacy (SEL). For instance, expressing and regulating emotions, and effective social interaction (Denham, 2003) and indeed the broad term of wellbeing literacy encompasses multiple wellbeing areas such as SEL. However, individual domains do not in themselves equate to wellbeing literacy, although discussion of this is beyond the scope of this paper.

Multimodal comprehension

Communicating about and for wellbeing includes both the aspects of receiving: comprehension and producing: composition (see Table 4.1). Comprehension of wellbeing communication can occur through reading, listening and viewing (ACARA, 2020) and literacy here is viewed as real-world, not solely bound in education (Oades, Baker, et al., 2020). Listening about, or for, wellbeing could involve purposefully listening to music to boost mood. Reading about, or for, wellbeing may be reading a story with a theme of hope and belonging. For a young child, comprehension of wellbeing may occur through viewing picture books about emotions and self-regulation, and hearing an adult's perspectives on the characters' strengths.

Multimodal composition

Composition of wellbeing occurs through writing, speaking, and creating (ACARA, 2020). Wellbeing literacy is not just receiving wellbeing related information, but also includes a productive element, acknowledging that language is a socio-cultural phenomenon that occurs between people (Gee, 1998; Oades, et al., 2020). Intentionally composing for wellbeing may be writing an email *for* a faraway relative to boost their sense of connection with family. Creating *about* wellbeing, could involve compiling and conducting a yoga class for colleagues to help them experience mindful movement during a busy day. For a 3-year-old child, this may mean drawing a picture for grandparents who are coming to visit or making cupcakes because their grandfather loves them.

Context awareness and adaptability

Wellbeing literacy includes attention to context as the meaning of language varies with the situation – context identification and appropriate adaptation of language is key (Oades, et al., 2020) (see Table 4.1). For example, words, language use and communication styles are different across the many spheres of a person's life, home, work, school, with family, friends or colleagues. A wellbeing literate person effectively adapts their comprehension and composition of language according to the context (Oades, Hou et al, 2021). A teenager may communicate being unwell with a parent via the use of the word 'sick' but use the same expression with peers to indicate that something is amazing or great. For a young child, this may be speaking of being 'in the green zone' when regulating behaviour in an ECEC setting but expressing this as 'chilling out' at home, as this is the language used in each context.

Intentionality for wellbeing

Finally, a wellbeing literate person exhibits intentionality *for* wellbeing, and this will include desire, belief, intention, and awareness (Malle & Knobe, 1997). This implies the comprehension; reading, listening, viewing, or composition; writing, speaking, creating, is purpose driven – the 'skilful' or 'mindful' use of language (Oades, et al., 2020). In this regard, language is assumed as a tool that is used with intention (i.e. it does not use itself). Without the component of intentionality, a behaviour - language, comprehension, or creation - is simply a wellbeing 'activity' rather than a demonstration of a capability for wellbeing literacy. To illustrate, a person may listen to music in the car and feel relaxed as a result. This does not demonstrate a wellbeing literacy capability, however. To indicate this is a wellbeing literacy capability, there must be an intention to play music for the purpose and knowledge of its ability to create positive emotions and improve mood. Perhaps particular songs are chosen as they evoke memories or create joy on the way home from a workday, with the knowledge that the person will feel more relaxed and be better able to transition to the demands of the family as a result. This is a mindful use of language for and about wellbeing. Intentionality applied to a young child may be one who, in the context of an ECEC service when parents have left, helps a peer take three deep breaths (using their 'superpower of kindness') to help their friend's body and mind settle after saying goodbye. Further illustrations of the ways wellbeing literacy conditions and

capabilities may be applicable to ECEC services and preschool aged children are provided in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2.

Conditions and skills to build wellbeing literacy capability - as applied to ECEC (adapted from Oades, Baker et al., 2021).

Wellbeing literacy component	**How might these be taught to children?**
Wellbeing vocabulary and knowledge *I have words that I can use, and that other people understand, to help myself and/or others feel good and function well.*	Children are introduced to vocabulary and knowledge of character strengths for making sense of interacting with self and others, e.g. kindness, teamwork, gratitude, self-control. Children learn the word 'mindfulness' and hence have the option to use it. Teachers expose children to a variety of words and knowledge about emotions so that children have the cognitive building blocks for wellbeing comprehension and composition skills.
Wellbeing comprehension skills *I can hear, see, read and understand ways to feel good and contribute to others wellbeing.*	Children are offered music and story books as ways to help them create and label emotions. Family photographs are accessible for children to view if they are experiencing separation anxiety or wish to feel connected to their family while in the classroom. Images of faces are used as visual cues for children to label, register and regulate emotions. Stories that highlight character strengths are read so that children may 'spot' and articulate these strengths in others and in themselves. Children are read stories about mindfulness to build knowledge that breathing techniques can help them generate a sense of calm.
Wellbeing composition skills *I can write, draw, make, create and talk about things to help myself feel good and function well.*	Children are offered painting, drawing, clay or playdough provisions as avenues for communication about their emotions and ways they can manage them, and/or to represent items/people that help them feel well and happy. Familiar and favourite songs, that are consistently sung with children, and taught as ways for them to feel good and share connection with others. Teachers support and encourage children to express emotions, moods, intentions, wishes and concerns verbally, as skills for feeling autonomous and capable. Teachers develop children's knowledge that they can communicate and manage emotions through dance.

Context awareness and adaptability *I know that receiving and expressing language can be different in different places, with different people and different circumstances.*	Teachers make connections for children about the similarities of language between home and their ECEC service – for example strategies for calming may be called 'being the boss of my body' with educators and 'calming down' with family – in order that they can adapt knowledge and vocabulary to different contexts. Teachers and children discuss different methods for communication about and for emotions in different places, for example using sensory materials (sand or water) to feel soothed when at an ECEC service versus accessing drawing or making a cubby house when visiting grandparents.
Intentionality *I have language (through, listening, viewing, speaking, writing, drawing and/or creating) that I can purposefully use to make myself and others feel good and function well.*	Teachers and children recite a deep breathing mantra to express the processing of difficult emotions for children when their parents leave each morning. Teachers and children refer to visual cues (icons of character strengths of *kindness* and *teamwork*) within the classroom as a way for children to practice the habit of speaking and acting kindly. Teachers ask children which story they would like to read as a way to help them feel happier when parents leave or as a relaxation tool before rest time.

Benefits of wellbeing literacy in the early childhood education context

Benefits of applying the model of wellbeing literacy to ECEC, to facilitate child wellbeing, development and learning success, include *relevance* to the context of ECEC; wellbeing literacy potential to *validate* best practice; *educator* benefits and, on a broader scale, offer gains beyond a child's immediate ECEC experience. These benefits are now described in more detail.

Contextual relevance of wellbeing literacy

A model that highlights pathways to wellbeing and adds insight to the processes of wellbeing for children, is relevant to ECEC given wellbeing outcomes is mandated in many international early educational curricular and policy (including Australia, New Zealand, USA, UK and Europe). Additionally, when viewed through the lens of wellbeing literacy, wellbeing science constructs and interventions (such as character strengths, gratitude, mindfulness) are increasingly applicable to ECEC. For example, mindfulness experiences, delivered through deep breathing exercises; character strengths as a shared language; facilitation of flow through uninterrupted periods of self-directed play; can be confidently undertaken in early childhood as building capabilities. When ECEC educators directly engage with children during such experiences, using language and explicit and intentional

teaching of the connections to wellbeing, new levels of understanding and deeper wellbeing knowledge can be achieved (Page & Tayler, 2016).

A social constructivist epistemology of children as active, collaborative learners and critical thinkers within the social context is prominent in ECEC philosophy and practice (Powell & Kalina, 2009). Learning informally through play and social interaction, rather than formally, is considered necessary for knowledge construction and wellbeing. Vocabulary, knowledge and skills, along with comprehension and composition of capabilities to improve and maintain wellbeing, is congruent with this ECEC approach as well as the psychological and relational wellbeing context of childhood.

Clarification of best practice in ECEC

Wellbeing literacy provides a model to view, guide, underpin and clarify ECEC best-practice. For instance, customary ECEC experiences, such as storytelling, drawing, dancing and imaginative play, can be clarified, articulated and valued as opportunities to develop wellbeing literacy (see also Table 4.2). Wellbeing literacy composition and comprehension capabilities, through listening, reading, viewing and speaking about a story book, can be fostered through the time-honoured exchange of storytelling between an educator and child in ECEC. Similarly, drawing, creating songs or viewing social stories, can provide young children with the necessary contextual knowledge and vocabulary to build capabilities for later usage of wellbeing for and about self and others, thus expanding and further elucidating the important role these pedagogical practices play in building foundational skills for children. These core experiences are important as they are not only pedagogically and philosophically sound ECEC practices that can foster children's emerging wellbeing across psychological, relational and subjective domains, but also build children's capabilities for ongoing use.

Benefits for ECEC educators

Wellbeing literacy also offers potential benefits for ECEC educators. Educators in ECEC face high degrees of work-related stress (Schreyer & Krause, 2016) and a lack of understanding from the populace of the meaning and positive impact of their work, with their practices undervalued by society and their professional identity misunderstood (Corr et al., 2015). However, the application of appropriate and robust new theories and models provide tools for educators to bring meaning, value and relevance to their work. Wellbeing literacy is one such model that could enhance and articulate, beyond the ECEC

profession, the value of daily educator interactions, such as those discussed of music and storytelling in Table 4.2. Encouraging and enabling appropriate educational and wellbeing outcomes, that educators can elucidate through a wellbeing literacy lens, validates ECEC as educators are offered greater possibility to articulate and consolidate their current practice.

Benefits beyond ECEC services

We additionally argue that wellbeing literacy is not only a mechanism between an individual child, an intervention/teaching strategy and a wellbeing outcome, but also a pathway between a child's ECEC service, family, home and beyond. The age and dependency of young children in ECEC services results in parents, caregivers and families engaging frequently with educators. Families are highly 'invested' and often seek information and support through ECEC services and pedagogues regarding the learning, development and wellbeing of their child and in areas such as education and parenting.

Assisting families to understand the language of education is vital to support their expectations and aspirations for their child (Hattie, 2008). A shared 'language' and understanding of what wellbeing concepts mean between and across contexts (of home and education) and generations (families and children) will facilitate deeper and more effective dialogue, skills and knowledge. For children may use different words to describe self-soothing strategies e.g., 'being the boss of my body' with educators and 'calming down' with family. Understanding this contextual and intentional language use as a wellbeing literacy capability can create connectivity across a child's ecosystem.

Beyond family contexts, broader community discourse and knowledge around the conceptualisation and facilitation of child wellbeing exists through the Capability Model of wellbeing literacy. Wellbeing literacy offers an accessible language of wellbeing that can form a bridge between education systems, families, educators and homes (Oades, Hou, et al, 2021). Opportunities for wellbeing outcomes increase as those in the child's ecological system are aware how knowledge, skills and language can facilitate wellbeing. Just as parents can adopt an ECEC service's strategy to utilise character strengths as a language to facilitate children's communication and relationships, for example, this language can extend to other services, relationships and interactions beyond the home. When knowledge is thus shared and expanded to different contexts, a

child's opportunities to utilise wellbeing literacy capabilities (see Table 4.2) are increased, and the likelihood of positive wellbeing outcomes is amplified.

Future directions, research and practice

Insight into wellbeing gains

In educational contexts, where wellbeing interventions/strategies are being increasingly utilised through positive education (Norrish et al., 2013) and social-emotional learning (SEL) programs, it is particularly vital to understand how potential wellbeing outcomes are being processed and achieved by children (if at all). Research suggests resilience and engagement with learning can be built through SEL (Coelho et al., 2015; Sklad et al., 2012) and that positive interventions correlate to wellbeing gains (Seligman & Adler, 2018; Waters, 2011). However, less is known about the processes involved for young children in achieving these gains. How and under what conditions are wellbeing outcomes, such as young children developing resilience, growth mindset or an understanding of character strengths, being reached in education?

The deeply contextual, cultural and multi-faceted nature of wellbeing and multiple perspectives from which this can be viewed and impacted, means that its development is not a linear process or outcome that can be readily mapped. Bronfenbrenner (1979) highlighted this in his ecological theory, and wellbeing dynamism is reflected in the view of some that, rather than an outcome, wellbeing is a process or unfolding life project linked to context and time (Hogan, 2008; Mashford-Scott et al, 2012; Thoilliez, 2011). Quite simply, a child's wellbeing cannot be extracted, defined or measured without consideration of their environment and experiences. With this in mind, ECEC regulatory and curriculum documents that conceptualise wellbeing as an outcome for which educators are responsible have the inherent message that it is a direct and linear process from pedagogy and practice to wellbeing. The fresh insight that wellbeing literacy can bring to this complex landscape may be the introduction of the capability of wellbeing literacy as a mediator or moderator of wellbeing outcomes – one that can be measured to examine gains made by children.

There is little data to understand which interventions, particularly in early childhood education, are having measurable impacts on wellbeing in the early years; how, why and in what context (Shonkoff, 2010). Contextually specific research is required; however, wellbeing literacy may provide insight. Oades (2017) argues wellbeing literacy is

the necessary pathway between wellbeing interventions and successful outcomes, increasing the capability of the individual to engage with and benefit from the wellbeing inputs, interactions and interventions available to them. In turn, increased capabilities to comprehend and compose wellbeing language, knowledge and skills (to read, view, listen to, speak of, write and create intentional wellbeing language) increase the likelihood of young children engaging with, and learning from, wellbeing interactions. Thus, wellbeing literacy can be proposed as a driver and underpinning mechanism for wellbeing learning and outcomes and a contribution to new thinking in ECEC.

Future research

Wellbeing literacy is a new construct not yet explored in the context of ECEC, and great opportunities for discussion, application and future research exist. These include, but are not limited to, establishing wellbeing definitions within ECEC; measurement; educator training; increased collaboration and research. As wellbeing literacy and it's offering of a wellbeing capability model, evolves and explores its relevance to various contexts, questions regarding how it is viewed, incorporated and measured in each context are raised.

Data and scholarly attention on the relevance of wellbeing literacy to the context of ECEC, for example, the Well-Lit 6, a provisional measure of wellbeing has been demonstrated as reliable and valid (Hou et al., 2021), however reported findings were limited to school age children. Links between wellbeing literacy and ECEC, in theory and practice, require significant research attention. How wellbeing literacy aligns with the specific ECEC regulations, curricula, frameworks and policy across and within different cultures, countries, states and territories internationally may be a strong starting point to articulate what is existing and what is indeed new thinking.

Conclusion

Child wellbeing is dynamic and emerging with critical implications across the life trajectory. Early childhood education services are a crucible for wellbeing facilitation and strong wellbeing enables children to capitalise on learning opportunities and build life-long capabilities (Marbina et al, 2015; Pollard & Lee, 2003). Given the pedagogical and theoretical connections between Wellbeing literacy and ECEC, the construct of wellbeing literacy has a potent home in ECEC. Wellbeing literacy offers 'fresh thinking' leveraged from science to expand and elucidate current best practice in early childhood education.

CHAPTER FIVE: '*METHODOLOGY*' - THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK, RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND STUDY DESIGN

Following discussion of the *Context, Concept*, and articulation of the *Claim* across Chapters 2, 3 and 4, this chapter introduces the *Methodology*. The purpose of this chapter is to present the guiding research philosophy, approach to theory development and qualitative methodological choices of this thesis. This chapter explains the research strategy of the three studies undertaken for this thesis, along with overarching details of the methods used for each study. Crucially, this methodology chapter articulates a cohesive and rigorous design that has supported this thesis from initial literature review through to final analysis and discussion. This approach has ensured a continuous and critical examination of the overarching research aim and question. Furthermore, the methodology has facilitated an evolution of ideas, approaches and data analysis, thereby mitigating the risk of confirmation bias and allowing for the emergence of new insights throughout the research process.

To note here is that Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9 also offer more specific methodological information for each study of this thesis as they are included in the corresponding publications. Further relevant information for the three studies undertaken (e.g. participant samples and data analysis processes) are detailed in this chapter with reference to relevant appendices.

This chapter begins with a short discussion of the theoretical framework underpinning this thesis and which has guided the overall question and aim.

Theoretical framework

Multiple theories can inform our understanding of a single phenomenon, as highlighted in previous chapters regarding the phenomena of 'wellbeing' and 'literacy'. Theory is an abstract description of the relationships between concepts and can be drawn upon to guide research and support our understanding of the world (Hughes, 2010; Varpio et al., 2020). Theoretical frameworks, developed from one or more theories, provide a systematic way to interpret phenomena, scaffolding research within existing theories (Varpio et al., 2020). Collins and Stockton (2018) suggest theoretical frameworks exist at the intersection of current knowledge and previously formed ideas, researchers' epistemology, and methodological approaches or lenses. Theory and theoretical frameworks support a researcher to be open and clear about their values, role and

perspectives within a study, making implicit assumptions explicit. Moreover, unlike a *conceptual* framework that maps how literature works together in a particular study, a *theoretical* framework provides a lens for how the study will process new knowledge (Collins & Stockton, 2018). With these definitions and intersections in mind, a framework of the theoretical perspectives influencing and supporting the research reported in this thesis will now be presented.

As discussed in Chapter 1, the aim of this thesis has been to examine how wellbeing literacy can be applied to early childhood education and care (ECEC) in Australia. More specifically, in what ways wellbeing literacy can expand, focus, inform and/or underpin ECEC wellbeing conceptualisations, pedagogy, practices and policy in Australia. As such, systems theories and sociocultural perspectives, and how these arise and interact in ECEC, are relevant and valuable frameworks for this thesis. These theoretical perspectives are summarised in Table 5.1 and described further below.

Table 5.1

The theoretical framework underpinning this thesis.

Theory	Concepts / models	Theorist(s)
Systems Theories	The bioecological model - an ecological model theorising how human development results from the bidirectional interactions between the individual and their environment.	Bronfenbrenner (1974) Bronfenbrenner & Morris (2007)
	Worlds of Influence framework of child wellbeing - a conceptual framework for understanding the cascading influences on child wellbeing outcomes in rich countries.	Gromada et al. (2020)
Sociocultural theories	Perspectives emphasising the interrelated influence of social and cultural factors on human development, behaviour and learning.	Vygotsky (1978)
	Multiliteracies – recognising new, multiple and diverse ways of communication encompassing traditional and contemporary literacies.	Cope & Kalantzis (2013) Perry (2012)

Systems theories within the theoretical framework

Broadly construed, a system is a group of interacting components that work together forming an identifiable entity or process (Laszlo & Krippner, 1998). Systems theories provide models for these complex entities, focusing on understanding the interrelated components and how they interact with each other and their environment

(Senge, 1990). Phenomena, in both the natural and human-made world, and those involving individual and collective human activity, invariably operate in complex systems. Systems theories are important for understanding, problem solving and cross-disciplinary research (Laszlo & Krippner, 1998).

While several systems theories could be applied to this thesis, two have particular relevance to ECEC, language-use and wellbeing concepts – Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory of human development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007) and UNICEF's Multi-level Framework of Child Well-being (Gromada et al., 2020).

The bioecological model

The bioecological theory of human development began with Bronfenbrenner's (1974) ecological approach theorising that development results from the interaction of the individual and their environment (Rosa & Tudge, 2013). Bronfenbrenner asserted "the properties of the person and of the environment, the structure of environmental settings, and the processes taking place within and between them must be viewed as interdependent and analysed in system terms." (1974, p. 4).

Evolving across decades into a bioecological theory, the resultant model describes five layers of the environment that influence human development across the life course: the micro, meso, exo, macro and chrono systems (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007). These layers are generally presented in a 'nested' view of bi-directional interaction, illustrating the impacts of the:

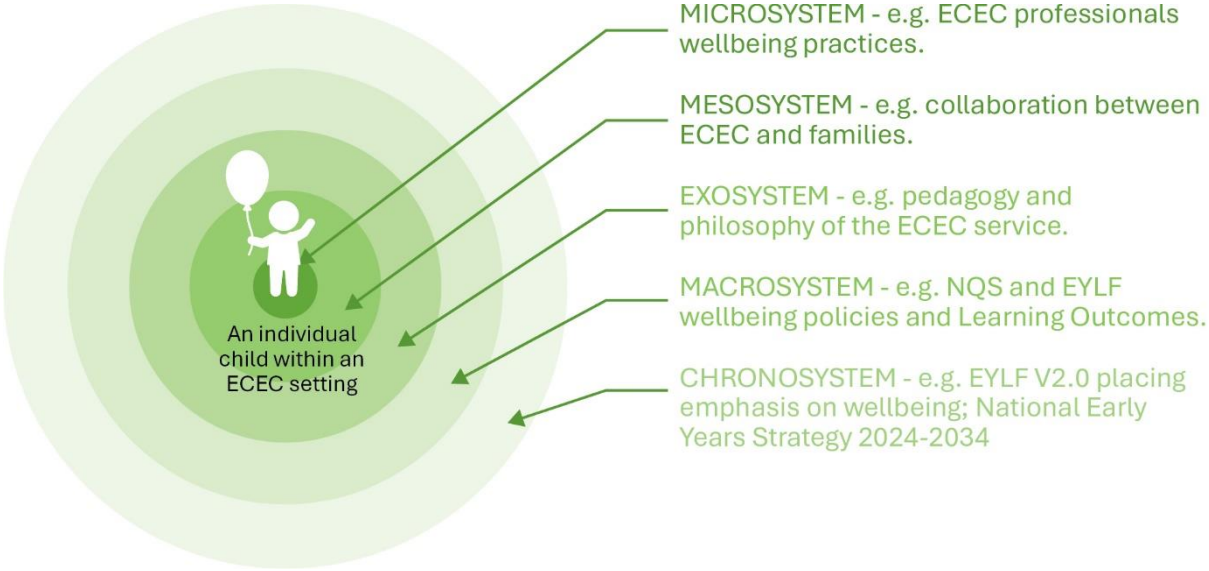
- proximal setting including the individual (micro)
- inter-relations between microsystems in which the individual actively participates (meso)
- external settings where the developing individual in not an active participant (exo)
- broader social, cultural or ideological systems (macro) and
- change or continuity over time (chrono) (Neal & Neal, 2013; Rosa & Tudge, 2013).

When applied to ECEC, the bioecological model illustrates the dynamic and bi-directional interactions between a child and the many environments and systems in which they live and are educated (Mohammadabadi et al., 2019).

While Neal and Neal (2013) argue the 'nested' systems may be better represented as a 'networked' arrangement that does not reduce or obscure the relationships between systems, the traditional concentric circles are shown below given the ease with which this portrays the child at the centre of their ECEC environment. How each of these systems are related and examples from the context of ECEC are illustrated in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1

Bioecological Model with the child at the centre and ECEC system examples related to this thesis (adapted from Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007).



Bioecological systems theory also incorporates four simultaneously occurring elements that influence human development as part of an interactive system - *process*, *person*, *context* and *time*:

- *Process* encompasses proximal processes, i.e. ongoing, frequent and bi-directional interactions between the individual and their environment, that are considered the primary mechanics of human development (Rosa & Tudge, 2013). An example of this enduring, reciprocal interaction in ECEC may be an educator comforting a baby or playing with a child (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007).
- *Person* refers to the biopsychological characteristics of the developing individual, such as disposition, abilities, knowledge, age or gender. These bioecological resources, and force and demand characteristics, are not

only products of human development themselves, but as Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) argue, influence development such that the individual plays a dual role in the bioecological model. In an ECEC setting this may be illustrated by the curious disposition of a child supporting them to explore and engage in more learning activities (proximal processes) (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007).

- *Context* refers to the environmental layers - the micro, meso, exo, macrosystems (Figure 5.1) – and how they shape the individual and the proximal processes they engage in (In ECEC this may be the layers of relationships between educators and children, the service and the community, and the impact of the EYLF on how an ECEC service is governed and monitored.
- *Time* considers that human development unfolds and is influenced by the passage of time. In an ECEC context, this may vary from how long a child engages in play or how often they are interrupted (microtime); how many hours a child attends ECEC (mesotime) or how policies shape ECEC curriculum or workforce issues that impact pedagogy and practices (macrotime) (Mohammadabadi et al., 2019; Neal & Neal., 2013).

Worlds of Influence Framework of child wellbeing

Since 2000, UNICEF's *Innocenti Report Card* series has focused on children's wellbeing in economically advanced countries, in domains such as health, safety and education, aiming to promote and influence policy reform in favour of children (Adamson, 2013). Report Card 16, *Worlds of Influence - Understanding What Shapes Child Well-being in Rich Countries*, provides a multi-level framework of child wellbeing (Gromada et al., 2020). Like Bronfenbrenner, it places the individual (the child) at the centre of the model to illustrate how children's wellbeing interacts with, and is influenced by, environmental factors.

Represented as concentric circles, the *Worlds of Influence* multi-level framework offers a holistic view of child wellbeing, with wellbeing outcomes for children at the core (Gromada et al., 2020). Child wellbeing outcomes in the Worlds of Influence model include both objective and subjective views, for example educational achievement or child reported life satisfaction. The framework argues these wellbeing outcomes are influenced by three levels:

- The ‘world of the child’ - the relationships and activities experienced directly by the child. This may include activities and relationships such as those with family and peers or, relevant to this thesis, within their ECEC setting (the wellbeing activities and pedagogical processes they experience).
- The ‘world around the child’- networks and resources, including factors such as the quality of the neighbourhood children live in or the economic status of their household. Networks may not be directly experienced by the child but represent the connections between adults closest to them that can impact their wellbeing. For example, the sources of support their families or caregivers have, the hours caregivers work or the relationship they have with the child’s ECEC setting.
- The ‘world at large’ - policies and context, including social, health and education policies of direct relevance to the child, and broader social, environmental and economic factors that directly or indirectly influence their wellbeing. In relation to ECEC, policies may include access to universal preschool, child safety regulations or quality standards.

Gromada and colleagues (2020) suggest the inner layers of ‘the world of the child’ and ‘the world around the child’ can explain variations in children’s wellbeing within countries and how children’s immediate surroundings differentiate wellbeing. Furthermore, that understanding and comparing this “penultimate circle” of policies and context between countries is vital to understanding child wellbeing outcomes (Gromada et al., 2020, p.24). The specific consideration of policies impacting child wellbeing is relevant to this thesis and the policy landscape in Australia that guides ECEC wellbeing pedagogy and practices.

The value of two systems perspectives for this thesis

Both the bioecological model and *Worlds of Influence* child wellbeing framework are based on fundamental principles of systems theory, including connectedness, feedback loops, holism and the importance of context (Senge, 1990). They are both relevant to ECEC where children, and policies related to them, exist in relationship. Both models postulate nested structures and multi-level analysis to understand complex phenomena. However differences within each framework offer nuanced perspectives and ways of thinking that supports the aim of this thesis:

- The bioecological theory has undergone robust theoretical evolution, refinement and application (Rosa & Tudge, 2013). It offers the *Process-Person-Context-Time* elements (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007) which is pertinent given the dynamic nature of children's learning in ECEC and this thesis' examination of the proximal, pedagogical processes of adult-child interactions for and about wellbeing The bioecological model also acknowledges the dimension of time; a relevant consideration given the rapid developmental changes occurring during the early childhood years (MCEECDYA, 2010) and wellbeing literacy as life-long capability that builds over time (Oades, Jarden et al., 2021).
- The UNICEF model is a new conceptual framework but was specifically designed with an understanding of the current context and crises of the world that are impacting children. Moreover, it focuses explicitly on *child wellbeing* outcomes, and a layer that considers how policy can "cascade down from the national context through the immediate world around the child to affect well-being" (Gromada et al., 2020, p. 57). Given this thesis' aim to understand wellbeing literacy at the levels of pedagogy, practices and policy, this targeted wellbeing focus, and cascading approach provides a relevant perspective.

Sociocultural theories within the theoretical framework

Sociocultural theories emphasise the interrelated influence of social and cultural factors on human development, behaviour and learning (Rahmatirad, 2020). Sociocultural theory was developed and first applied by Vygotsky and colleagues, and has been extended, modified and clarified, drawing on disciplines including philosophy, psychology and education (Tzuriel, 2021). Various theories and sociocultural perspectives are now united under the sociocultural umbrella (Perry, 2012).

Sociocultural theories have a fundamental focus on children and their cognitive, language and literacy development within their social and cultural environments (Tzuriel, 2021). These perspectives posit that children are cultural beings, and learning is deeply connected to their social, cultural and historical contexts (Fleer et al., 2004; Wang et al., 2011). Furthermore, that children learn and develop from "a more knowledgeable other" such as a teacher, family member or peer who can support their progress and/or provide expertise or guidance (Schull et al., 2021, p. 25). The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD),

a central concept in Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, describes the gap between what children can do independently (their actual developmental level) and what they can achieve with the guidance of more knowledgeable others. This highlights the role of social interaction and support in learning and development (Daneshfar & Moharami, 2018; Schull et al., 2012). In ECEC, the ZPD is akin to the concept of 'scaffolding'; the pedagogical approach of teachers providing temporary support for children as they complete a task they might not otherwise be able to do (Van de Pol, 2010).

Sociocultural theories view language and literacy as a social and cultural practice whereby children develop language skills within the context of family, peers and others who engage and support them (Perry, 2012; Schull, 2021). Additionally, that children's early language develops from collaborative activities and meaning-making with others within their culture (Rahmatirad, 2020). Sociocultural views also support theories of multiliteracies, multimodal communication and the practice of literacy in real world, social contexts (Cope & Kalantzis, 2013; Perry, 2012). These perspectives are particularly important for this thesis given the multimodal nature of wellbeing literacy as discussed in Chapter 3.

Sociocultural theories are accepted perspectives for explaining learning and development in ECEC. They can support professionals to understand and bridge the gap between home and ECEC learning (Fleer & Raban, 2006). Sociocultural theories are also explicitly referenced in the Australian *Early Years Learning Framework* (EYLF) as valuable perspectives for pedagogy and practice:

> "Different theories, world views and knowledges inform early childhood approaches and practices to promote children's learning, development and wellbeing. Educators draw upon a range of perspectives in their work which may include sociocultural theories that emphasise the central role that families and cultural groups play in children's learning and the importance of respectful relationships and provide insight into social and cultural contexts of learning and development." (AGDE, 2022, p. 13)

Integration of the theoretical framework

Systems and sociocultural theories have been selected for this thesis for several reasons. These theories resonate with the positionality of this thesis, which is informed by the dual perspectives of a researcher and former ECEC teacher. Particularly, systems and

sociocultural theories provide an integrated framework for the examination of children's wellbeing, language, literacy and wellbeing literacy in the broader sociocultural system of ECEC. Expressly, this integrated theoretical framework underpins the key concepts examined in this thesis. The theoretical framework highlights and supports the understanding that wellbeing, literacy, pedagogy, practices, and policies occur within and because of social, cultural, historical, educational, and political systems. Furthermore, it emphasises that these elements are impacted by proximal interactions and change over time.

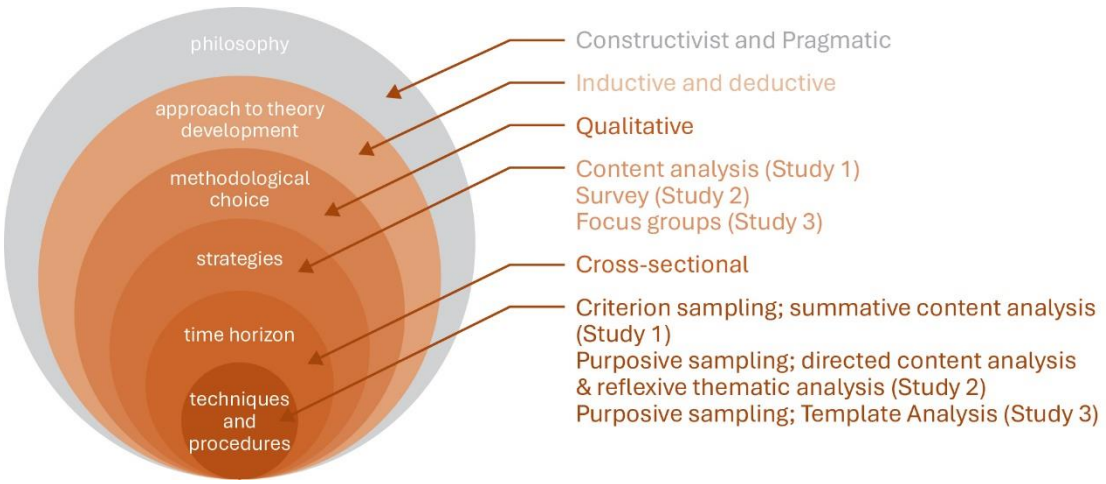
Grant and Osanloo (2014) suggest a theoretical framework provides a lens to support a researcher's thinking and serves as the foundation to guide research design and choices. Along with the above systems theories and sociocultural perspectives are important philosophical, ontological, epistemological and axiological considerations. These will now be discussed within the context of the methodology for this thesis.

Methodology

The aim and research question of this thesis was examined and achieved through three sequential qualitative studies. To communicate holistically and cohesively about the methodological approach to these studies, Saunders and colleagues' (2019) 'onion' is used as a framework to articulate what was done, how and why. The following discussion includes the 'layers' of research philosophy, approach, strategy, time horizon and techniques. See Figure 5.2.

Figure 5.2

The Methodology 'onion' applied to this thesis (adapted from Saunders et al., 2019)



Philosophy

Research philosophy is the system of assumptions and beliefs about how knowledge is developed (Saunders et al., 2019). At every stage of research, assumptions are made including those about reality (ontology), knowledge (epistemology) and values (axiology) (Hathaway, 1995; Saunders et al., 2019). The following interrelated philosophical questions influence how and why a researcher undertakes research (Lincoln et al., 2011; Saunders et al., 2019):

- Ontology: What is reality? Is there a single truth, or is reality socially constructed?
- Epistemology: How can we know reality, and what constitutes acceptable knowledge? Can knowledge be measured objectively, or is it a matter of perspective?
- Axiology: What role do values play in research? Does the researcher influence the process, or should they remain detached?

It is vital to reflect critically on the research philosophy of this thesis and acknowledge how this has inevitably shaped its research design and methodology. Holmes (2020) argues that, particularly for PhD researchers, this process of finding and knowing one's positionality is integral to the research process.

Positionality requires self-reflection and a reflexive approach, particularly as research in educational fields is rarely value free (Holmes, 2020). Reflectivity is the process of critically reflecting on oneself and examining one's own beliefs and practices (Lincoln et al., 2011). For the purposes of articulating positionality and reflexivity, first person communication is useful here. Reflexivity is a familiar metacognitive process for me as a former ECEC teacher. The educational framework that guided my teaching practices for over a decade (the EYLF) calls for critically reflective thinking as a meaning-making process and to inform pedagogical decisions (AGDE, 2022). Connecting this to myself as the researcher, Hall and Wall (2019) argue there are commonalities between pedagogy and methodology, both as forms of enquiry. It is through this enquiry, pedagogical and reflexive approach that I have examined my research philosophy, wrestling with the "buffet of wildly rich fare" (Lincoln et al., 2011, p. 144) of methodology. It has also supported me to make informed choices about how to shape and critically evolve this thesis.

A constructivist paradigm resonates strongly with me as the aim of this thesis including seeking to understand and reconstruct ideas, assumptions and perspectives (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). Primarily, to examine and therefore understand how wellbeing literacy can be applied to early childhood education. Furthermore, through this sequential process, to construct and reconstruct knowledge that can be applied to wellbeing conceptualisations, policy, pedagogy and practices in ECEC in Australia.

Ontologically, I align with the belief that reality has multiple layers and is socially constructed. This position stems from my experience as an ECEC teacher for over 30 years, during which time I observed and facilitated the learning, development, wellbeing, and social interactions of young children. Each child brought their unique understanding of the world to the classroom, contributing to a complex, shared reality in my ECEC setting. While individual perceptions held by children and adults may have varied, an underlying shared reality existed that formed the basis of our human interactions and experiences (Searle, 1995).

Social constructivism and the premise that our understanding of reality is shaped through human activity and interaction (Kukla, 2000) has influenced the thinking and research approach of this thesis. This aligns with my epistemological stance, grounded in a commitment to constructivist epistemology, which posits that individuals construct their own knowledge and meanings through interactions with the environment, shaped by their lived experiences (Kim, 2001; Lincoln et al., 2011). I recognise that knowledge of reality is often subjective, influenced by individual experiences and social contexts (Guba & Lincoln, 2005).

A constructivist epistemology is also relevant to wellbeing literacy with its key philosophical assumptions that language and realities are socially constructed (Oades, Jarden et al., 2021). Guba and Lincoln (1985) argue advocacy and activism are also key concepts of constructivism. This too connects with parts of the overarching research question of examining, and therefore highlighting and impacting, ways wellbeing literacy can expand, focus, inform and/or underpin ECEC wellbeing conceptualisations, pedagogy, practices and policy in Australia.

Embedded from my career as a teacher is a social constructivist epistemology that views children as active, collaborative learners and critical thinkers within their social context (Powell & Kalina, 2009). The pedagogical influences of early childhood developmental psychologists and educational theorists, such as Vygotsky and Bruner, are

evident in my belief that knowledge and learning can be built and mediated by social interactions (Clark, 2018; Jaramillo, 1996). My own pedagogy and practices were primarily influenced by European historical and contemporary educators leading me to view and value children as capable, rich constructors of knowledge and social researchers (Giamminuti, 2013; Malaguzzi, 1994; Vygotsky, 1978).

Extending this epistemological stance to adult learners and learning has informed my approach to engaging with research participants during this thesis. This constructivist foundation has driven the research design, aligning with Guba and Lincoln's (1985) notion of creating findings through research. Particularly from a social constructivist viewpoint, the belief that knowledge is a socially and culturally constructed human product resonates with me (Kim, 2001).

This epistemological stance also informed my desire to create findings collaboratively with other ECEC professionals. As such, hearing directly from ECEC professionals has been a priority in this research. As Richardson and St Pierre (2005) suggest, one's way of knowing is found in one's history, situation, subjectivity, and locality, which inevitably affects and drives the research process. It is important to acknowledge here the homogeneity of my epistemology and Eurocentric gaze. As a researcher, I continue to learn and understand my privileged position in settler colonial Australia. These factors are recognised and noted as boundaries of this thesis.

Having established my ontological and epistemological stances, it is equally important to consider the role of values in shaping this research I have conducted. Axiologically, I consider the roles of values and ethics in decision-making throughout the research process (Bahm, 1993; Saunders, 2019). Heron and Reason (1997) suggest that within a research context, axiology poses the question of what knowledge is intrinsically worthwhile. I adopt the researcher 'posture', as tabled by Guba & Lincoln (2005) of being a co-constructor of knowledge with the research participants, aiming to examine, understand and interpret their lived experiences of teaching for and about children's wellbeing. As a researcher, I value ECEC professionals' voices and believe their knowledge to be intrinsically worthwhile in this PhD research.

Additionally, I place high value on practical applications to real issues, aligning with a pragmatic approach. Pragmatism is concerned with action, change, solving practical problems, and the interaction of knowledge and actions (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Morgan, 2014). Cornish and Gillespie (2009) advocate for pragmatism in research,

highlighting its action-oriented nature and proposing the evaluation of knowledge based on its practical utility for various stakeholders, including academics, practitioners, and policymakers. This thesis aims to generate knowledge, perspectives, information, solutions, and actions for ECEC professionals.

These pragmatic ideas and approaches have been important in shaping the research and publications of this thesis. The pragmatic stance also influenced the study design, acknowledging the limited time, personal, and financial resources available for graduate research, and how these constraints impacted which gaps and opportunities from the literature could be realistically examined.

Approach to theory development

Inside the outer philosophy layer of Saunders and colleagues' (2019) 'onion' is *approach to theory development* (see Figure 5.2). The overall aim of this thesis was to examine how wellbeing literacy can be applied to the ECEC context in Australia. The initial thinking, as articulated in the position paper in Chapter 4, was based on significant teaching experience and recent post-graduate study in the field of wellbeing science. This resulted in the research question of this thesis of examining how the concept of wellbeing literacy can expand, focus, inform and/or underpin wellbeing conceptualisations, pedagogy, practices and policy.

The applicability of a deductive approach to this thesis could be argued, in the framing of this as a hypothesis that wellbeing literacy practices are evident in ECEC pedagogy. However, given the nascent nature of wellbeing literacy (as explored in Chapter 3), the contested and multifaceted nature of child wellbeing (see Chapter 2) and a constructivist standpoint, a predominantly inductive approach was preferred. Moreover, a deductive reasoning approach coupled with a pragmatic philosophy carries risks such as premature theorising and fatuous pragmatism (Simpson, 2018; Oades, et al., 2019) which are important to avoid.

An inductive approach to theory development is generally 'bottom up' and aims to begin with observations and make inferences about the meaning of collected data (Oades, et al., 2019). It has the strength of valuing context and the way in which humans interpret their social world (Saunders et al., 2019), both of which resonate with a constructivist paradigm. An overarching inductive reasoning approach therefore was therefore applied to the three studies undertaken for this thesis (see Table 5.2).

Table 5.2

Three study design and research questions of this thesis.

THESIS AIM: *To examine how wellbeing literacy can be applied to the context of early childhood education and care in Australia.*

OVERARCHING RESEARCH QUESTION: *In what ways can wellbeing literacy expand, focus, inform and/or underpin ECEC wellbeing conceptualisations, practices, pedagogy and policy in Australia?*

Context: ECEC in Australia - pedagogy and practice. ECEC - conceptualisations of wellbeing; policy and pedagogy landscape.
Concepts: Wellbeing, wellbeing literacy and the 5 component Capability Model of wellbeing literacy (CM-WL)
Cohort: ECEC professionals (teachers, educators, educational leaders, directors, mentors/coaches) working (directly or indirectly) with kindergarten children (aged 3-5 yrs) in ECEC services in Australia.

Study 1 Content analysis of ECEC documents.	Study 2 Online survey of ECEC teachers (n=76)	Study 3 Focus groups with ECEC teachers and professionals (n=28)
Research Question: How is the concept of wellbeing defined, described and used in key documents that impact Australian early childhood education pedagogy and practice?	**Research Questions:** 1. How do early childhood teachers (ECTs) in Victorian Kindergarten programs define, describe and promote children's wellbeing? 2. In what ways are these ECTs developing children's wellbeing through pedagogy and practice? 3. How do the answers provided by these ECTs compare to the wellbeing literacy model?	**Research Questions:** 1. How can CM-WL further inform, reflect and/or underpin ECEC professionals wellbeing conceptions, practices, pedagogy and policy? 2. How can it expand ECEC professionals' knowledge, theories, pedagogy and practices? 3. What alternative or debating views exist about the application of wellbeing literacy to the context of ECEC?
Data collection: Online ECEC policy and pedagogical documents. **Inclusion criteria**: Adapted from Cardno (2018) **Data analysis**: Qualitative summative content analysis of key documents (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005)	**Data collection:** Online survey. Multiple choice and open text responses. **Participants**: ECEC teachers working (directly or indirectly) with children aged 3-5 years in centre-based ECEC services in Victoria. **Data analysis:** Reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2022) Directed content analysis Hsieh & Shannon (2005)	**Data collection:** Online focus groups. **Participants**: ECEC professionals working (directly or indirectly) with children aged 3-5 years in centre-based ECEC services in Australia. **Data analysis:** Qualitative Template Analysis (King & Brooks, 2017)

The sequential design of the three studies supported an inductive reasoning approach as results of each study informed the design and execution of the next (see also the *Bridge* section between Chapters Six and Seven).

Having examined the inductive approach to theory development, it must be stated that this thesis capitalised on both inductive and deductive data analysis approaches. Some a-priori codes/themes were used in data analysis phases where this supported the research relevant questions and aims of the study. How this process informed the design and analysis of each study is discussed in each publication. For example, using components of CM-WL as predetermined codes in data analysis in Study 2. This is explicated further in the method section of the resultant publication in Chapter 8.

Creswell and Creswell (2023) argue that processes that begin inductively still require deductive thinking as data analysis moves forward. For example, Braun and Clarke (2022) caution that, in fitting with a qualitative paradigm, themes are not independent of the researcher or "hidden in the data waiting to be found" (p. 242). These balanced and reflexive processes are highlighted where relevant throughout chapters in this thesis.

Methodological choice

This layer of the 'onion' concerns the research methodology choice (see Figure 5.2) (Saunders et al., 2019). Given the above discussion regarding research philosophy and approach to theory development, a qualitative methodology was deemed authentic and relevant. Unlike quantitative research that explains phenomena through numerical data and mathematical based methods of analysis, qualitative research is an "emergent, inductive, interpretive and naturalistic approach" with an attention on quality and "descriptive terms" (Yilmaz, 2013, p. 312).

Qualitative research aims to explore and understand human experiences from the perspective of the participant, particularly the meaning that individuals or groups assign to a phenomena or problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Oades et al., 2019). This is done through non-numeral data, such as observations, interviews, documents, audiovisual or digital texts (Lincoln et al., 2011). The basic characteristics of qualitative research align with this thesis, its positionality philosophy and aim, including:

- *Participants' meanings*: the qualitative process focuses on understanding the meaning research participants hold around the problem, with an

understanding of multiple realities. This thesis sought to examine what ECEC professionals know, think and do about and for child wellbeing.

- *Natural setting*: qualitative data is collected where participants experience the issue. This thesis is concerned with ECEC professionals' pedagogy and practices in the real world, as well as the policy and guiding documents that impact them. Moreover, how wellbeing literacy may be applied to this 'natural setting' of ECEC pedagogy and practices.
- *Researcher as key instrument*: qualitative researchers collect and examine data themselves. As a former teacher and wishing to hear from ECEC professionals, being immersed in their perspectives and experiences through the data, was relevant to learn about and use the meanings they hold, examining and informing how wellbeing literacy can be applied to ECEC.
- *Multiple sources of data*: rather than a single source. The three-study design includes documents, surveys and focus groups which were included to assist examining and making sense of professionals' wellbeing conceptualisations, pedagogy and practices and the policy context in which they exist.
- *Emergent design*: the qualitative research process facilitates changing phases as the topic is delved into deeper and the researcher aims to understand and reconstruct. The three-study sequential design facilitated progressive understanding of the context and perspectives from ECEC professionals, modifying the next stage with information from the previous. This is evidenced below in the data analysis changes that occurred during Study 2.
- *A complex account*: qualitative researchers aim to develop a complex picture of the problem being studied. Wellbeing literacy is a relatively new concept and child wellbeing is a multifaceted and contested construct. The drive of this thesis included a desire to bridge these two fields of study and see how this "mirrors real life and how events may operate in the real world" (Creswell & Creswell, 2023, p. 224).

Qualitative inquiry, particularly in social and educational research, may be criticised for investigating what is and what was, rather than what might be (Lincoln et al., 2011). However, this thesis aims to go beyond only describing the current state of wellbeing conceptualisations, pedagogy and practices in ECEC. By examining how wellbeing literacy can be applied to the ECEC context, this thesis planned to explore potential future applications, insights and directions. The goal is not only to understand current practices but also to surface and examine how wellbeing literacy may be applied to enhance ECEC policy, pedagogy and practices in the future. This forward-looking approach aligns with the pragmatic stance of this thesis, seeking to impact policy and governing documents over time and offer practical solutions to ECEC professionals in the field.

Qualitative methodology has also been criticized for lacking evidence, being labour intensive, not having generalisable findings or being scientific enough (Lincoln et al., 2011). However, Braun and Clarke (2022) argue qualitative research apologising for limitations such as lack of statistical generalisability is problematic, and such claims (or lack thereof) must be reflexively considered ensuring they align with the overall approach. Moreover, a qualitative approach utilises intuitive and 'felt' knowledge (such as teacher's pedagogical practices may be) and can appreciate the nuances of multiple realities (Creswell & Creswell, 2013). With a reflexive, qualitative approach, subtleties and richly descriptive data can be captured, focusing on meaning and understanding (Lincoln et al., 2011), both of which are epistemologically aligned with this thesis.

Strategies, Time horizon, Techniques and Procedures

The final, inner components of the research onion are *strategies* (or research choices), *time horizon* (cross-sectional or longitudinal) and *techniques and procedures* (data collection and data analysis) (Saunders et al., 2019). These are evidenced in the design of the three sequential qualitative studies (see also Figure 5.2).

- Study 1 – content analysis of ECEC documents
- Study 2 – online survey of ECEC teachers
- Study 3 – focus groups with ECEC teachers and professionals

The three studies were sequential, with a cross-sectional time horizon (data collected at one specific timepoint). Data and insights from each study informed the design and execution of the next. More specifics about the methods, rationale, research population,

sampling procedures, recruitment and data analysis methods for each study are found in the publications of Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9. However a summary is positioned here to provide a broad and introductory overview of each study's methods:

Study 1 – summative content analysis of ECEC practice and pedagogy documents

The aim of Study 1 was to examine:

How is the concept of wellbeing defined, described and used in key documents that impact Australian early childhood education pedagogy and practice?

A suite of documents and regulations in Australia provide ECEC professionals with theories, definitions, pedagogies, principles, practices, outcomes, policies, assessments, ratings, operational requirements, compliance, approvals and the like (ACECQA, 2025). These documents impact, mandate and guide the daily pedagogical practices of ECEC professionals. This study was designed to understand how the ECEC regulatory, curriculum, policy and document 'landscape' conceptualise wellbeing. Cardno's 'Questions for Organisational Policy Analysis' (2018) were adapted to guide selection of documents for examination. These included national and international documents, such as the UN Rights of the Child, National Regulations and Law, the National curriculum framework (the EYLF) and National Quality Standard (NQS), and educator guides.

For data analysis, the qualitative, summative content analysis approach of Hsieh and Shannon (2005) was chosen. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) offer three distinct strategies of content analysis (conventional, directive and summative), with the key difference being how initial codes are developed. In conventional and directed content analysis approaches, the study begins with text observation or the application of a theoretical framework respectively, and resultant codes are defined before or during data analysis. A summative approach, however, provides for keyword nomination to occur prior to data analysis. This approach was chosen as relevant to Study 1 given 'wellbeing' was identified as the key concept under examination.

Study 2 – online survey of ECEC teachers working in Victorian kindergarten programs

The aims of Study 2 were to understand how ECEC teachers view children's wellbeing and what pedagogical practices they use to teach for and about wellbeing. Also, to compare how answers provided compare to CM-WL (Oades, Jarden et al., 2021). Specifically:

1. *How do early childhood teachers (ECTs) in Victorian Kindergarten programs define, describe and promote children's wellbeing?*
2. *In what ways are these ECTs developing children's wellbeing through pedagogy and practice?*
3. *How do the answers provided by these ECTs compare to the wellbeing literacy model?*

The research sample was chosen to fulfill one of the epistemological underpinnings of this thesis - to hear from ECEC professionals about their understanding of wellbeing. The purposive sample of early childhood teachers working in kindergarten programs in Victoria was expected to have in-depth understanding of child wellbeing practices and to be able to provide insight into pedagogy. Specifically, the inclusion characteristics for Study 2 were:

- 'early childhood teachers' – this narrowed sample, as opposed to the broader 'ECEC professionals', was chosen given those holding teaching qualifications and positions are responsible for ECEC curriculum design and delivery. ECEC teachers plan and deliver pedagogy and practices relevant to child wellbeing to meet mandated wellbeing Learning Outcomes of the EYLF. As such, they were deemed a suitable sample to offer examples of teaching practices and child wellbeing conceptualisations.
- 'kindergarten program' – these services are funded by both State and Commonwealth governments to deliver early ECEC to children aged 3-5 years. They must therefore meet the *National Quality Standard* Rating and Assessment (Assessment and rating process | ACECQA), adhere to the National Regulations and Law and deliver educational programs that meet the EYLF and its relevant wellbeing Learning Outcomes (AGDE, 2022; ACECQA, 2025). Furthermore, kindergarten programs are for children ages 3 years and over. The ages and developmental skills of children under 3 years of age (infants and toddlers) necessitate distinct language and communication practices (AERO, 2023) which were deemed beyond possible scope of this thesis.
- 'in Victoria' – the inclusion of one state (and exclusion of others) was a pragmatic decision to control the sample size and resultant data analysis time required. Also because this jurisdiction in most familiar to this researcher.

Qualitative surveys offer benefits for participants including flexibility of location, anonymity, fast response time and avenues for open-ended responses (Braun et al., 2021). For researchers, online surveys provide easy, quick and economical access to larger samples than other qualitative methods may allow (such as interviews) along with straightforward comparison across the dataset and standardisation of questions (Braun et al., 2021).

A purposeful sampling strategy included recruitment via known networks, social media and snowball sampling. 76 volunteer respondents fully answered the survey. This sample size provided a rich dataset that could answer the research questions (see Figure 5.2) but pragmatically be deeply analysed (Boddy, 2021; Braun & Clarke, 2013).

Surveys were completed online via the survey software Qualtrics (https://www.qualtrics.com/au/). The full survey questionnaire can be found in Appendix A and included closed and open-ended questions covering the following broad components:

- demographic information (such as participant postcode, highest level of ECEC qualification, current professional role, years of work experience)
- wellbeing knowledge and perspectives (such as how participants understood child wellbeing, how would they know if a child had a strong or low sense of wellbeing, word associations for wellbeing, how they think children are effective communicators about their wellbeing), and
- pedagogical practices (such as how participants reported they promote children having a strong sense of wellbeing, what are the important things they teach about wellbeing, how important this is to them and why or how they improve child wellbeing in their work)

To mitigate the limitations of a multiple-choice survey method and better examine participants' experiences, iterative and follow up free-response questions were included to allow participants to provide examples of their practices, other ways they promote child wellbeing, why wellbeing practices were at their identified level of importance and perceived barriers to practice.

Further documents and processes relevant to Study 2 can be found in the Appendices:

- Human Ethics Approval (Appendix B)
- Survey Plain Language Statement (Appendix C)
- Survey Participant Consent Form (Appendix D)

Data was organised and analysed primarily through the NVivo analysis software platform (https://lumivero.com/). Once manual familiarisation and input into NVivo was complete, it was apparent the three research questions (see Table 5.2) would not be best served, or the data able to be deeply analysed, if all analysed at the same time and using the same analysis method. The survey data was therefore examined and the results written up in two consecutive phases using different data analysis methods. This process resulted in Study 2 Part A and Part B:

Part A – a reflexive thematic analysis. Part A answered research question 1 - *How do early childhood teachers (ECTs) in Victorian Kindergarten programs define, describe and promote children's wellbeing?* Braun and Clark's (2022) reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) was undertaken on the free-response survey data (resulting from questions about ECEC teacher's understanding and describing of child wellbeing and pedagogical practices). RTA highlights reflexivity and the researcher's role in knowledge production, viewing subjectivity as a resource and acknowledging researchers inevitably bring a theoretical lens and social position to their research (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Terry et al., 2017). Further rationale for RTA and the six key phases of recursive and iterative data analysis is provided in the published article reproduced in Chapter 7. Appendix E additionally illustrates parts of the iterative and reflexive stages of data analysis.

Part B – a directed content analysis. To answer research questions 2 and 3 in Study 2 (*In what ways are ECTs developing children's wellbeing through pedagogy and practice? How do the answers provided by ECTs compare to the wellbeing literacy model?*), Hsieh and Shannon's (2005) directed content analysis (DCA) was undertaken on the multiple choice and free-response survey data (from questions about how expressive and receptive language experiences were provided to support wellbeing, if teaching these communication skills was important and why, examples of practices and barriers around the wellbeing literacy model components). DCA begins with theory, and codes are defined both before (from relevant research findings or theory) and during analysis (from the data). The main strength of a DCA approach is that existing theory can be refined, extended or supported, particularly as a research area (such as wellbeing literacy) grows (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Findings can include both supporting and non-supporting evidence for a

theory, particularly in a new context (such as ECEC). DCA has three main phases, Preparation, Organisation and Reporting (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Further rationale for DCA and analysis steps undertaken is provided in Chapter 8.

Study 3 – focus groups with ECEC teachers and professionals

The aim of Study 3 was to understand how CM-WL (Oades, Jarden et al., 2021) could inform and/or expand ECEC professionals' knowledge, theories, pedagogy, and practices about child wellbeing. Moreover, to uncover any alternative or debating views that may exist about the application of wellbeing literacy to the context of ECEC in Australia. Specific research questions were:

1. *How can CM-WL further inform, reflect and/or underpin ECEC professionals wellbeing conceptions, practices, pedagogy and policy?*
2. *How can it expand ECEC professionals' knowledge, theories, pedagogy and practices?*
3. *What alternative or debating views exist about the application of wellbeing literacy to the context of ECEC?*

Participants were garnered from the sample of volunteers in Study 2 who had indicated a willingness to be involved in further research via second Qualtrics survey link upon completion of the main survey. Participants were also recruited through known networks, social media (email, Facebook, LinkedIn) and resultant snowball sampling. Necessary items for Study 3 can be found in the Appendices:

- Human Ethics Approval (Appendix B)
- Focus Group Plain Language Statement (Appendix F)
- Focus Group Participant Consent Form (Appendix G)
- Consolidated criteria for reporting qualitative studies (COREQ): 32-item checklist (Appendix H)

Two pilot focus group tests were undertaken, one with an early childhood professional and one with a wellbeing science academic. Adaptations to the focus group structure and prompts were discussed and made before the first focus group was held. Vaughn and colleagues (1996) suggest 6-8 participants per focus group is optimal for an exploratory approach to a new topic (such as wellbeing literacy is in the context of ECEC) and to generate and validate ideas. Five 90-minute focus groups were held online via zoom with a maximum of 7 and a minimum of 4 participants. A total of 28 ECEC

professionals, including teachers, pedagogical leaders and mentors were involved. Further details can be found in the COREQ (Appendix H) and resultant publication (Chapter 8).

Participants were introduced to wellbeing literacy (Oades, Jarden et al., 2021) via an initial information session at the beginning of each focus group and CM-WL being emailed the day prior. They were then asked to reflect on how they perceived this may align with their current wellbeing pedagogy and practices. The focus group conversations were audio recorded and transcribed (with participants' consent) and following each group a summary of high-level initial themes and sample anonymised extracts from each focus group were emailed to the respective participants for their comments/feedback/ corrections. Access to verbatim transcripts was also offered to particpants following each focus group.

King and Brooks (2017) qualitative Template Analysis (TeA) was undertaken to confirm and/or explore perceptions of wellbeing literacy in the ECEC context. TeA was chosen for its iterative nature, hierarchical indexing of themes that allow for depth rather than breadth, and the cautious use of 'soft' a-priori themes that could be developed from the research questions. Further rationale for TeA and the six steps of analysis is provided in Chapter 9. Iterations of templates, codes and theme generation that reflect the process of data analysis can be found in Appendices I, J and K.

Chapter summary

This chapter has articulated the theoretical framework and methodology in which this thesis is situated. This included the methods employed to meet the aim of examining how wellbeing literacy can be applied to ECEC in Australia. The three studies that constituted this thesis were also specifically introduced.

In the following chapter, more information and results from the first of the three sequential studies is provided. This content analysis of ECEC documents represents the *Landscape* of this thesis. It is presented next in its entirety as a published article.

CHAPTER SIX: *'LANDSCAPE'* – A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PEDAGOGY AND PRACTICE DOCUMENTS IN AUSTRALIA

This co-authored chapter has been published in the *Journal, Educational Research for Policy and Practice:*

Baker, L. M., Raban, B., & Oades, L. G. (2025). What does 'wellbeing' mean? A content analysis of early childhood education pedagogy and practice documents in Australia. *Educational Research for Policy and Practice*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10671-025-09396-9

Note - this open access article has been reproduced in its entirety here as Chapter 6 but formatted to align with the thesis as a whole. For consistency, in-text citations and the numbering of figures and tables have been adjusted to match the formatting of this thesis. Also, for flow of the thesis, references have been integrated into the References on p. 198 rather than at the end of this reproduced publication.

Abstract

Wellbeing is explicitly mentioned in the United Nations Rights of the Child, and governments, humanitarian organisations, scientific and educational research internationally call for a focus on child wellbeing in the early years. Early childhood education policies, pedagogy and practice reflect this call, with curriculum frameworks, regulations and documents around the world having 'wellbeing' outcomes and foci. However, the concept of wellbeing is complex, intangible and multifaceted. It is important to understand how the term wellbeing is presented in key policy and pedagogical documents used by early childhood professionals as this discourse informs educational practice. A qualitative summative content analysis of key documents impacting early education practice in Australia was undertaken with the key question of understanding how the term wellbeing is defined, described and used. Results show usage of the term wellbeing is multifold and disparate, and definitions are rare and lacking contemporary perspectives. Questions arise about practice and/ or policy implications that result from 'wellbeing' positioned as a Learning Outcome in the Australian Early Childhood Learning Framework V2.0. These findings and questions are important for early childhood education professionals and policy makers as they meet increased global imperatives to support child wellbeing in early education contexts. Discourse between education,

government bodies and wellbeing science is encouraged to inform and expand current pedagogy, policy and practice in early childhood education in Australia and internationally.

Keywords

Child wellbeing · Wellbeing definitions · Early childhood education · Content analysis · Learning Outcome · Pedagogy

Introduction to child wellbeing

'Wellbeing' is a complex, intangible and multifaceted construct frequenting conversation and literature, but whose definition is unresolved, contested, inconsistent and changeable (Dodge et al., 2012; Marbina et al., 2015; Pollard & Lee, 2003). The modifier of 'childhood' adds complexity via the distinct experience of childhood, and children's physical, neurological and psychological development (Jones & Sumner, 2009). Rapid change and developmental trajectories and differing social and cultural constructions of childhood also make wellbeing definition and assessment complicated (Marbina et al., 2015). Moreover, the impacts of contextual expectations, opportunities and limits on children's development and learning, along with children's relative vulnerability, compounds the difficulty of defining wellbeing (Barblett & Maloney, 2010; Jones & Sumner, 2009; White, 2008).

Despite this complexity, wellbeing definitions, interpretations, indicators, dimensions and measures, some focused specifically on children, can be found in important and influential global reports, policies and frameworks. These include the World Health Organisation's (WHO) Health Promotion Glossary (2021) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) 'Well-being Framework' (2020) who describe wellbeing as a positive state influenced by multiple factors and dimensions such as socioeconomics, environmental, materiality and quality of life. Specifically, regarding child wellbeing, UNICEF's Innocenti report 'Understanding What Shapes Child Well-being in Rich Countries' provides a multilevel child wellbeing framework illustrating it ecologically, radiating out from child outcomes through activities, relationships, networks, resources, policies and context (Gromada et al., 2020). UNICEF and the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ACARY) have collaborated to produce an Australian Children's Wellbeing Index 'The Next' of six interlinked domains—

valued, loved, and safe; material basics; healthy; learning; participating and positive sense of identity and culture (Noble et al., 2021). In Australia, the National Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy describes a wellbeing continuum for children (from well, coping and struggling to unwell; NMHC, 2021). As these examples highlight, definitions in policy and literature tend to be extensional (listing particular characteristics or factors leading to wellbeing) rather than intentional (indicating internal content or a formal definition). However, there is some consensus in that definitions and conceptions of child wellbeing have a shared understanding it is multidimensional, considers objective and subjective quality of life perspectives as well as physical and emotional/mental measures, and pays attention to culture, gender, age and other personal characteristics, including strengths and deficiencies and the child's own views (Ben-Arieh, 2014; Lippman et al., 2011; Pollard & Lee, 2003; Statham & Chase, 2010).

Even given these various offerings and complexity, we argue it is important to understand how the term wellbeing is described, defined and used in specific contexts as these perceptions and parameters impact not only our view of children, but the way we engage with, make policy for and educate them. This study is particularly interested in child wellbeing conception in early education contexts.

The context of child wellbeing discourse and descriptions in pedagogy

The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child in 1990 (UNCRC, United Nations, 1989) sparked a new image and discourse about children as holders of rights and full participants in society (Casas, 1997) and remains a guiding document for early childhood pedagogy. Explicit in the Convention are children's access to education and protection of their wellbeing (Engdahl, 2019). Global, intergovernmental and humanitarian organisations and policies; neuroscientific, psychological, health and wellbeing sciences have also called for a focus on flourishing for children. An impetus to understand the impact of early education experiences and facilitate the systems and processes by which children experience optimal education and wellbeing followed (Immordino-Yang et al., 2019; OECD, 2017; Shonkoff, 2010; UNICEF Office of Research, 2013). In the new millennium, global and cross-disciplinary conversations and understanding of 'what happens early matters' increased. Evidence mounted that quality early education is beneficial for children's learning, development and wellbeing in their early years, and also positively predicts health, wellbeing, educational attainment and employment into

adulthood (CDC, 2009; OECD, 2017; Shonkoff, 2010; Shuey & Kankarašm, 2018). Governments around the developed world responded with educational policy, and early education strategies and curricula underwent review in several countries. Explicit 'wellbeing' inclusions were introduced in the United Kingdom, USA, Australia, New Zealand, China, Columbia, Denmark, Portugal (Baker et al., 2017; Brogaard-Clausen et al., 2022; Shuey & Kankarašm, 2018). Most recently the COVID-19 pandemic made apparent the need for coordinated child wellbeing policy and curricula (Dirwan & Thévenon, 2023), further highlighting the importance of understanding 'what does wellbeing mean?' and how the term is positioned and used in education policy and documents.

It is in this context—and those of continued neuroscientific advances, increased understanding of the impact of early childhood experiences and education, and the broadening and complex waves of wellbeing science research (Lomas et al., 2021)—that this study argues an examination of the concept of wellbeing in education discourse is timely and important. Specifically, this paper is interested in the Australian context. Australian is an Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and UN member, and country who has released its first National Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy (NMHC, 2021), National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2018), and most recently 'The Early Years Strategy 2024–2034, outlining the national government's priorities for child centred policy and investment across the next decade (Department of Social Services, 2024). In this policy climate, a focus on child wellbeing and related pedagogical practice is evident.

The current study: What does 'wellbeing' mean?

In Australia, early childhood education and care (ECEC) services are delivered for children prior to compulsory school age (from birth to 5 years), subsidised by the Australian government. ECEC is guided by the National Quality Framework (NQF) and administered by Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) under relevant regulations, laws and frameworks. In a culturally diverse and organisationally complex system, ECEC is offered through a mixed market model including private, for profit, not-for-profit, community-based and government providers. Three primary delivery settings include centre-based long day care (for children aged 0–5 attending on average 30 h per week), sessional preschool (part-time attendance for

children aged 3–5 years) or home-based care (for children aged 0–5 years, mostly full days; Understanding ECEC (thefrontproject.org.au). These programmes are run by teachers and educators with a variety of roles and education qualifications from trainee, certificate, diploma, bachelor and/or master's degrees, all of whom are mandated to enact ACECQA's approved educational framework/s (Grieshaber & Graham, 2017). Recent government reports that include census data from Australia's broad socio-economic advantaged and disadvantaged population, reporting 48.3% of children aged 0–5 years attending a government subsidised approved childcare service and over 337,000 4–5-year-old children enrolled in preschool programmes in remote, regional and metro settings across the country (March quarter 2022 report—Department of Education, Australian Government).

Wellbeing is positioned strongly within the Australian ECEC policy and pedagogical documents. A key objective of Australia's National Quality Framework (NQF) is to ensure the 'safety, health and wellbeing of children' (ACECQA, 2023, p. 9) and in the *Early Years Learning Framework* (EYLF), a specific Learning Outcome for children aged birth to 5 years is 'Children have a strong sense of wellbeing' (AGDE, 2022, p. 44). Additionally, a suite of documents and regulations within the NQF provide ECEC professionals with theories, definitions, pedagogies, principles, practices, outcomes, policies, assessments, ratings, operational requirements, compliance, approvals and the like (ACECQA, 2023). These documents impact, mandate and guide the daily pedagogical practices of ECEC professionals across the nation. How the term 'wellbeing' is defined, described and used within these documents and policies, and what impact this has for ECEC policy and practice, is therefore the key interest of this study, guided by the research question: How is the concept of wellbeing defined, described and/or used in key documents impacting Australian early childhood education pedagogy and practice?

Methods

Data acquisition and sample

Data for this study were retrieved from publicly available content, primarily government websites, particularly ACECQA as the authority who resources and guides Australian ECEC services, professionals, management bodies, governments and stakeholders (https:// www.acecqa.gov.au/). To select a preliminary data set, and for

purposes of credibility, aspects questioned of the available documents were adapted from Cardno (2018):

1. Document purpose and location (Is this document accessible, important and relevant to ECEC professional's practice?)
2. Authorship and intended audience (Who wrote this? Who was it written for?)
3. Document context and intended use (What is the document's purpose?)
4. Document text (What are the key elements; are they associated with national legal or regulatory requirements, procedure or guidance for ECEC practice?)
5. Document consequences (Does this document inform or impact ECEC pedagogy or practice and/or have wellbeing implication/content?)

As a result, 21 data sets were initially identified including law, pedagogical guides, curriculum frameworks, assessment tools, policies, standards and information sheets. This sample was then reduced with repeated interrogation of questions 1 and 2 regarding context and intended use, target and consequences. This reduced sample of 9 documents/sets excluded items such as rating scales and literature reviews (state-specific), Educational Leader resources, educator posters and Transition to School Kit. The final documents were included as they subjectively qualified as both 'everyday' documents (that ECEC professionals would refer to in normal pedagogical practice and where information and assumptions about wellbeing may be present, e.g. the national curriculum framework) and 'high impact/background' documents (those perhaps not referred to inform routine pedagogy, but vital, impactful and available to the ECEC profession, e.g. the National Regulations and Law). Acknowledging the limitation of the subjective selection, the final documents analysed, subjectively listed in order from 'high impact/background' to 'everyday', were:

- UN convention on the rights of the child
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act
- Education and Care Services National Law Act
- Education and Care services National Regulations
- Guide to the National Quality Framework
- The National Quality Standard
- The EYLF for Australia V2.0

- Educators' Guide to the EYLF for Australia
- ACECQA information sheets

Data analysis

Qualitative summative content analysis was conducted on the documents to assess the way the term 'wellbeing' is used and conceptualised across the whole data set. Content analysis can be used on all types of texts, qualitatively and quantitatively, and enables reduction of the volume of text, grouping of categories, an understanding of the data sought, and interpretations to be drawn. Although the use of preconceived categories, codes or keywords are generally avoided in conventional content analysis (CA), the qualitative, summative CA method of Hsieh and Shannon (2005) suggests that keywords or codes be derived from the interest of the researchers (with reflexivity paramount) and keyword nomination occurring prior to the data analysis. As this study sought to explore the explicit use of the word 'wellbeing', the word 'wellbeing' was therefore used as the single predetermined key word/ code. In summative CA, keywords (rather than codes) are identified and quantified through searching for their occurrences within texts, for the ultimate purpose of understanding their contextual use. Moreover, despite the inherently reductive nature of CA, summative content analysis allows for text to be approached as single words in relation to the chosen content and an interpretation of the contextual meaning reached through an analysis of patterns (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The specific steps taken for this article's analysis are now described.

First, in each of the documents, the explicit presence (or absence) of the word 'wellbeing' was determined as a manifest content analysis (describing what is visible and obvious in the text; Bengtsson, 2016). The number of occurrences of the word 'wellbeing' was recorded, with no further quantitative analysis. Explicit uses of the word 'wellbeing' were searched for manually in each document, with the first aim to ascertain if a definition of the term was provided (such as in a glossary).

Second, condensation of text around explicit mentions of 'wellbeing' in each document was undertaken, and categories formed and applied. Latent content analysis (seeking to find underlying meaning; Bengtsson, 2016) was conducted for interpretation of how each individual document described or used the word 'wellbeing'. Euphemisms or synonyms were not searched for.

Finally, themes were derived though latent analysis (where this latent content was found in two or more categories; Bengtsson, 2016) to express the underlying meaning of the usage of the word wellbeing in each document and across the data set. The creation of and adherence to this specific analytic procedure was important for credibility and dependability of the summative content analysis (Bengtsson, 2016; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The purpose of CA is to organise and elicit meaning from the data collected and draw realistic conclusions in a way that, congruent with a qualitative approach, demonstrates trustworthiness, i.e. is credible, dependable, transferable and confirmable (Bengtsson, 2016; Polit & Beck, 2006). Primary data analysis was conducted by the first author, and threats to trustworthiness, such as coder fatigue in manifest content analysis and subjectivity in regard to latent content analysis, were mitigated with several strategies including allowing sufficient time for analysis, a detailed audit trail, reflective journal and description of methods, and frequent peer debriefings (Kleinheksel et al., 2020; Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999).

Results

Following the steps of the summative CA, many categories were formed from condensation of text around the word 'wellbeing'. These categories offer an interpretation of how the term is used and described across the whole data set—*basic needs; comfort; connected to play; connectedness; development; dispositions; education; emotional wellbeing; families; family connection; happiness and satisfaction; health and physical wellbeing; health; hygiene; inclusion, learning and wellbeing; learning and development outcomes; learning and wellbeing; learning, development and wellbeing; mental health; outcome; partnership with families; physical needs; protection; resilience; risk and protection; risk assessment; risk; safety, health and wellbeing; safety; security and clarity; sense of wellbeing; social functioning; social relationships; tenderness and affection; wellbeing and comfort; wellbeing, development and learning; wellbeing, motivation* and *engagement*. Where categories occurred across two or more documents (for example, found in both the National Regulations and the Quality Standard), these were deemed to be themes for how 'wellbeing' is being used and described across the data set. The resultant themes present in each document are in the description of each document below:

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

The UNCRC is internationally recognised and influential, guiding document in ECEC (Engdahl, 2019). It specifically mentions 'wellbeing' ('well-being') six times, with no definition provided. 'Wellbeing' is used primarily in regard to care, safety and social mechanisms and with condensation of text around phrases of protection and family, for example 'such protection and care as is necessary for his or her well-being' (United Nations, 1989, p. 2). Derived themes present were *family*, *protection* and *risk* (Table 6.1).

Table 6.1.

Themes found in Australian ECEC documents expressing underlying meanings of 'wellbeing'

Document/s	Protection	Safety	Health	Hygiene	Family	Development	Comfort	Learning	Outcome	Physical	Resilience	Connection
United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child	■	■			■							
Child Wellbeing and Safety Act		■	■	■		■	■					
Education And Care Services National Law Act	■	■	■	■								
Education and Care services National Regulations	■	■	■	■	■		■		■			
Guide to the National Quality Framework	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■			
The National Quality Standard					■	■	■	■	■	■		
Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework V2.0								■	■	■	■	
Educators' Guide to the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia					■			■	■		■	■
ACECQA information sheets	■	■	■	■	■			■			■	■
Frequency of occurrence (percentage of documents expressing this theme)	**50**	**60**	50	50	30	60	40	30	60	30	20	30	20

Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (authorised version no. 038)

The main purpose of the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act is to establish, promote and improve child wellbeing outcomes. No explicit definition of wellbeing occurs in the document, and the term 'wellbeing' is used 224 times, most consistently in conjunction with safety. For example, *Principles for children* mentions the promotion and protection of children's 'safety, health, development, education and wellbeing' (p. 18). Themes appearing *were health, safety, development, families* and *protection* (Table 6.1).

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 (Cth)

Two hundred and ninety-six pages of National Law outline provisions for the adoption of national law, approvals, assessments and ratings, compliance, enforcement, monitoring, records and privacy, finance reporting, regulations, etc. 'Wellbeing' is used explicitly 14 times, with no definition. Listed under the objectives and guiding principles of the Law is 'to ensure the safety, health and wellbeing of children' (*Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010* (Vic), s. 3 (2)(a)Austl.)). An interpretation of the contextual meaning of 'wellbeing' can be made from patterns where usage of 'wellbeing' is consistently condensed around 'safety, health and wellbeing'. Themes thus evident are *risk, protection, safety* and *health* (Table 6.1).

Education and Care Services National Regulations (Cth)

The Regulations cover a broad range of areas impacting ECEC services in Australia. These include approvals, assessments, ratings, and operational requirements (including educational programme and practice). 'Wellbeing' is explicitly used 35 times across the 218-page accessed version, but without definition. A specific division of Health, safety and wellbeing of children is included (Chapter 4, Division 1, Part 4.2) covering areas of health, hygiene and safe food practices, sleep and rest, and tobacco, drug and alcohol-free environment. Themes found in the document were *risk, health, safety, protection, hygiene, development* and *learning* (Table 6.1).

Guide to the National Quality Framework

A 648-page document, the guide is provided by ACECQA to support ECEC professionals, providers, authorised officers and regulatory staff to understand the NQF. In this document, 'wellbeing' is used 215 times and is described in the glossary:

> Sound wellbeing results from the satisfaction of basic needs including physical, social-emotional and mental health. Laevers (1994) suggests the need for tenderness and affection; security and clarity; social recognition; to feel competent; physical needs and for meaning in life. Wellbeing includes happiness and satisfaction, effective social functioning and the dispositions of optimism, openness, curiosity and resilience (AGDE, 2022, p. 69)

Questions aside about this glossary term qualifying as a 'definition', 'description' or simply a list of phenomena, the analysis of 'wellbeing' usage patterns derived a long list of categories. Moreover, 'wellbeing' was used in conjunction (via the word 'and') with 22 additional terms ranging from learning, development, engagement, care and belonging, to safety, comfort, welfare and self-confidence. The largest number of latent themes across the data set were evident, namely *risk, protection, safety, health, hygiene, family, development, comfort* and *learning* (Table 6.1).

National Quality Standard 2018

The *National Quality Standard* (NQS) comprises seven quality areas against which ECEC services are rated by their regulatory authority (https://www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf/national-quality-standard). 'Wellbeing' is explicitly mentioned in three of the seven standards—Quality Area 1 (QA1) with the proposition of wellbeing as a Learning Outcome for children; QA2 in terms of children's wellbeing and comfort; and QA6 in regard to collaboration with families. The meaning of 'wellbeing' is therefore inferred around the themes of *outcome, comfort, learning, development* and *family* (Table 6.1).

Belonging, being and becoming: the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia V2.0

The EYLF (V2.0, an update of the original version, released in 2022 and coming fully into effect in 2024) directly uses 'wellbeing' 112 times, including the glossary term (as above, but with the noted additional phase of wellbeing 'including physical, social-emotional and mental health' (AGDE, 2022, p. 69). As Australia's nationally approved learning framework for ECEC, it offers and explains 5 key Learning Outcomes for children, including 'Children have a strong sense of wellbeing' (AGDE, 2022, p. 44). This Learning Outcome is divided into three specific sub-outcomes - 'Children become strong in their social, emotional and mental wellbeing'; 'Children become strong in their physical learning and wellbeing' and 'Children are aware of and develop strategies to support their

own mental and physical health and personal safety' (AGDE, 2022, p. 45). The document offers many intext descriptions of what 'wellbeing' provides and is integral to—from physical and mental health, nutrition, sleep and rest, feelings of happiness, satisfaction, successful social functioning, to confidence, optimism, learning, agency and exploratory drive. It also suggests what wellbeing is *correlated with* (resilience, success, achievement, executive function, belonging, becoming and learning), *affected by* (all experiences), *includes* (physical and psychological aspects) and *enables* (growth mindset and positive attitude to learning). In addition, it uses 'wellbeing' in terms of something that educators can *contribute to, monitor, support, assist, observe, attend to, build* and *promote*. Latent themes resulting around 'wellbeing' were *learning, outcome, physical* and *resilience* (Table 6.1). While this study did not have the specific focus of comparing the original EYLF (DEEWR, 2009) with the updated version (AGDE, 2022), it is interesting to note the explicit addition of the term 'mental health' in the document and glossary term, and the significantly increased usage of the term wellbeing (up from 34 times to 112). This resulted in 'mental health' emerging as a category in the EYLF V2, however given the lack of usage or condensation of this term in the text of other examined documents, 'mental health' did not surface as a theme across the whole data set.

Educators' guide to the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia

The Guide has the stated intention of supporting ECEC curriculum decision making (DEEWR, 2010). It includes the wellbeing glossary term (as above) and contains 43 direct mentions of 'wellbeing'. 'Wellbeing' usage is broad across the 150-page document, with many categories derived (learning and wellbeing; outcome; resilience; security and clarity; physical needs; basic needs; happiness and satisfaction; tenderness and affection; competence; social functioning; partnership with families; dispositions; connected to play; connectedness/connection). Themes interpreted (Table 6.1) from the analysis of patterns were *family, learning, outcome, resilience* and *connection*. Note that at the time of publication, although the EYLF itself has been updated, the Guide has not. ACECQA have provided a list of resources to support the implementation of the new EYLF V2.0 (Approved learning frameworks | ACECQA).

ACECQA information sheets

The ACECQA website has 39 information sheets with the stated intention of offering ECEC professional practical strategies to support quality practice (Information sheets ACECQA). 26 information sheets contain the word 'wellbeing'. As a data set (rather than a single document) policy, pedagogy and practice areas covered are broad, revealing different categories of wellbeing dependent upon the topic of the information sheet. For example, *Inappropriate Discipline* sheet revealed categories of safety, health and risk, while *Toileting and Nappy Changing* sheet evidenced the hygiene category. No specific information sheet on wellbeing was available, despite this being a key outcome of the EYLF. Themes derived were *risk, protection, safety, health, hygiene, learning, resilience* and *connection* (see Table 6.1).

Following analysis of the entire data set (UNCRC, Acts, Regulations and Quality Standard, NQF, EYLF and guides, plus information sheets), multiple and disparate categories were derived. Latent content analysis allowed for a reduction of these categories into expressed themes, conveyed below in Table 6.1. Within Table 6.1, the presence of the derived themes within each document is indicated by a filled square. Where the theme was not evident within the document, the space within the column is blank.

Discussion

Following the analysis, two initial conclusions and one question are herewith offered for discussion, with suggested implications for ECEC policy, pedagogy and practice:

- multifold and disparate usage of the term 'wellbeing'
- wellbeing' definitions are rare and lack contemporary perspectives
- what implications come from 'wellbeing' being viewed as a Learning Outcome?

Wellbeing usage is multifold and disparate

The term 'wellbeing' is used in a multitude of ways in the analysed documents with definitions being rare and extensional. Manifestly and latently, wellbeing is used and described (rather than defined) as many and varied concepts and domains—from risk,

protection and safety; health, hygiene and comfort; family, connection and resilience; to learning, development, physical and health, and as an outcome. 'Wellbeing' usage is, in short, multifold and disparate. Patterns of usage do appear (see Table 6.1) whereby documents from law and regulation (such as the Acts and The Guide to the NQF) cluster around themes of *risk, protection, safety* and *health*, and pedagogical documents (the EYLF and guide) cluster around themes of *learning, outcomes* and *resilience*. However, there is minimal usage overlap, with multiple inferred meanings across the data set.

Inherent messages of child wellbeing as something that is externally focused —a state to be protected and secured by external forces—is evident in the law and regulatory documents. Child wellbeing as internal, a trait or outcome to be encouraged, is prevalent in documents for ECEC teachers and educators. The term 'wellbeing' is used as pedagogical process or idea (something for teachers to debate, or as an outcome) and a catch-all term or extender, added routinely to the end of phases (safety, health *and wellbeing*; learning, *development and wellbeing*; belonging, connectedness *and wellbeing*).

While multifold and disparate usage may not be surprising given the varied authors and nature of these documents, they are intended to target a similar audience (that of ECEC professionals). As discussed, literature concurs that wellbeing is a multifaceted, complex and debated construct and this is reflected in the multiple and broad themes found in the documents. What does this mean for professionals in ECEC? Under the NQF, quality is assessed and rated against the *National Quality Standard*, and National Regulations must legally be adhered to and evidence that wellbeing is protected and taught (as a Learning Outcome) is required. While some of the documents and policies may appear to be in the 'background' of the realities of everyday practice and pedagogy (such as the National Law), they become immediately foregrounded and consequential during regulatory authorities' compliance, rating and assessment procedures (which are publicly reported online https://www.startingblocks.gov.au/). If teachers, service providers and/or officers of the relevant state and territory regulatory authorities have different conceptualisations and expectations of wellbeing pedagogy and practice, based on the multifold usage across the documents, impacts for practice exist. ECEC professionals and authorities working in different contexts with philosophies and practice lenses that focus more on one area of discourse or documents (such as the

Regulations and Safety Act that express themes of *risk, protection, safety* and *health*) may educate and operate in contrast to those that foreground the EYLF and its Guide (which speaks more to themes of learning, outcomes and resilience). While this is not inherently or automatically problematic, confusion and even conflict within workplaces and between ECEC professionals can occur as child wellbeing practices differ, adding extra burden on the already complex, demanding and emotionally exhausting roles in ECEC (Harrison et al., 2024).

While we in no way suggest ECEC professionals lack the competency to navigate complexity, the disparate usage of 'wellbeing', and the broad themes and descriptions that underly the documents, nonetheless has the potential to create confusion, ambiguity and complication. This is particularly relevant in the Australian ECEC sector where the workforce is mandated to address wellbeing policies and outcomes range in educational training, and resultant pedagogical capacities, from certificate or diploma qualifications through to bachelor's and master's degrees (Grieshaber & Graham, 2017). The EYLF V2 states 'Children's wellbeing can be affected by all their experiences within and outside their early childhood settings' (AGDE, 2022, p. 44) and this refers not only to the underlying themes and discourse around wellbeing, but how ECEC professionals interpret and enact these in pedagogy. ECEC services and providers could support policy, practices and professionals of varying capacities, within their unique contexts, and address potential conflict and confusion, by discussing the varying nature of wellbeing definitions/descriptions and articulating their own assumptions and resultant expectations about child wellbeing practices.

Wellbeing definitions are rare and lack contemporary perspectives

This analysis looked for descriptions and/or definitions of the term 'wellbeing' in the documents, but with few results. No definition of the concept was offered in the National law or Regulations, or the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act (despite its specific remit of wellbeing). A singular description was offered across the data set by way of the glossary term in the EYLF and guides. As this paper's introduction submitted, definitions and descriptions of child wellbeing in literature and policy are more extensional than intentional. The EYLF glossary term is an example of this, being somewhat of a 'shopping list' of what wellbeing might *include* or *result* from. Further discussion across the EYLF V2.0 (2022) and Guide speaks to what wellbeing is *correlated with, includes, incorporates,*

is affected by, how it can be impacted, strengthened, debated, promoted and *attended to*. The existence or defining constructs of wellbeing are inferred by its relationship to other phenomena rather than a clear definition in and of itself. Moreover, other prevalent themes in the document landscape, such *as risk, protection, safety* and *health*, are not evident in the wellbeing glossary term description.

The description of wellbeing provided in the EYLF references Laevers (1994). Derived from papers presented at a conference on quality of early education, in Belgium in 1991, edited by Laevers, this is now a 30+year old reference. A data lag can be considered the price paid for developing a global understanding of a concept such as wellbeing (UNICEF Office of Research, 2013), however early education in Australia in 2024, post pandemic, is a context and evidence-informed space far removed from Belgium mid-1990s. Connections to psychological and wellbeing constructs are evident (for example self-determination theory as satisfaction of basic needs; Deci & Ryan, 2008) and EYLF V2.0 has seen the inclusion of 'mental health' (as on opportunity to strengthen mental health promotion, Barblett, Cartmel et al., 2021), however Laevers appears to be the founding citation for the term 'wellbeing'.

Theoretical and pedagogical shifts have occurred in recent decades, including our understanding of early childhood, neuroscience and optimal development; an increased focus on indigenous ways of being and knowing, and vast growth in wellbeing science research (Kong et al., 2020; Lippman et al. 2011; Lomas et al., 2021). In this contemporary light, how relevant, complete or sound, for policy or pedagogical practice, is the basis of the EYLF V2.0 wellbeing glossary term? What gaps exist and what contemporary theories, conceptualisations or models of wellbeing are available that could inform pedagogy and practice of ECEC professionals, and the development of government policy and educational documents? It is useful to consider contemporary conceptions from wellbeing science and related disciplines to add to the descriptions and usage of wellbeing, not only in the EYLF V2.0 as the guiding curriculum framework, but across the document set. Key characteristics of contemporary wellbeing conceptions include a literature and research focus on more positively valenced experiences and outcomes, and that 'wellbeing' is more than the absence of 'illbeing', moving discourse beyond the traditional risk-based, deficit and dysfunction foci (Lomas, 2022; Lomas et al., 2021). Recent wellbeing scholarship also encourages us to integrate the 'dark' and 'bright' sides

of life and develop an increased understanding of the contextual factors of wellbeing, maturing our western thinking beyond the individual to consider wider interdisciplinary and systems-informed thinking, sociopolitical dynamics of globalisation, interdisciplinary science and more-than-human thriving (Kern et al., 2020; Lomas, 2022; Steger, 2024; Wong, 2019). Additionally, an increasing focus on a child's rights perspective is evident in recent decades, understanding that children can and do have a viewpoint on their own of wellbeing (beyond the assumptions made by adults) and that their immediate ideas and experience of their wellbeing are as important as those occurring in the future (Ben-Arieh et al., 2014; Camfield et al., 2010; Mashford-Scott et al., 2012; Statham & Chase, 2010). For ECEC professionals this may require collaborative discussions, professional development and/or critical refection about the role of the child in wellbeing interventions and practices, and consideration of what skills are being promoted in the ECEC setting that builds children's wellbeing capabilities and literacy within and beyond the ECEC setting (Baker et al., 2021).

What practice and/or policy implications arise from 'wellbeing' positioned as a Learning Outcome?

Linking with the idea of building children's wellbeing capabilities and the complex nature of child wellbeing, a provocation and future direction is offered from this study, informed by the *outcome* theme and the EYLF V2.0 positioning of wellbeing as a Learning Outcome (AGDE, 2022). An outcomes-based education (OBE) approach has been adopted by Australian states and territories since the mid-1990s; however the inclusion of outcomes was a major change for early childhood curricula under the NQF (Donnelly, 2007). While outcomes remain the dominant discourse in education, and the 2020–2022 review of the EYLF considered the use of learning outcomes as a strength (Barblett, Bobongie-Harris et al., 2021), how does this outcomes-based pedagogical approach to wellbeing align with contemporary wellbeing research and discourse? The EYLF presents 'Children have a strong sense of wellbeing' (AGDE, 2022, p. 44) explicitly as a Learning Outcome, but can 'wellbeing' itself be considered a proximal learning outcome of education?

Research indicates there is a heritability and relative stability of wellbeing, influenced by genetics and inherited pre-dispositions (Lykken & Tellegen, 1996) however there is also evidence that it can and does change. Dynamism is reflected in the view that

wellbeing is a process or unfolding life project linked to context and time, malleable and externally influenced, rather than an outcome (Dodge et al., 2012; Thoilliez, 2011). A wellbeing guide, offered not by ACECQA, but by the Victorian Department of Education to support its state approved ECEC learning framework (VCAA, 2016), acknowledges wellbeing in the early years as a *prerequisite* for an outcome of learning—an emerging, cumulative capacity, rather than an outcome or endpoint itself (Marbina et al., 2015). How can we then pedagogically view this dynamic process as a learning outcome?

Moreover, Learning Outcome 3 describes a 'sense' of wellbeing (AGDE, 2022, p. 44), implicitly referencing a subjective, rather than objective perspective of wellbeing. Wellbeing from a subjective dimension infers one's sense of positive affect, subjective evaluation of satisfaction with life and fulfilling potential (Diener et al., 1999), however are these learning outcomes or a subjective experience? It is the position of the authors that wellbeing can be a process or pedagogical *objective* but not a *learning* outcome. If children are learning *skills* that enable them to experience a strong sense of wellbeing, it is those skills that represent the learning outcome, not the *experience* of wellbeing itself. Instead, wellbeing literacy is offered herewith as a set of wellbeing skills and capability relevant to ECEC pedagogy, practices and policy, and that ECEC professionals could promote and be held accountable for as a learning outcome across their complex and diverse settings. Defined as the mindful use of language for and about wellbeing (Oades, Jarden et al., 2021) and a relevant construct in ECEC to facilitate child wellbeing (Baker et al., 2021), wellbeing literacy is suggested as a future direction in a sector where wellbeing is valued, but meanings are multifold and disparate, and definitions are rare.

Future directions

Insight into the questions and findings raised here could be sought in wellbeing scholarship and contemporary sciences. In Australia, where ECEC service delivery is diverse and complex across the country, it is not only necessary to honour the unique, contextual and dynamic nature of child wellbeing, including Australian indigenous perspectives, but to continue to develop new ways to conceptualise, improve and measure it (AERO, 2024; Marbina et al., 2015). One such direction, as discussed, may be the application of wellbeing literacy to the context of ECEC. Wellbeing literacy is the language-use skill set of comprehending and composing language for and about wellbeing and the metacognition and choices of when and how to use them, intentionally,

in context (Oades, Jarden et al., 2021). How this knowledge may support ECEC professionals to teach young children vocabulary and knowledge about their wellbeing, expressive and receptive language skills (in multimodal ways) and to adapt these to their individual contexts for the intention of experiencing and improving the wellbeing, is a topic worth future dialogue and research (Baker et al., 2021). Baker et al. (2021) argue that wellbeing literacy, as a wellbeing language *capability* (rather than learning *outcome* or *skill*) not only adds to current ECEC thinking but could inform and support existing pedagogy, practice and policy. While not defining or measuring wellbeing in itself, wellbeing literacy may be a frame through which ECEC professionals can view current practices, conceptualise and discuss child wellbeing and make sense of the regulatory and document landscape and learning outcomes as they exist. Further research and collaboration between early education and wellbeing science, for shared discourse, theoretical and practical applications is encouraged.

Conclusion

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, now over 30 years old, prompted international conversation about children's special rights and wellbeing. Wellbeing as a social, moral and economic imperative may be now at its greatest (Gromada et al., 2020) and as we know more about this elusive construct, we are charged to do more. Gaps and opportunities exist when it can be argued that uses, descriptions and definitions of the term 'wellbeing' in ECEC is not only multifold and lacking wellbeing science perspectives, but disparate and confusing. Contemporary wellbeing interventions and literacies need to be more readily available to early childhood professionals, in Australia and internationally. The provision of multidisciplinary informed pedagogy, practice and policy, for and about wellbeing is not only timely, but vital.

BRIDGE – LINKING INFORMATION BETWEEN PUBLISHED ARTICLES OF CHAPTERS SIX AND SEVEN

This bridging section provides a link between the published articles of the *Landscape*, examining the usage of 'wellbeing' in selected ECEC documents (Chapter 6), and *Perspectives*, hearing from ECEC professionals (Chapter 7). Specifically, this section highlights the connection between Study 1 and the first results from Study 2.

Study 1, reported in the previous chapter, was conducted to ascertain how wellbeing was defined, described and used in the regulatory, curriculum, policy and document 'landscape' of ECEC. Documents and regulations examined mandate and guide the pedagogy and practices of ECEC professionals in Australia. Within this landscape teachers, educators and other professionals (such as educational leaders, mentors and coaches) design curriculum, implement wellbeing practices and assess children's wellbeing outcomes (AGDE, 2022). In doing this work, they teach for and about children's wellbeing.

The selected documents impact and operate at several levels of the ECEC ecosystem in Australia. Macrosystem influences are found via the international and national documents, law and regulations. These documents then regulate and guide the interactions of ECEC professionals occurring in the meso and microsystems (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007). Examining how wellbeing is conceptualised in these documents offered this thesis a more contextualised view of child wellbeing in ECEC. Furthermore it presented an evolution of thinking and evidence gathering in this thesis, moving beyond broader the literature review (Chapters 2 and 3) and the published position paper (Chapter 4).

Having inspected the curriculum, policy and document backdrop, the next goal was to examine the perspectives of those working within the landscape – to hear what ECEC teachers think about child wellbeing and what do they say they do to promote it. Therefore, Study 2 was a survey of ECEC teachers (n=76) aiming to understand how they define and describe child wellbeing and what pedagogical practices they employ to promote it.

The combination of documents representing policies, government and societal aspirations (Study 1) along with perspectives and practices of teachers and other ECEC

professionals (Study 2) offer an insight into the interrelated social and cultural influences on children's development and wellbeing in ECEC (Vygotsky, 1978).

Survey questions for Study 2 were designed to understand teachers' conceptualisations of wellbeing within the backdrop of the documents examined in Study 1. Also, to elicit examples of wellbeing language practices to ascertain what teachers are doing in the reality of their daily pedagogy and practices in ECEC services. Practices undertaken by ECEC professionals for children's wellbeing represent the activities and relationships in the 'world of the child' described in Gromada and colleagues' (2020) wellbeing framework and impact on children's wellbeing outcomes.

Survey questions were structured to uncover wellbeing practices that might align with the wellbeing literacy model. However, this was done without explicitly informing participants about wellbeing literacy or asking them to make direct comparisons. This was an intentional decision across the study design of this thesis to first examine what is understood and happening in ECEC policy, pedagogy and practices (Study 1 and Study 2) before comparing or contrasting to wellbeing literacy (Study 2 and Study 3). Also, to provide survey respondents with the opportunity to share what they think and do about children's wellbeing, without predisposing their answers explicitly to the Capability Model of wellbeing literacy**.**

The full list of survey questions used in the analysis of Study 2 can be found in Appendix A, however a sample are presented here for context when reading the resultant publication:

- *If you had to choose 5 words to define or describe 'child wellbeing' what would they be?*
- *Learning Outcome 3 in the approved learning frameworks (i.e. EYLF) is 'Children have a strong sense of wellbeing'.*
    - *In your work, how do you know if a child has a strong sense of wellbeing?*
    - *What do you do to promote a child having a strong sense of wellbeing?*
    - *What do you do to support a child who has a low / weak sense of wellbeing?*
    - *Please note below what you think are the three most important things you teach children about wellbeing.*

- *Teachers may teach children words and information about wellbeing. For example, teaching about mindfulness, naming feelings or managing their emotions. Within the many planning and teaching demands of your work, how important is it to you to teach children words and information so they can communicate about their own wellbeing?*
    - *Why is it at this level of importance to you?*
    - *Are there any barriers to you being able to do this more often? And if yes, what are they?*
    - *Please give an example of how you teach children words and information so they can communicate about their wellbeing.*
- *Children may learn about wellbeing through receptive language, skills such as reading, listening or viewing. Teachers might intentionally support this with books, storytelling, signing/gestures, music or video clips that are related to wellbeing. For example, reading a story about friendship and showing pictures of different emotions.*
    - *How important is it to you to provide such receptive language experiences so children are able to understand about wellbeing?*
    - *Within the many planning and teaching demands of your work, how important is it to you to provide such receptive language experiences so children are able to understand about wellbeing?*
    - *Why is it at this level of importance to you?*
    - *Please give an example of how you provide receptive language experiences so children can understand about wellbeing.*

As discussed in the *Methodology* chapter (Chapter 5) after initial familiarisation with the survey data, it was evident that the three research questions, data analysis and reporting of findings for Study 2 would be best examined in two phases. Appendix L offers a sample of the NVivo Reflexive log / audit trail that was kept during the data familiarisation and analysis process, and which support this change. This adjustment included dividing the research questions, addressing them in two sequential stages and using different data analysis methods.

The chapter that now follows therefore reports survey findings addressing the research question "*How do early childhood teachers (ECTs) in Victorian Kindergarten programs define, describe and promote children's wellbeing?*" This analysis built on the

knowledge gained from Study 1 about how wellbeing is conceptualised in the context of ECEC. Moreover, it provided further grounding for addressing the overall aim of this thesis - *To examine how wellbeing literacy can be applied to the context of early childhood education and care in Australia*.

CHAPTER SEVEN: '*PERSPECTIVES'* - TEACHERS' DEFINITIONS OF CHILD WELLBEING IN EARLY EDUCATION

This co-authored chapter has been published in the *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood:*

Baker, L. M., Raban, B., & Oades, L. G. (2025). Constant crossings: Teachers' definitions of child wellbeing in early education, a reflective thematic analysis. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*. https://doi.org/10.1177/18369391251337791

Note - this open access article has been reproduced in its entirety here as Chapter 7 but formatted to align with the thesis as a whole. For consistency, in-text citations and the numbering of figures and tables have been adjusted to match the formatting of this thesis. Also, for flow of the thesis, references have been integrated into the References on p. 198 rather than at the end of this reproduced publication.

Introduction

Child wellbeing is a topic of global discourse and concern, particularly in education. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) International Science and Evidence based Education (ISEE) Assessment speaks of 'flourishing' as an educational focus (De Ruyter et al., 2022) and the links between education and wellbeing outcomes continue to be positive (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2020). Many developed countries have education and policy frameworks incorporating wellbeing, including the United Kingdom, USA, New Zealand, China, Portugal, Columbia and Denmark (Baker et al., 2017; Brogaard-Clausen et al., 2022). Wellbeing is, however, difficult to conceptualise, both in general and in the context of children and education.

What is 'wellbeing'?

Defining the concept of wellbeing has been under examination for millennia (Jarden & Roache, 2023). From Greek philosopher Aristotle's ideas of human functioning (Ransome, 2010) to today's vast and expanding waves of wellbeing science (Lomas, 2022), the consideration of what makes humans 'well' is perpetually interrogated and fascinating. Complicating matters of definition are multiple terms commonly used for wellbeing (including happiness, mental health, quality of life, flourishing, life satisfaction)

and the many identified domains of wellbeing, such as physical, psychological, subjective, social, mental, emotional, material (Christopher, 1999; Diener, 1984; Jarden & Roache, 2023; Keyes, 1998). Moreover, the term wellbeing exists in the discourse and endeavours of various disciplines, from education, psychology, philosophy and science to politics, economics, public policy and marketing (Jarden & Roache, 2023).

While defining the concept of wellbeing remains contested, literature concurs it is multidimensional, intangible, nuanced and complex (Christopher, 1999; Dodge et al., 2012). Research also agrees wellbeing is both contextual and cultural, dependent upon and impacted by complex influences including, but not limited to, individualist and collectivist viewpoints, societal morals and visions, external assets and personal capabilities, social justice factors and views of what is 'good' for humans (Ben-Arieh et al., 2014; Ransome, 2010; White, 2008).

Further nuance is created in wellbeing definitions and descriptions when the qualifier of 'child' or 'childhood' is added. Children's interdependency and vulnerability in the world and the impact upon them of various cultural and contextual limits, expectations and opportunities, compounds complexity (Dirwan & Thévenon, 2023; Marbina et al., 2015; Pollard & Lee, 2003; White, 2008). Moreover, childhood is both a distinct and time-bound experience, during which rapid neurological, psychological and physical development occurs thus 'wellbeing' can refer to children's immediate lives and experiences, but also the impacts on their future development and prospects (Ben-Arieh et al., 2014). Not only is child wellbeing a dynamic and elusive concept changing over time (Dirwan & Thévenon, 2023), it can be considered from multiple standpoints - from cultural and contextual perspectives as broad as economic sustainability, moral imperatives, ecology, government strategy, learning and development, education, child rights and voice (Baker et al., 2021; Jarden & Roache, 2023).

Despite these multiple standpoints, wellbeing interpretations, definitions, indicators, dimensions and measures can be found in important and influential global reports, policies and frameworks. For example, the World Health Organisation (WHO) suggests wellbeing as a positive state and resource determined by social economic and environmental factors (WHO, 2021). The OECD proffers wellbeing as compromising 11 dimensions relating to material conditions and quality of life (2020). Specifically, regarding child wellbeing, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) provides a multi-level framework, radiating out from child outcomes through activities, relationships, networks,

resources, policies and context (Gromada et al., 2020). In Australia, The National Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy describes wellbeing as a continuum from well, coping and struggling to unwell (NMHC, 2021) while the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth suggest six interlinked domains - valued, loved, and safe; material basics; healthy; learning; participating, and positive sense of identity and culture (Noble et al., 2023). Whatever the report, policy or framework, understanding and promoting child wellbeing, is a significant but complex topic of global concern.

Australian early childhood education context

Of interest to this study is the Australian context where national calls have been renewed for prioritising and monitoring children's early education and wellbeing. A whole of government Early Years Strategy 2023-2034, focusing on child health and wellbeing, and the first National Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy follow on from the momentous education reform of the 2012 National Quality Framework (NQF) (Department of Social Services, 2024; Fenech et al., 2012; NMHC, 2021). Specifically in early education (0-8 years), wellbeing is a key learning outcome and focus of state, territory and national educational frameworks and regulations (ACECQA; 2023; CoA, 2011; Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005). In the national *Early Years Learning Framework* (EYLF), one of the 5 key Learning Outcomes for children is "Children have a strong sense of wellbeing" (AGDE, 2022, p. 44). Moreover, the "safety, health and wellbeing of children" is a key objective of the National Quality Framework, Australia's regulatory, assessment and quality improvement strategy for early education (NQF; ACECQA, 2023, p. 9).

With such a pedagogical focus, understanding what child wellbeing is and how those in ECEC, who are guided by the EYLF, perceive and promote it, is important. Particularly the perspectives of early childhood teachers (ECTs) are valued in this study as they are responsible for the pedagogical approach and practices to meet the EYLF child wellbeing outcomes. In addition to the EYLF, the state of Victoria has its own nationally recognised curriculum framework, the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) which shares the same 5 key Learning Outcomes as the national EYLF including children having a strong sense of wellbeing (DET, 2016).

The current study

It is in this highly wellbeing-focused Australian ECEC context, whole-of-government attention, updated EYLF and underpinned by the understanding of child

wellbeing as multi-faceted, dynamic and contextual, this current study finds its timely rationale. Science, health, education, policy and the like are increasing their focus on defining, improving, and measuring wellbeing in and with different contexts, cultures and cohorts (Khaw & Kern, 2014; OECD, 2020b). Wellbeing is a multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary concept that sits across disciplines including psychology, economics and philosophy with key applications in health services, education systems and legal systems. Wellbeing is used to refer to the broad concept valued by humans and particularly from a lived experience angle, differentiated from more objective approaches in health, which often orbit around disorders or disease. In this regard, health and wellbeing whilst related are not interchangeable. Moreover, theories of wellbeing suggest the importance of people being able to choose their own conceptualisations of wellbeing and to experience wellbeing by their own definition (Nussbaum, 2011; Ransome, 2010) and Forgeard and colleagues (2011) call for a move away from broad and blurry definitions of wellbeing. With these factors in mind and moving from broad and global conceptions of wellbeing to child wellbeing in the context of ECEC in Australia (and, pragmatically, within a single state), this study sought to hear from early childhood teachers about their perspectives. It was guided by the research question 'How do early childhood teachers (ECTs) in Victorian Kindergarten programs (early childhood settings for 3–5-year-olds) define, describe and promote children's wellbeing?'.

Methodology

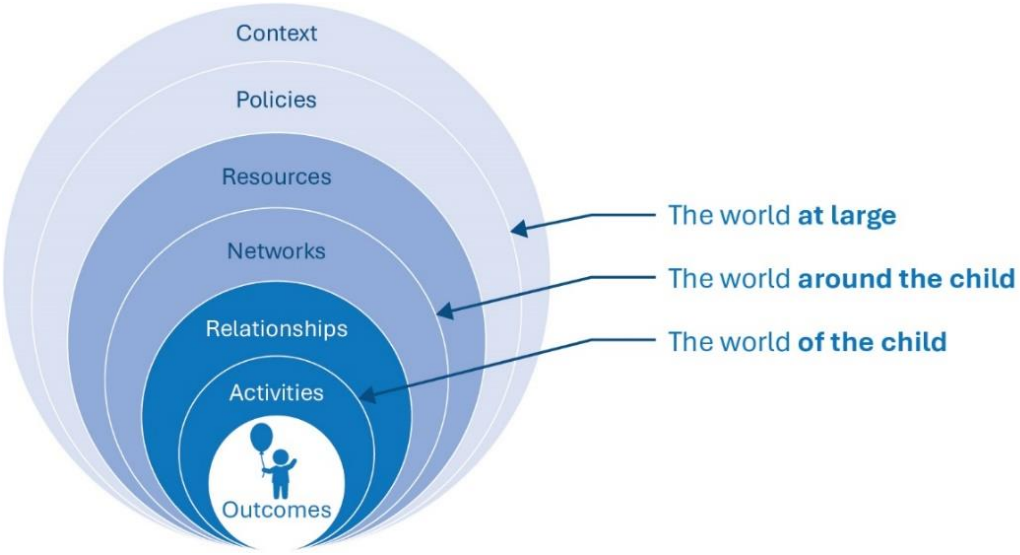
As the research focus was to hear from ECEC teachers about their ideas and practices, a qualitative, interpretivist approach was adopted. Qualitative research aims to explore and understand human experiences from the perspective of the participant, particularly the meaning individuals or groups assign to a phenomena or problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Interpretivist research endeavours to generate new, deeper interpretations and understandings of contexts and social worlds (Saunders et al., 2019). Phenomenology, as a specific methodological approach within the broader interpretivist paradigm, places an emphasis on participants lived experiences, the pursuit of insight and mutually created findings (Van Manen, 2017). Inspired by this but recognising Van Manen's (2017) cautions of the challenges of genuine phenomenological inquiry, a phenomenologically-informed approach was taken to hearing from and understanding ECTs and their practices and definitions around child wellbeing in their education contexts.

Theoretical framework

This study is framed by UNICEF's child wellbeing framework (Gromada et al., 2020). Like Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory of child development, UNICEF offers a multi-level framework with the child at the centre (see Figure 7.1). Relevant to this study is the UNICEF framework's specific focus on wellbeing, providing a holistic view of child wellbeing as interacting with, and being influenced by, multiple environmental levels. The concentric spheres of influence places wellbeing outcomes for children at the heart, including mental wellbeing, physical health, academic and social skills (Gromada et al., 2020). Wellbeing outcomes for the child are influenced in the UNICEF framework, as they are in ECEC settings, by the 'world of the child' (including activities and relationships like those with family and peers), the 'world around the child' (of networks and resources) and the 'world at large' (context and policies). In this paper, 'the world of the child' is relevant to understand child wellbeing in the context of their early education experience. While this paper acknowledges the broader contextual and policy level influences on child wellbeing included in the framework (particularly of the EYLF and ECEC Regulations), it is primarily concerned with the viewpoints of those who reside in the 'relationships' and 'networks' levels, i.e. ECEC teachers.

Figure 7.1

Multi-level child wellbeing framework (Gromada et al., 2020, p. 6)



Adapted from Worlds of Influence: Understanding what shapes child well-being in rich countries | Innocenti Global Office of Research and Foresight (unicef.org). In the public domain.

Participants

Data reported in this paper came from a subset of questions from the larger online survey of ECTs working with 3–6-year-old children, in kindergarten programs (early childhood settings) in Victoria, Australia. Consistent with a phenomenologically-informed approach, participants should be relatively homogeneous and have significant and meaningful experiences with the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell & Creswell, 2023), hence the ECT sample.

Volunteer respondents were recruited through known networks and social media (invitations via email, Facebook and LinkedIn) and resultant snowball sampling. Respondents submitted anonymous online answers via Qualtrics (www.qualtrics.com.au) and a total of 76 surveys were included in this study. Of the 76 respondents, 74 identified as female, one male and one as non-binary. Sixty-five spoke English only and 12 another language/s. All respondents were teachers (holding early childhood qualifications or 'taken to be an early childhood teacher'; Actively working towards a qualification | ACECQA) with various years of experience and undertaking a variety of roles. Further respondent demographics are shown in Table 7.1. This represents a convenience sample who provided informed and important perspectives on ECTs wellbeing pedagogy and practices but may not generalise across all early childhood teachers.

Table 7.1

Participant Demographics

Sample Characteristics	n
Role	
Teacher	36
Teacher + Director/Service leader	12
Teacher + Educational/Pedagogical leader	11
Teacher + Director/Service leader + Educational/Pedagogical leader	10
Teacher + other (e.g. coach)	7
Qualification	
Diploma or Graduate Diploma	16
Bachelor's degree	46
Master's degree	14
ECEC Experience	
Less than 1 year	2
1-10 years	43
11-20 years	13
20+ years	18
Cultural Background	
Australian (excluding Indigenous Australian)	52
Indigenous Australian	1
Other backgrounds	23

Materials and methods

A qualitative online survey method was used to gather ECTs' perspectives. Respondents completed the survey between July and November 2023 and answered closed and open-ended questions regarding their wellbeing definitions, perspectives and pedagogical practices, for example, "If you had to choose 5 words to define or describe 'child wellbeing' what would they be?" (Q10); "In your work, how do you know if a child has a strong sense of wellbeing" (Q13); "What do you do to promote a child having a strong sense of wellbeing?" (Q14); "In what ways do you think children are effective communicators about their wellbeing?" (Q17); "What you think are the three most important things you teach children about wellbeing?" (Q18). To mitigate the limitations of a survey method and better explore participants' experiences, iterative and follow up questions were included to allow participants to provide examples of their practices, other ways they promote child wellbeing, why wellbeing practices were at their identified level of importance and perceived barriers to practice. Questions were generated based on Learning Outcomes of the EYLF and wellbeing literacy literature (AGDE, 2022; Baker et al., 2021).

Justifications of sample size for qualitative research are complex, there are few rules and saturation is not recommended, however the 'mid-range' sample of 76 was deemed a rich enough dataset to answer the research questions but pragmatically be deeply analysed (Braun et al., 2021; Marshall et al., 2013). Also, aligning with qualitative values, consideration was given to information power over sample size – that the ECEC context of the study's aim was narrow; the participants belonged to a highly specific target group; and specific wellbeing theories were applied for exploratory analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Malterud et al., 2016). Given the anonymous, survey design, quality of dialogue would be considered 'weak', however other indicators of rigour and trustworthiness added methodological integrity, including the data analysis method, reflexive thematic analysis (RTA)'s prolonged data engagement process, audit trail, peer debriefing, code to theme diagramming and continuous comparison against raw data (Malterud et al., 2016; Nowell et al., 2017).

Data analysis

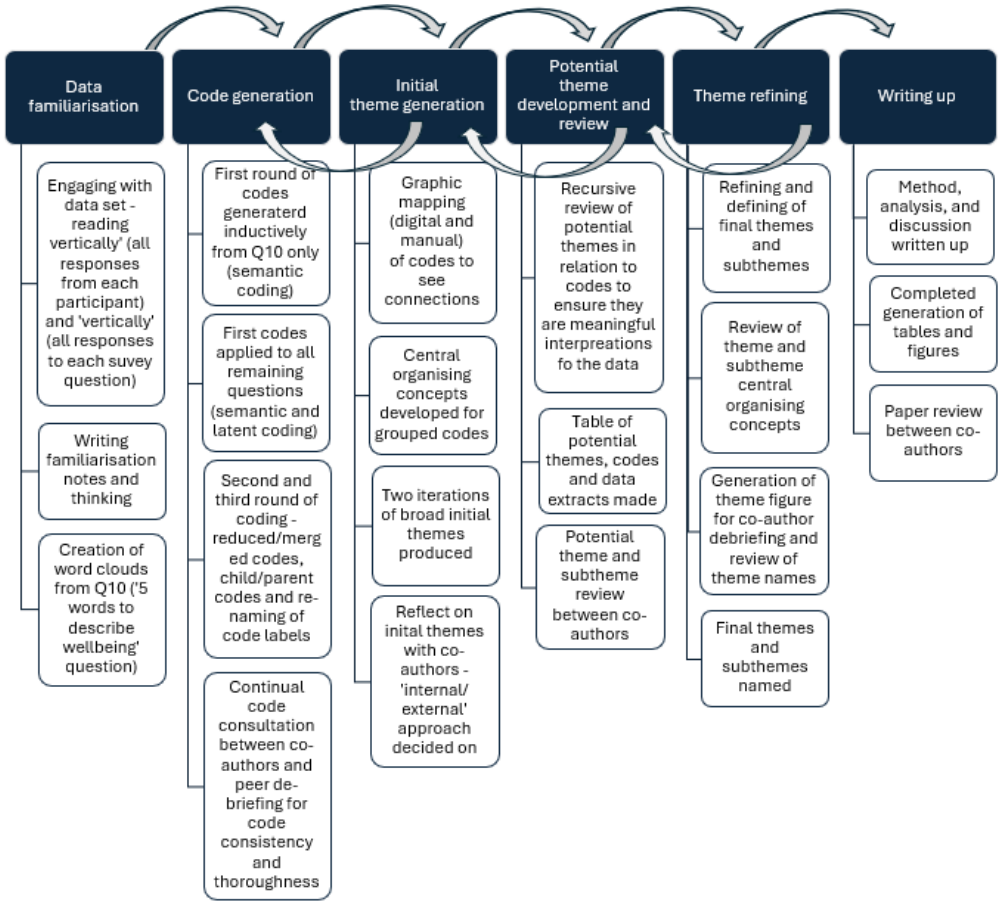
Data was organized and analysed primarily through the NVivo platform (https://lumivero.com/). An in-depth qualitative analysis of the patterns of meaning within the survey data was undertaken using Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA; Braun & Clarke,

2022). Demarcating RTA from other types of thematic analysis, RTA highlights reflexivity and the researcher's role in knowledge production, viewing subjectivity as a resource and acknowledging researchers inevitably bring a theoretical lens and social position (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Terry et al., 2017). The authors of this paper have backgrounds in early childhood education, psychology and wellbeing science. Congruous with RTA, analysis of data was undertaken primarily by the first author given her extensive ECEC teaching experience and supported throughout the process by the second and third authors. RTA can be used within most theoretical frameworks (Terry et al., 2017) and was relevant for this study's aim of exploring and identifying themes arising from ECTs definitions and understanding of child wellbeing.

RTA consists of six key phases of recursive and iterative analysis – 1) data familiarisation, 2) code generation, 3) initial theme generation, 4) potential theme development and review, 5) theme refining, defining and review, and 6) writing up (Byrne, 2022; see Figure 7.2). In this way, the analysis process is subjective and evolving while rigorous, systematic and insightful (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

Figure 7.2

Reflexive Thematic Data Analysis Process Undertaken (adapted from Braun & Clarke, 2022).



Analysis was primarily inductive, with semantic and latent codes and themes generated to reflect the content of the survey data, without preconceived theory or framework (Bryne, 2022.) With an aim of prioritising ECTs own conceptions of child wellbeing and understanding their wellbeing pedagogy and practices, an experiential orientation to data interpretation was adopted, to focus on what participants think, feel and do through analysis of open-text responses and iterative questions, as listed above (Terry et al., 2017).

Ethical considerations

This study was conducted in accordance with the Australian National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (National Health and Medical Research Council 2018). All procedures were approved by the Human Research Ethics committee (ID #25979). Survey participation was voluntary, anonymous and confidential. Participants were informed of the purpose, risk and benefits and consent obtained. Data was collected via the secure Qualtrics platform and stored according to University data management protocols.

Findings

Key Themes

RTA can produce complex, unanticipated and non-obvious themes and following immersion in the data, reflecting and wondering (Braun & Clarke, 2022) three overarching themes and five subthemes were generated from the multiple codes created from the dataset. Table 7.2 outlines these themes, subthemes, and representative participant's quotes (Pnumber = participant number).

Table 7.2

Themes and Subthemes bout Child Wellbeing Generated from the Survey Data

Theme	Subtheme	Participant quotes
Seeing who you are: what the child brings - internal environment and capacities	**Healthy and whole** - mental, physical, social development	*"How active they are, physically and mentally".* (P41) *"Being the boss of their own body. Healthy practices, physical safety"* (P23)
	Actively engaged - communication feelings, confidence, care and resilience	*"They are able to engage freely and confidently with teachers and peers"* (P45) *"Willing to give new things a go and are able to recover from mishaps or the unexpected"* (P9)

	Sensing and feeling - belonging, regulation, security, happiness, identity	*"They have a strong sense of self-worth that comes from knowing they are loved, valued and accepted".* *"They are joyful in play"* (P53) *"Able to identify feelings and learn tools to support self-regulation"* (P21)
We are here for you: context and affordances of the external environment	**Community and connections** - children need support, safety, trust and validation	*"A safe and nurturing environment, where trusting relationships are formed are of paramount importance for children's wellbeing"* (P36) *"Emotional support is essential to a child's well-being"* (P5) *"Connections to place and family"* (P63)
	Visibility and value - children are heard, included, regarded and respected	*"Being seen and valued as individuals"* (P32) *"Children can have a sense of achievement and accomplishment"* (P7) *"We all have a right to feel safe and to tell people when we don't."* (P45)
L*et's learn:* child wellbeing is participatory, dynamic and beneficial for life'		*"Children may need to be shown/role modelled what wellbeing looks like, discussions about this are also important so children can learn from others."* (P42) *"Wellbeing is not a static thing, it changes with situation, inner strength and support from others"* (P25)

In the following section, each theme and relevant subtheme are discussed. Congruent with a qualitative approach, quantification of respondents and/or individual responses is not presented. However, during the RTA process, a recursive review of candidate themes was undertaken for internal theme clarity and to ensure the final themes represented meaningful interpretations of the entire dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Byrne, 2022).

Theme 1*: 'Seeing who you are'*

'Seeing who you are: what the child brings - internal environment and capacities' explores a core idea expressed across the data that child wellbeing exists and is impacted by internal factors within the child. Three subthemes explain this more fully – 'Healthy and whole - mental, physical, social development', 'Actively engaged - communication feelings, confidence, care and resilience' and 'Sensing and feeling **-** belonging, regulation, security, happiness, identity'.

Subtheme: *'Healthy and whole'*

'Healthy and whole' highlighted views of child wellbeing from the perspectives of mental health, physical skills and bodily needs; elements of children's development (including social and spiritual) along with the idea of the 'whole child'. One respondent captured the essence of this subtheme suggesting understanding wellbeing in a child means "Looking at them as a whole person. Physical, mental, social, emotional, spiritual connections and skills" (P48).

Subtheme: *'Sensing and feeling'*

'Sensing and feeling' conveyed the idea of what children feel and have a sense of within themselves. This spoke to positive psychological states with respondents directly identifying happiness, ease, calm and contentment to describe child wellbeing. Mindfulness, and dispositions of curiosity and empathy were also captured in the data alongside references to children's "sense of" many things – identity, self-esteem, self-worth, belonging, stability, security and attachment. This subtheme also highlighted areas of regulation – self-regulation, co-regulation and dysregulation - with respondents acknowledging that child wellbeing includes managing "meltdowns". Children with strong wellbeing were described variously as "well adjusted', "calm and relaxed, expressing happiness and contentment"; "stable emotionally", having a "strong sense of self" and "able to regulate own emotions".

Subtheme: *'Actively engaged'*

'Actively engaged' focused on ways children leverage their internal environment and capacities to engage with the world, their skills, behaviours and interactions, communication, confidence and resilience. The data captured broader aspects of the child's internal environment, alluding to engagement with the external environment – that wellbeing means being "engaged in learning", "confident" in oneself and surrounds, "independent" but able to seek help and able to recognise and communicate their emotions and feelings. This subtheme also focused on respondents' recognition that wellbeing communication and signs can also be non-verbal. One participant saying, "Children use a lot of non-verbal communication and body language to communicate about their wellbeing" (P61). Resilience was also reflected in this subtheme speaking directly to children's ability to "bounce back", "problem solve", "cope with challenges" and "take considered risks" as descriptors of wellbeing.

Theme 2: 'W*e are here for you'*

'W*e are here for you:* context and affordances of the external environment' broadly represented respondents' perspectives that child wellbeing in ECEC is defined and impacted by the external environment. By factors such as the support afforded to them, their relationships, community, and how they are valued, trusted, validated and included. One particular response captured the essence of the theme saying the most important thing to teach children for their wellbeing is "you are not alone, I am here to support you and we can find a solution together" (P2). Two subthemes encapsulate the data under this theme - 'Community and connections' and 'Visibility and value'.

Subtheme: *'Community and connections'*

This theme represented views of child wellbeing as requiring trust, partnerships, strong relationships, routines and stability. Many forms of connection were expressed as important for child wellbeing – connection to family, community, peers, educators, culture, environment, place and nature. One respondent noted child wellbeing requires "Consideration and deep thought and planning around the whole child - not separate to their family, community, and any other influences: part of a supportive community of friends, teachers, parents and wider community" (P20). Notions of safety and emotional support, validation and safety were also prevalent, and the impact of trauma was acknowledged in responses suggesting child wellbeing cannot be conceptualised without consideration of the "nature, history and cultural context of the child" (P63).

Subtheme: *'Visibility and value'*

'Visibility and value' reflected respondents' views that to promote wellbeing, children need to be seen and heard; valued and afforded rights and respect, and experience autonomy and success, regardless of who they are**.** Ideas were identified of the ECEC environment supporting children as individuals with unique needs, and wellbeing requiring acceptance, valuing and celebrating diversity and including children with all levels of ability. Respondents' perspectives regarding children's rights (to safety and wellbeing) and the affordance of love, nurture and regard were evident. One respondent expressed "When children feel heard and when they feel that they are understood are more likely to form a strong sense of wellbeing" (P27).

Theme 3: '*Let's learn'*

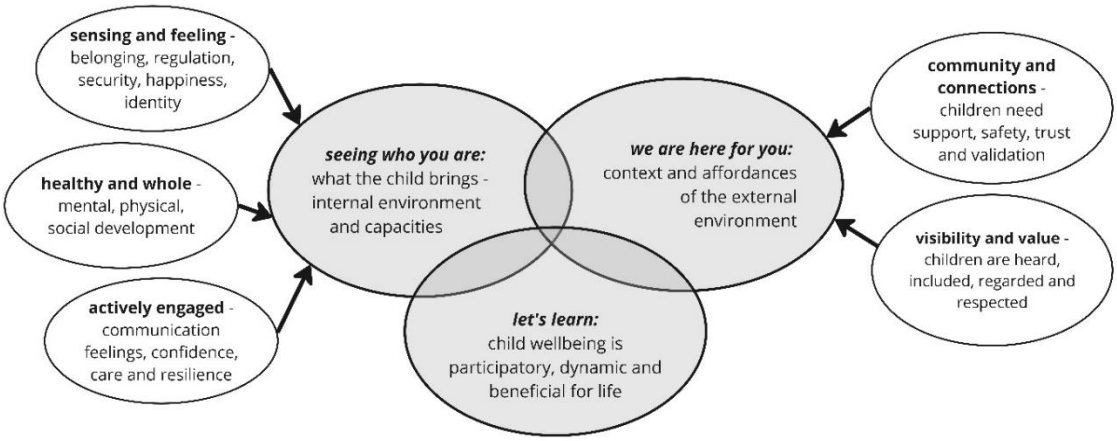
'Let's learn*:* child wellbeing is participatory, dynamic and beneficial for life' signalled broad matters of empowering child agency, voice, autonomy, capability and choice, and ideas of wellbeing meaning children are adaptable and flexible. The notion that children's wellbeing is dynamic, changeable and multi-faceted was evident; one respondent expressing "To support a feeling of worth and feelings of positive wellbeing we need to look at the multi-faceted parts of well-being and plan to support all of them" (P20). In this sense, respondents also describe child wellbeing as learnable, teachable and able to be influenced by the ECEC environment. This theme also highlighted respondents' views of wellbeing as a skill for life and taking time - "Wellbeing a big outcome and not achieved in one day; it takes time and life experience" (P35).

Overarching theme of 'constant crossings'

The idea that child wellbeing in ECEC is a continual (constant), oscillating and dynamic crossing between children's *internal* and *external* environments, capacities, and affordances, as viewed by the teacher, was evident across the data set. Overall, child wellbeing was defined and described by the internal - what the child 'brings' – their health, what they experience 'a sense of' and how they engage with the ECEC space. Simultaneously, and in constant exchange, wellbeing is promoted by what the ECEC environment affords – how children are seen and valued and connected to and supported by the external environment. Underpinning and interplaying with these two themes were the notion that wellbeing is participatory and dynamic: not static but malleable, learnable, adapted and adjusted. Ideas of child agency and the impacts of time and change surfaced with the assumption strong wellbeing brings immediate and lifelong benefits for children. Figure 7.3 is offered to visualise the interaction of the themes and subthemes (Table 7.2) and represent an alternative conceptualisation of the data.

Figure 7.3

Representing Themes and Subthemes as 'Constant Crossings' in the ECEC Context



Discussion

In the current study, ECTs definitions, descriptions and ways they promote child wellbeing in ECEC settings were examined, offering important contextualised consideration of child wellbeing. The intent was to map meaning across the data, both semantically and latently, generating thematic views to answer the research question of how teachers define, describe and promote child wellbeing in ECEC. The findings reflect child wellbeing discourse of dynamism and life-trajectory benefits (Ben-Arieh et al., 2014; Dirwan & Thévenon, 2023), multiple influences (Gromada et al., 2020) and the continual nature of wellbeing change. Together the themes also reflected literature consensus about the multifaced nature and overlapping, or 'crossing' of facets, of wellbeing (Dodge et al., 2012; Jarden & Roache, 2013; Pollard & Lee, 2003). Resonance was also afforded with key Australian Government policy and curriculum documents, such as the EYLF and VEYLDF, where Learning Outcome 3 speaks to children having as strong 'sense' of wellbeing (AGDE, 2022; DET, 2016) and the themes and subthemes generated concerning teachers' perceptions of children's internal environment, capacities, senses and feelings.

The theme generation is also reflective of theories of 'internal' and 'external' environments interacting for wellbeing. Varying philosophical schools of thought have perspectives on what the boundaries, influences and conditions are between the mind, body and its physical and societal surroundings (De Ruyter et al., 2022). For example, some assume 'internal' is the classic phenomenological stance of consciousness,

subjectively experienced, with all else (including the physical body) being 'external' (Johnson, 2008). Others suggest the 'internal' extends to the boundary of the body, with what is outside the physicality of the skin deemed 'external' (De Ruyter et al., 2022). This paper (and the themes generated) reflects the stance of the physical body as the internal/external boundary, influenced by the recognition young children have relatively little control and power over their physical and societal circumstances compared to adults. The internal environment is therefore the child's body – it is what they 'bring' as they step into the 'external' environment of the ECEC setting. This is signalled in the 'Seeing who you are' theme representing what the child senses and feels, their physical health and skills along with their behaviours and interactions (see Table 7.2 and Figure 7.3). Like Bronfenbrenner's (1979) micro system level and UNICEF's multi-level child wellbeing framework (Gromada et al., 2020), the 'external' environment is demarcated by all that exists in the ECEC setting – the physical space, people and interactions, perceptions, values and situational affordances. Important to these internal/external assumptions and resultant themes is the idea of the interactive and dynamic exchanges between these environments. An underlying notion that child wellbeing is a 'constant crossings' between the internal and external environments of the child is reflected by the 'Let's learn' theme. The conceptualisation of wellbeing as a dynamic and learnable 'crossing' between the two environments, not unlike Bronfenbrenner's notion of bi-directional and reciprocal exchange (1979) supports the proposition of wellbeing being described and promoted by the exchange between what they bring ('Seeing who you are' – 'healthy and whole'; 'sensing and feeling'; 'actively engaged') and what the environment affords ('We are here for you' – 'visibility and value'; 'community and connections').

Implications

Theoretical and research implications of this study lie in the addition of a contextualised ECEC perspective to education and child wellbeing literature and discourse. Jarden and Roache (2023) argue that despite the ubiquitous and popular nature of the term 'wellbeing', many disciplines fail to define it satisfactorily. Conceptualisation of the term 'wellbeing' influences how it is measured and promoted in education research and practice (Mashford-Scott et al., 2012), and this study offers contextualized, nuanced perspectives from those within education. Also elucidated in the themes is a continual interplay between the child, their ECEC environments,

interactions and affordances, contributing to current thinking about the dynamic nature of child wellbeing (Ben-Arieh et al., 2014; Dirwan & Thévenon, 2023) specifically in education contexts.

Thematic findings of this study, viewed within an ecological wellbeing theoretical framework, further illustrate understanding around the intersection and interdependence of factors impacting wellbeing and its complex nature in childhood. Statham and Chase (2010) suggest the emerging consensus of multi-faceted child wellbeing should include physical, social and emotional dimensions, objective and subjective measures, and focus on both the immediate and future lives of children. These elements are present in the three broad themes from the data, offering insight not only into the specific factors that exist in early education settings, but the continual way they interact. The timebound experience and vulnerability of child wellbeing (Ben-Arieh et al., 2014; Pollard & Lee, 2003) is also highlighted and extended with respondents' perspectives revealing both the proximal and distal influences of ECEC on children's wellbeing.

ECEC practice implications are also relevant given education and policy frameworks incorporating children's wellbeing exist in Australia and internationally. However, clarity around the complex, multifaceted and 'blurry' concept of wellbeing does not always exist for those working directly with children (Dodge et al., 2012; Christopher, 1999; Marbina et al., 2015). The perspectives offered in this study could assist with an increased understanding of child wellbeing, particularly in ECEC settings and for early childhood professionals. This study is not intended as a scholarly critique of educational frameworks' approaches to wellbeing, but an opportunity for further interpretation, accessibility and specificity of this complex concept. This is particularly relevant in the Australian context at a time of the revised EYLF coming into full effect and around the mandated wellbeing Learning Outcomes (AGDE, 2022).

Additionally, by having greater clarity regarding how child wellbeing may be defined and promoted in ECEC, and adding these perspectives to their context and practices, early childhood professionals may increase their own wellbeing literacy, and that of the children. Baker and colleagues (2021) offer wellbeing literacy (the mindful communication for and about wellbeing) as a necessary and relevant construct to facilitate and conceptualise child wellbeing, and this study may offer insight to support wellbeing literacy understanding in ECEC.

Strengths, limitations and future directions

This study had the strength of drawing on the understanding of a knowledgeable and experienced cohort (ECTs working with children), to provide a contextualised and deeper understanding of child wellbeing in ECEC. Limitations exist in the one-off survey method which lacks opportunities for probing respondents about their account of wellbeing pedagogy (Braun et al., 2021). Opportunities include extending this research to teachers in other states and territories in Australia and using more traditional phenomenological methods of focus groups or in-depth interviews. Also, although this study situated itself amidst the changeover from the previous EYLF to V2.0, questions in the survey were about child wellbeing in practice, not in relation to any EYLF changes. Further studies could seek ECEC professionals' perspectives on child wellbeing pedagogy and practice, both in an Australian context considering the EYLF, but additionally in other countries where child wellbeing is also highlighted in curriculum frameworks. A pedagogical model for child wellbeing may also be derived from the themes following additional research and perspective gathering.

A clear future direction is also to continue to consult with children about their wellbeing, particularly those in early childhood. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child highlights children's right to be heard and both sociological and pedagogical views of children increasingly see children as competent thinkers and communicators about matters affecting them (AGDE, 2022; United Nations, 1989). The authors of this paper concur with Mashford-Scott et al., (2012) position about the lack of attention given to children's perspectives on their wellbeing and echo the argument for increased participatory research approaches with young children. Similarly, parent and caregivers' views on child wellbeing could be sought, for their inherent value and contextual perspective, but also for future research in understanding how these compare and/or contrast to the positions held by ECEC teachers and/or policy.

Conclusion

With child wellbeing featured internationally in early education discourse and policy and centrally located in the Australian curriculum and regulation landscape, clarity on how it is defined and promoted is important. This study heard from those mandated to implement the revised national EYLF, early childhood teachers.
A conceptualisation was generated of child wellbeing as one of 'constant crossings'

between the internal environment of the child and the external affordance of the ECEC context in a participatory, dynamic and beneficial way. This may provide a deeper and contextualised understanding of child wellbeing for ECEC professionals, adding clarity and specificity around wellbeing curriculum foci. This study also adds to wellbeing and education discourse and research, highlighting perceptions and perspectives from an early childhood context. Ensuring children have strong wellbeing, as is politically, economically, socially, educationally, and morally vital, can and should be supported during their earliest education. For children and their wellbeing, what happens early matters.

BRIDGE – LINKING INFORMATION BETWEEN PUBLISHED ARTICLES OF CHAPTERS SEVEN AND EIGHT

This section offers a bridge between Chapters 7 and 8, the two publications that presented results from Study 2.

As discussed in the *Methodology* section (Chapter 5) and in the previous bridge section, data from the teacher survey of Study 2 was analysed and reported in two phases. This two-phase approach allowed for a comprehensive examination of the survey responses with respect to the different research questions. It also generated results from ECEC professionals' perspectives through a process in which they had *not* been explicitly exposed to wellbeing literacy or Capability Model of wellbeing literacy (CM-WL).

Chapter 8 builds on findings from Study 1 and sits alongside the first findings from Study 2. It reports further on the survey data but specifically addressing the research questions:

1. *In what ways are ECTs developing children's wellbeing through pedagogy and practice?*
2. *How do the answers provided by ECTs compare to the wellbeing literacy model?*

Specifically, Chapter 8 illuminates how what ECEC professionals think and do about children's wellbeing compares to the five components of CM-WL. While answering the research questions above, findings also contribute to addressing the overall aim of this thesis - to examine how wellbeing literacy can be applied to ECEC in Australia.

CHAPTER EIGHT: '*SYNERGIES*' - HOW WELLBEING LITERACY REFLECTS AND SUPPORTS WELLBEING PRACTICES IN EARLY EDUCATION

This co-authored chapter has been accepted for publication in the *International Journal of Wellbeing:*

Baker, L. M., Raban, B., & Oades, L. G. (2025). How wellbeing literacy reflects and supports wellbeing practices in early education - A directed qualitative content analysis of teacher practices. *International Journal of Wellbeing*, *15*(4) https://doi.org/10.5502/ijw.v15i4.4739

Note - this author accepted manuscript has been reproduced in its entirety here as Chapter 8 but formatted to align with the thesis as a whole. For consistency, in-text citations and the numbering of figures and tables have been adjusted to match the formatting of this thesis. Also, for flow of the thesis, references have been integrated into the References on p. 198 rather than at the end of this reproduced publication.

Abstract

At the same time as positive psychology and wellbeing science has grown and expanded through cross disciplinary research and dialogue, the field of early education globally has increased its focus on wellbeing outcomes for children. How new concepts and theories from wellbeing science, such as wellbeing literacy, can be applied to early childhood education to underpin wellbeing pedagogy and practices, and support children's wellbeing, is relevant and timely. Through an online survey and directed content data analysis, this qualitative study sought the perspectives of early childhood teachers about how they promote children's wellbeing communication. Furthermore to understand how teachers' practices compare to the Capability Model of wellbeing literacy. Findings from 76 teachers from Victoria, Australia yielded rich data about ways wellbeing words, topic areas and concepts are taught, practice examples of expressive and receptive wellbeing language, how these align to wellbeing literacy and why this is important to teachers. An intentionality for child wellbeing and children's capability for effective wellbeing communication, along with other pedagogies in addition to the Wellbeing literacy model emerged. These findings indicate wellbeing literacy, and the 5-component model align with existing wellbeing pedagogy. Additionally, how wellbeing literacy can expand early education's singular and traditional view of literacy towards a contemporary,

socio-cultural conception. Findings from this study begin to address the paucity of research and literature about wellbeing literacy in the context of childhood and early education. Understanding how a literacy of wellbeing may be applied to pedagogy and practice in ECEC and authentically facilitated by teachers, is novel in both education and wellbeing fields and can enhance both educational and wellbeing outcomes for young children and pedagogical avenues for educators.

Keywords: wellbeing literacy, wellbeing, early childhood education, teacher perspectives, literacy

Introduction

Human wellbeing, and related concepts such as happiness, quality of life, thriving and flourishing, have been under discussion and debate for centuries. Under the broad term of 'wellbeing science', research into what defines and supports how humans can *be well* and *do well* has expanded, moving though cross-cultural deepening waves, offering new theories, models and a "more globally inclusive picture of wellbeing" (Lomas, 2022, p. 254; Wong, 2011). With this broader focus (beyond illbeing) and cross disciplinary dialogue, new and expanded constructs and theories have emerged. These include those related to positive emotions (Frederickson, 2013); flow (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000); hope (Snyder, 2000; Colla et al., 2022); self-determination (Deci & Ryan, 2012); strengths (Peterson, 2004); wellbeing literacy (Oades, Jarden et al., 2021) and psychological wellbeing (Ryff & Keyes, 1995).

These and other concepts from wellbeing science and positive psychology have been influenced by and applied to many disciplines - from education, psychology, philosophy and science to politics, economics, public policy and marketing (Jarden & Roache, 2023; Lee & Sirgy, 2004). In particular, the application of positive psychology to education settings has produced the field of 'positive education'. Positive education (or wellbeing education) seeks to combine knowledge from positive psychology with best-practice teaching and learning to achieve both wellbeing and academic goals (Norrish et al., 2013; White, 2023). However positive education is under-examined in early childhood (Baker, et al., 2017; Waters, Dussert et al., 2022). This article addresses positive education in the specific discipline early childhood education, and the application of one of wellbeing science's newest concepts, wellbeing literacy.

Wellbeing literacy

Introduced by Oades and colleagues in 2017, wellbeing literacy was proffered first as an ingredient missing in positive education and an interesting possible future to elaborate on wellbeing, recovery and mental health (Oades & Johnston, 2017; Oades et al., 2017). Originating in wellbeing science and influenced by the intellectual and disciplinary spaces of contemporary literacy, constructivism and contextualism, wellbeing literacy is defined as "a capability to comprehend and compose wellbeing language, across contexts, with the intention of using such language to maintain or improve the wellbeing of oneself, others or the world" (Oades, Jarden et al., 2021, pg. 1). In line with multiple literacies and socio-cultural views of literacy as constructing and making meaning within and between people, wellbeing literacy draws attention to the language people have and use around their wellbeing (Oades, Jarden et al., 2021). Wellbeing literacy, simply construed as the mindful use of language for and about wellbeing, is the ability to communicate intentionally about and for wellbeing and involves language skills that are used in context and for the direct purpose of wellbeing creation (Hou et at., 2021). These skills, or necessary components, form the capability of wellbeing literacy whose five components distinguish and extend it beyond other literacies such as health or emotional literacy (Berkman et al., 2010; Steiner, 2003). (see Table 8.1).

Table 8.1

The Capability Model of wellbeing literacy (*CM-WL)* (adapted from Baker et al., 2021)

	Component	**Description**
The WHAT? of wellbeing literacy - about *wellbeing*	1. Vocabulary and knowledge about wellbeing	Words, information about wellbeing
The HOW?	2. Wellbeing Comprehension of multimodal texts	Listening, reading, viewing about and for wellbeing
	3. Wellbeing composition of multimodal texts	Speaking, writing, creating about and for wellbeing
The WHO? WHEN? WHERE?	4. Context awareness and adaptability	Awareness of adapting language to context
The WHY? of wellbeing literacy - for *wellbeing*	5. Intentionality for wellbeing	Habit of intentionally communicating for the purposes of wellbeing – a belief, desire, awareness and intention to use language to maintain or improve wellbeing for the self and others

Of note in CM-WL is potential confusion with emotional literacy or social-emotional learning (SEL), particularly under the *Vocabulary and knowledge* component. Emotional literacy is the ability to recognise, understand, manage and appropriately express emotions (Sharp, 2014). SEL is generally defined as the process of understanding and managing emotions, empathy, relationships, identities, goals and decisions (Denham, 2003). These concepts could be perceived as similar to wellbeing literacy regarding the use of vocabulary and knowledge related to emotions. Concepts of emotional literacy and SEL provide broad frameworks for conceptualising emotional and social competencies, however wellbeing literacy focuses on the capability to intentionally comprehend and compose wellbeing language across contexts. While emotions are a domain of wellbeing (Sun et al., 2020), this does not equate to the broader scope of wellbeing literacy. Rather, emotional literacy and SEL could be considered domains or elements of wellbeing literacy (Francis et al., 2020).

As a recent addition to wellbeing science and positive education, research into wellbeing literacy and its application to real world situations is nascent. Hou and colleagues (2021) have developed and empirically tested a simple provisional measure of wellbeing literacy (the Well-Lit 6), a 6-item scale to assess the concept of wellbeing literacy in the education context. Wellbeing literacy has been studied in primary school children (aged 5 – 10 years) through visual narrative analysis of children's drawings (Waters, Dussert et al., 2022; Waters & Higgins, 2022) and via a brief online positive psychological intervention (Francis et al., 2020). In adults, wellbeing literacy has been explored in lay populations (Chng et al., 2022); in the workplace in the form of digital wellbeing literacy (An et al., 2023), and in higher education settings for the wellbeing of academics (Lemon, Francis et al., 2024; Lemon, O'Brien et al., 2024) and students (Johnson et al., 2017; Serini et al., 2024). Wellbeing literacy has also begun to be explored cross nationally, with the psychometric properties of the Well-Lit 6 examined in Chinese military cadets (Jia et al., 2024); perspectives of wellbeing gathered from Chinese international students (Huang et al., 2020) and Burns et al.'s., (2024) study of 1044 adults residing in Australia, the United Kingdom, Singapore, South Africa and Malaysia investigating their mental health and wellbeing literacy discrimination skills. Disciplines other than wellbeing education, such as coaching, are also interested in the application of wellbeing literacy (e.g. Passmore et al., 2024).

These studies aside, many opportunities exist to further explore, understand and apply wellbeing literacy across contexts and cultures, and at different ages and stages of the lifespan. For example, a yet unexplored area is early childhood education (Waters, Dussert et al., 2022). There are synergies between positive psychology and early childhood education regarding prioritising wellbeing outcomes, but there is a paucity of research applying positive psychology interventions to this education sector (Baker et al., 2017; Shoshani & Sloane, 2017). Baker et al., (2021) have specifically highlighted the potential application of wellbeing literacy to early education, arguing it is a necessary and relevant concept to facilitate and conceptualise child wellbeing in this context however further research has yet to be published. This current study aims to begin exploring this novel opportunity and further expand knowledge of wellbeing literacy.

The early childhood education context

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) services provide age-differentiated education and care for children under compulsory school age, with an intentional education component aiming to develop cognitive, physical, social and emotional skills necessary for school and societal participation (OECD, 2024). Education for children prior to school attendance is embedded in international government policy and discourse, highlighted by the United Nations (2015) Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4; Quality Education, Target 4.2) to ensure that all children have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education. Moreover, OECD indicators show that enrolment in at least one year of formal ECEC before the start of compulsory schooling is universal or near universal in OECD countries (OECD, 2024). For example, 92% of 4-year-olds are enrolled in ECEC in Australia, 81% in New Zealand, 98% in Japan and Italy, 100% in the UK and Indonesia, with a 2022 OECD average of 96% (OECD Chart).

Congruent with positive education's goal of providing education for both wellbeing and scholarly achievement (Norrish et al., 2013), ECEC curricula and frameworks internationally focus on both child wellbeing and academic outcomes. For example, explicit inclusions around wellbeing exist in ECEC curriculum documents in the United Kingdom, USA, Australia, New Zealand, China, Columbia, Denmark, Portugal (Baker et al, 2017; Brogaard-Clauson et al., 2022, Shuey & Kankaraš, 2018). The acquisition of traditional academic skills, such as literacy, is also a widespread focus of ECEC programs, with efforts to increase early literacy experiences (as emergent literacy) evident

in curricula and practice (Chambers et al., 2016; Piasta, 2016). Given this, wellbeing literacy's nascent and under-researched position in the critical early education sector, and early childhood as a time of rapid language acquisition and literacy skill development (Al-Harbi, 2020; Raban, 2012), there is a relevant and important opportunity to investigate of how wellbeing literacy can be applied to ECEC settings.

The context of Australia

In the Australian ECEC context, an examination of how children's wellbeing literacy may be supported is timely. Whole of government initiatives have been recently launched, including *The Early Years Strategy 2024–2034* (Department of Social Services, 2024) and the *Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy* (NMHC, 2021) both of which include a child wellbeing focus. Furthermore, in early education, early literacy and wellbeing are key learning outcomes and foci of state, territory and national educational frameworks, quality standards and regulations (ACECQA; 2023; CoA, 2011). Australia's national *Early Year's Learning Framework* (EYLF), mandates 5 key Learning Outcomes for children including "Children have a strong sense of wellbeing" and "Children are effective communicators" (AGDE, 2022, p. 29). Effective communication with the intention for wellbeing is therefore a synergy between wellbeing literacy and ECEC worthy of investigation. Additionally, the EYLF states literacy "incorporates a range of modes of communication including music, movement, dance, storytelling, visual arts, media and drama, as well as talking, listening, viewing, composing, reading and writing" (AGDE, 2022, p. 57), echoing the multimodal elements of communication in the CM-WL (see Table 8.1). With government ECEC strategies focused on wellbeing and connections visible between curriculum documents and the Capability Model of wellbeing literacy, we find a rationale for examining how ECEC teachers are promoting children's wellbeing communication in multimodal ways.

The current study

To begin addressing the wellbeing literacy research gap and possible connection in ECEC, this investigation sought to hear from teachers in early education about their child wellbeing pedagogy and practices. As an initial look into this education context through the perspectives of those responsible for wellbeing and educational outcomes (ECEC teachers), it was guided by the research questions - *In what ways are early*

childhood teachers promoting children's wellbeing communication through pedagogy and practice? and *How do the answers provided by teachers compare to the Capability Model of wellbeing literacy?*

Method

Qualitative study design

Qualitative research aims to explore the meaning that individuals or groups assign to a phenomena or problem and understand human experiences from the perspective of the participant (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). A qualitative stance on this study therefore sought to compare data from early childhood teachers about their wellbeing practices with CM-WL to see how the model "mirrors real life and how events may operate in the real world" (Creswell & Creswell, 2023, p. 224). Reflecting an interpretivist approach (Saunders et al., 2019) this study endeavoured to generate new and deeper interpretations and understanding of wellbeing literacy in the context of early education, placing an emphasis on the pedagogical experiences and practices of ECEC teachers.

Participants

Data reported in this paper came from a subset of questions from a larger online survey purposively sampling early childhood teachers working with 3–5-year-old children, in kindergarten programs in the state of Victoria, Australia. Consistent with phenomenology, participants should have meaningful and significant experiences with the phenomenon under investigation and be relatively homogeneous (Creswell & Cresswell, 2023; Moustakas, 1994). Thus, the perspectives of those in teaching roles (holding a Diploma or Bachelor of Early Childhood Education or relevant qualification) were sought given the responsibility they hold for the pedagogical approach and practices to meet the wellbeing and communication Learning Outcomes of Australia's national and state ECEC frameworks.

Volunteer participants for the survey were recruited via social media (invitations via email, Facebook and LinkedIn), known networks and resultant snowball sampling. Participants submitted anonymous online answers via Qualtrics (www.qualtrics.com.au) between July and November 2023. A total of 76 surveys were included in the study. In qualitative research, justifications of sample size are complex - there are few 'rules' and saturation is not recommended, however this sample size was deemed 'mid-range' and

rich enough to answer the research questions and pragmatically able to be deeply analysed (Boddy, 2021; Braun et al., 2021; Marshall et al., 2013).

Of the 76 participants, gender identity was 74 female, one male and one non-binary, and countries of origin included Australian (including Indigenous Australian), Asian and Anglo European. 65 participants spoke English only and 12 an additional language. Participants taught in rural, regional and metropolitan ECEC services with teaching experience ranging from less than one year to over 25 years. All were teachers but many held additional leadership and/or pedagogical roles (see also Table 8.2). The sample represents a convenience sample who provided an informed and important perspectives on ECTs wellbeing pedagogy and practices but may not generalise across all early childhood teachers.

Table 8.2

Demographics of Survey Participants

Sample Characteristics	n
Role	
Teacher	36
Teacher + Director/Service leader	12
Teacher + Educational/Pedagogical leader	11
Teacher + Director/Service leader + Educational/Pedagogical leader	10
Teacher + other (e.g. coach)	7
Qualification	
Diploma or Graduate Diploma	16
Bachelor's degree	46
Master's degree	14
ECEC Experience	
Less than 1 year	2
1-10 years	43
11-20 years	13
20+ years	18
Cultural Background	
Australian (excluding Indigenous Australian)	52
Indigenous Australian	1
Other backgrounds	23

Data collection

Participants answered closed and open-ended online survey questions regarding their wellbeing definitions and perspectives (such as how they describe child wellbeing, how they would know if a child had a weak or strong sense of wellbeing) and pedagogical

practices (such as how they reported they promote or support child wellbeing in their work and what they think are the most important things they teach children about wellbeing). Consistent with the chosen data analysis method for this study (qualitative directed content analysis, see below), other questions targeted the components of CM-WL (Table 8.1) – for example, seeking to know how expressive and receptive language experiences (composition and comprehension skills) were provided to support wellbeing, if teaching these communication skills was important to teachers and why. Examples of practices and barriers were also sought specifically around the wellbeing literacy model components of words and information, expressive and receptive language, and context.

Researcher reflexivity

The authors have backgrounds in ECEC, psychology and wellbeing science. Our respective familiarity with ECEC pedagogy and wellbeing literacy were an asset in the study design and interpretation of the results. However, we acknowledge the potential initial positive bias towards the Capability Model of wellbeing literacy (CM-WL). While an understanding of nuances of ECEC practices reported in open- text responses was an advantage, we were conscious of this familiarity leading to assumptions. To counteract this, reflexivity was maintained during data analysis with peer debriefings, frequent revisiting and questioning of the data and the first author keeping a reflective log and audit trail (Shaw, 2010). The directed content analysis approach reported below also supported reflexivity and mitigation of bias via the allowance for emergent categories and those outside of the CM-WL.

Ethical considerations

All procedures were approved by the University of Melbourne Human Research Ethics committee (ID #25979)

Data analysis

Data was organised and analysed using directed qualitative content analysis primarily through the NVivo platform (https://lumivero.com/). Content analysis has three distinct approaches (conventional, summative and directed) and is a method for drawing realistic conclusions, from all types of texts, in a way that is dependable, credible, confirmable and transferable (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Specifically, directed content

analysis (DCA) starts with theory, and codes are defined both before (from relevant research findings or theory) and during analysis (from the data) (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

The main strength of a DCA approach is that existing theory can be refined, extended or supported, particularly as a research area grows (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Findings can include both supporting and non-supporting evidence for a theory, particularly in a new context. DCA was therefore chosen to understand more about wellbeing literacy in ECEC practices using codes predetermined from CM-WL while remaining open to new insights to emerge from the data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Oades, Jarden et al., 2021). Guided by a more structured process than a conventional content analysis, DCA has three main phases, Preparation, Organisation and Reporting (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

For the current study, the *Preparation* phase included data familiarisation to develop a comprehensive sense of the whole. Open text responses from relevant questions in the survey were chosen as units of analysis (Elo & Kynga s, 2008) and both manifest and latent content analysis was decided upon to ensure a deep understanding of the data (Assarroudi et al., 2018). The *Organisation* phase then began via developing the structured categorisation matrix of predetermined codes (see Table 8.3, column 1). Theoretical definitions of the predetermined codes were made using existing theory and definitions from CM-WL (Oades, Jarden et al., 2021). These included the five necessary components of wellbeing literacy (see Table 8.1) and an additional 'other than the model' category (to capture data that may not fit the Capability Model of wellbeing literacy). This approach allowed for critical reflection on preconceptions and mitigated potential bias by explicitly allowing for the inclusion of data that did not align with the Capability Model of wellbeing literacy.

Next, analysis was undertaken, including reviewing the data for correspondence with or exemplification of the predetermined categories. During analysis, data that could not be coded into the predetermined categories of the structured categorisation matrix were identified and analysed to decide if they represented a new category or a subcategory, based on the principles of inductive content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). This process resulted in the emergence of six subcategories, further evidencing receptiveness to emergent themes that extended beyond the initial framework of the wellbeing literacy model (Table 8.3, column 2).

Table 8.3

Structured Categorisation Matrix (of predetermined Categories and Emerging Subcategories) used For and During Coding

1. Predetermined categories	2. Emergent Subcategories
Vocabulary and knowledge about wellbeing	Practice and pedagogy importance
	Wellbeing words, topic areas and concepts taught
Comprehension of multimodal text related to wellbeing	Comprehension - Practice and pedagogy importance
Composition of multimodal text related to wellbeing	Composition - Practice and pedagogy importance
	Composition - wellbeing expression, communication and signs
	Composition - non-verbal communication avenues are important
Context awareness and adaptability	-
Intentionality for wellbeing	-
Other than the model	-

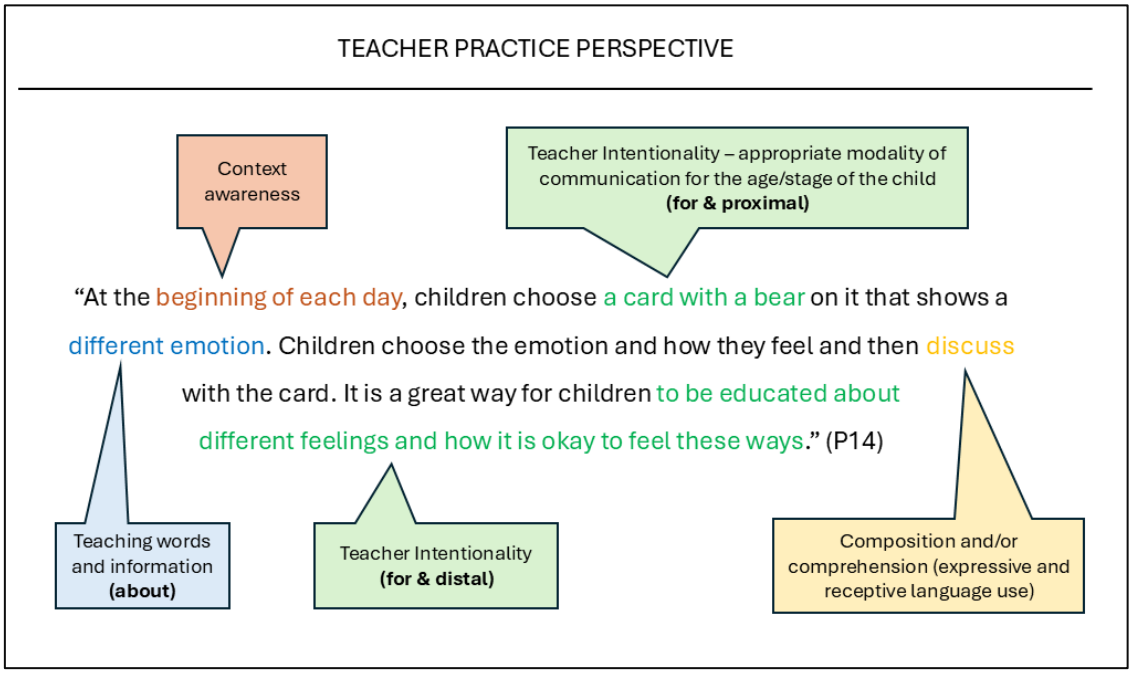
Data analysis was conducted by the first author followed by regular discussions and validation of content among co-authors to reach consensus (Elo & Kynga s, 2008). In addition, findings were discussed with three external peer de-briefers (from wellbeing science and early education fields) to provide critique and fresh analysis perspectives (Byrne, 2001).

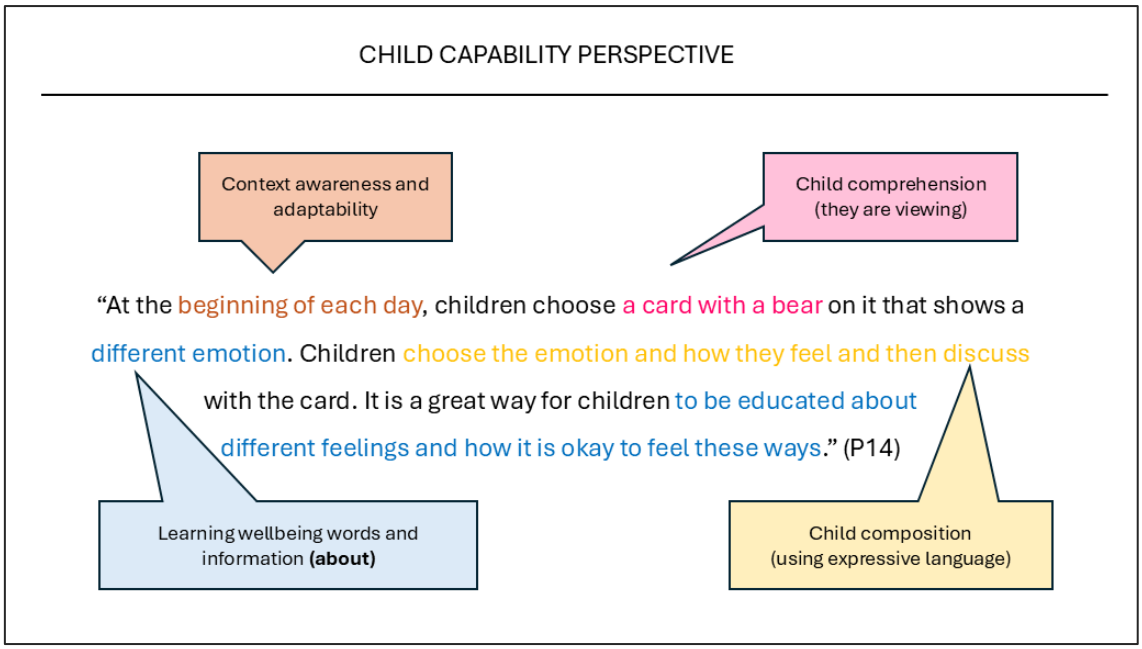
Beyond the adopted DCA process as elaborated by Elo & Kyngäs (2008) and Hsieh & Shannon (2005), we devised and applied an additional and more nuanced stage of analysis. Smaller sections of qualitative data - specific examples of child wellbeing practices and language-use interactions reported by survey participants - were chosen for deeper analysis using only the 5 components of the wellbeing literacy model. Likening these small data units to a vignette (realistic stimuli or scenarios used in research to provoke responses and gain participants' insight into a phenomenon; Skilling & Stylianides, 2019) these data extracts were used to support our understanding of the alignment of wellbeing literacy components with teacher reported practice.

In this way we used the extracts/vignettes to further our understanding and analysis of data in our role as researchers, rather than the traditional use of vignettes for data collection with research participants. This analysis was undertaken on the same data extract/vignette from both a teacher practice perspective (teacher pedagogy and how it may be underpinned though a wellbeing literacy lens) and the child capability perspective (what elements of the capability of wellbeing literacy may be being developed in the child during the specific language interaction). This analysis process was undertaken during peer debriefings and captured in audit trails to interrogate specific segments of the data against CM-WL. It was as a reflexive and re-questioning technique that informed the emergent subcategories and conclusions drawn for the overall findings. See Figure 8.1 for a specific example of the process.

Figure 8.1

Example of Participant Response Coded for Components of the Wellbeing Literacy Model from the Dual Perspectives of the Teacher and the Child (Pnumber = participant number).





The final phase, *Reporting*, consisted of detailing the DCA process and enumeration of findings, including systematically presenting the association between the data and the Structured Categorisation Matrix (Table 8.3), and reporting trustworthiness criteria adopted (Assarroudi et al., 2018).

Trustworthiness

Informed by Lincoln & Guba's evaluative criteria for qualitative studies of credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability (1986), several techniques for establishing trustworthiness (as a parallel term to rigour) were used. Familiarisation with the data, by reading and re-reading the survey results, was undertaken by the co-authors for credibility and peer debriefing supported clarity of data interpretations and content validation. An audit trail was kept to capture and report the DCA stages and processes along with evolving interpretations and decisions, and researcher reflexivity to establish dependability and confirmability of the analysis. The extent to which the findings are trustworthy and transferable are ultimately up to the reader (Lincoln & Guba, 1986), however strategies such as purposive sampling of participants and reflective journaling were undertaken to support transferability (Enworo, 2023).

Findings

The survey responses yielded rich and explicit data related to how teachers in early education contexts promote children's wellbeing communication and how these

practices compare to the CM-WL. These findings were informed by the dual analytic approach of broader DCA and the novel vignette analysis as described above. Findings, under each of the predetermined categories and five emerging subcategories (Table 8.3) are now discussed, along with supporting participant responses:

Predetermined category - 'Vocabulary and knowledge about wellbeing'

This category refers to an individual possessing vocabulary and knowledge about wellbeing that they value and can use in the service of their own wellbeing or that of others (see Table 8.1, Component 1). Participants provided many examples of teaching practices (interactions, experiences, curriculum content and strategies) they employ to promote children's wellbeing through this avenue. For example:

- "At every opportunity I use words to describe feelings. If I see a child is feeling upset/overwhelmed/angry/frustrated etc., I will say: 'I can see you're feeling upset because…', 'That's so hard for you right now…'. Describing what's happened, what's going on inside for that child helps to give them the words and validates their feelings, and actually, them as a person of value." (P20).
- "Through stories, songs, games, puppets, incidental conversations and modelling - sharing resources with families." (P58).

At a more nuanced level, participants shared specific language they used to support children's wellbeing communication in knowledge areas such as self-regulation, behaviours, interactions, levels of arousal, thoughts, emotions, health, social justice, lifestyles, safety and consent. For example "You know your body best; it's okay to say no" (P36); "How's your engine running?" (P53); "What colour do you think jealousy is?" (P44); "When you have a problem with others. What are your options?" (P9); "'sometimes' and 'everyday' foods" (P29). Participants also shared examples of wellbeing vocabulary and knowledge used by children, for example "I'm in the green zone. When we take turns, I feel happy" (P29); "I'm having a moment" (P48); "When I'm quiet the monsters come." (P70); "this is what angry looks like" (P36).

When participants answered questions about wellbeing words and information they teach children they not only expressed how important this area of their work is, but the many ways they do this. As a result, two emergent subcategories were identified during analysis:

Emergent subcategory - 'Practice and pedagogy importance'

Overwhelmingly, participants indicated (in multiple choice survey questions) that practices teaching children wellbeing words and information were 'important' or 'very important' (92%). Why these practices were important was further evidenced in open text responses, revealing an underlying pedagogical value of teachers that children are capable communicators and wellbeing communication skills are vital:

- "... words help children identify things that they perhaps can't otherwise understand. They are capable of such understanding so by embedding the language into our daily practice we are allowing them to learn in a way that reflects their capabilities and sets them up for success." (P3)
- "Having and understanding the language to use when speaking of their well-being, understanding how to regulate themselves and knowing how to ask for help. Having the language to describe how they're feeling. (P23)

Emergent subcategory - 'Wellbeing words, topic areas and concepts taught'

Participants also shared broad wellbeing topics and concepts they teach young children, including but not limited to vocabulary, knowledge and language skills about emotions, feelings and self-regulation; self-care and pursuing their own interests; safety and security; independence, agency and having their own voice; concepts of respect, fun and happiness, autonomy and rights; mindfulness and resilience; strengths of character (kindness, empathy, love of learning); physical health and lifestyle; nature and the outdoors; and ideas about belonging, relationships and connection.

Specific knowledge areas participants reported they teach children so they have access to wellbeing vocabulary included those around respect, yoga, exercise, healthy eating, mindfulness, meditation, mindset, gratitude, resilience and anxiety. Multimodal resources teachers used to support children's acquisition of wellbeing words and knowledge included books, posters, flash cards, illustrations, posters, puppets, social stories, toys and television programs. Participants also shared they utilised formal and external programs/practices as sources of wellbeing knowledge suitable to share with young children. For example, emotional literacy curriculums, the concept of 'bucket filling', Zones of Regulation, emotional coaching, Circle of Security and Smiling Mind.

Predetermined category - 'Comprehension of multimodal text related to wellbeing'

This category concerns people being able to comprehend multimodal texts related to wellbeing. Participants reported they support children's wellbeing communication, outcomes and learning through comprehension (receptive language) in ways aligning to the wellbeing literacy model through reading, listening or viewing (Table 8.1). Practice examples provided by teachers included story telling (picture story books, audio books, oral stories, social stories); displays, posters, charts and visual aids (for routines, achievements, topics of discussion, activity choices); positive verbal expressions, encouragement and affirmations; watching films or video/YouTube clips; puppets; photographs (of family, emotions, events); introducing new language/words; having comfort items accessible; listening to music, singing and meditation/mindfulness tracks; role modelling and sharing personal experiences. Illustrative responses from participants included:

- "I do a lot of "told" stories or puppet play.... In this way I can tailor stories towards a particular need. Also using books and games." (P20)
- "Sharing a personal experience and how it felt for me. Providing story/video as provocation for discussion about wellbeing." (P29)
- "Listening to lovely music, providing opportunities to dance to different types of music and noting how the music makes us feel." (P74)

98% of participants shared that providing receptive language experiences for children's understanding of wellbeing was as 'important' or 'very important' and thus a 'practice and pedagogy importance' subcategory (Table 8.2, column 2) developed.

Emergent subcategory - 'Comprehension - practice and pedagogy importance'

It was evident that children having the opportunity to receive/comprehend wellbeing texts, such as books, music or groups discussion, was an important pedagogical avenue for teachers to promote child wellbeing communication. Not only to provide children with immediate wellbeing boosts and experiences, but for them to develop increased comprehension of their own wellbeing and strategies to improve it that they could use beyond the immediate ECEC setting. Pedagogical intentions of fostering children's learning, development and wellbeing were evident, for example:

- "Wellbeing underpins all learning and development. Learning about wellbeing in early childhood will give children a framework they can take with them through life." (P 54)

- "Stories have always been used to teach, right back in time. We all relate to teaching that comes through stories. They open up new worlds to us." (P26)
- "Receptive language is important for educators to teach children to assist children in being effective communicators." (P66)

Predetermined category - 'Composition of multimodal text related to wellbeing'

This category refers to composition of wellbeing texts as it occurs through writing, speaking, and creating (Table 8.1). Wellbeing literacy is not just about knowing and receiving wellbeing related information, but also includes a 'productive' element of creating *about* and/or *for* wellbeing of self and/or others (Oades et al., 2021). Survey participants reported many ways they promote children's wellbeing communication through expressive language activities and opportunities, including art/craft experiences (drawing, painting, cutting, pasting); singing, dancing and actions songs; puppets, books and comfort items; emotion/feeling/face stones/cards; dramatic and 'small world' play; group discussions and 1:1 conversation; sensory experiences (playdough, sand, water, mud); puzzles; and loose parts. For example:

- "Puppets, (making emotions puppets as well as acting with different puppets) emotions cards for memory or sorting or similar games, emotions dominos, playdough with blank face templates, potato heads, books, songs." (P13)
- "We send home Kozy Koala each week with a different child, and they are encouraged to then share with the group what adventures they had together. Our prompts encourage the children to draw and speak about different mindful experiences, ways their family practice gratitude or empathy etc." (P34)
- "Daily quiet time where we use meditation pebbles that children have decorated." (P42)

Following from and underneath the pre-determined category of 'Composition of multimodal text related to wellbeing', three subcategories emerged:

Emergent subcategory - 'Composition - practice and pedagogy importance'

The data highlighted how important promoting child wellbeing communication through expressive language practices was to participants (including writing, speaking and/or creating). Participants expressed pedagogical aspects related to educational

philosophies, child development and differentiated teaching, for example:

- "Visual arts are a strong form of communication for children and I have deep respect for the Reggio Emilia project and the hundred languages of children." (P45)
- "If a child is able to effectively communicate that they need help or assistance, or explain how they are feeling, this demonstrates strong wellbeing." (P60)
- "Children learn differently and express themselves differently. It's important to provide a wide range of ways for them to express themselves successfully." (P71)

Emergent subcategory – 'Composition - wellbeing expression, communication and signs'

Responses indicated participants felt children can be, and are, effective wellbeing communicators with capacity to express how they feel and what they need to support their wellbeing. Furthermore, signs children have a strong sense of wellbeing can be observed by teachers via children's expressive language, particularly during opportunities such as art experiences, singing, dancing or wellbeing related conversations:

- "Children at the early years stage are developing the communication skills about wellbeing. Learning the words to describe emotions and feelings. Once trusting relationships are built with their peers and the Educators the children are able to practice effective communication." (P9)
- "They are able to be aware of their own feelings or able to express how they're feeling." (P23)
- "Children express their feelings and needs through words, facial expressions, body language and voice. Can effectively express happiness, sadness, anxiety, etc." (P6)

Emergent subcategory - 'Composition - non-verbal communication avenues are important'

Answers to questions about expressive language practices for child wellbeing included those around through writing, speaking, and creating, with a strong focus on teachers acknowledging children's non-verbal pathways of communication. Congruent with the wellbeing literacy model that wellbeing communication is multimodal, and

literacy is a social exchange between people (Oades, Jarden et al., 2021) many responses referred to the pedagogical importance of non-verbal strategies as valid forms of wellbeing communication. This included body language; children's actions, interactions and behaviours; as well as children with English as a second language or non-verbal languages, for example:

- "Verbal communication is just one type of communication, I believe that children have 100 languages and providing opportunities to use these languages strengthen the children communication, identity and wellbeing." (P74)
- "Children communicate through action and body language, if a child has a poor sense of wellbeing or safety they may act out and misbehaviour is always communicating, children with a strong sense of well-being may be confident and engaged in the program and this is also communication." (P27)
- "Children may verbalise or be non-verbal in sharing their wellbeing - how they self-regulate, manage challenges, adapt to change etc. this can also come out in their play." (P31)

Predetermined category - 'Context awareness and adaptability'

This category refers to being aware of and adapting to contexts as the meaning of language varies with different situations and wellbeing information may be useful in one context and not in another (Oades et al., 2020; see also Table 8.1). Participants expressed they have observed and believe young children possess this ability. Firstly, in the way they transfer knowledge from one setting to another (home to their ECEC setting and vice versa), and secondly, more closely aligned with the intent of 'Context awareness and adaptability', by adapting words and language use according to the different spheres of their lives:

- "I have heard about children taking concepts they have learned at Kinder and sharing them with their family. E.g.: twiddling thumbs, taking a deep breath, telling family members to use a green voice (quiet) instead of an orange (loud)." (P53)
- "Yes, often the children will use words with their family that they know it is not appropriate at Kinder." (P4)
- "Children's willingness to express is affected by those around them and how

they expect to be received. Also the environment may affect their capacity to express by limiting opportunity, providing negative feedback or few resources with which children may express e.g., art, music." (P25)

Predetermined category - 'Intentionality for wellbeing'

The final component in CM-WL concerns intention - the habit of intentionally using language to maintain or improve the wellbeing of self or others. This implies that comprehension (reading, listening, viewing) or composition (writing, speaking, creating) is 'skillful' or 'mindful' (Oades, Jarden et al., 2021). This can be argued as a complex and nuanced skill, in that expressive and/or receptive communication is *intentionally* used for the purpose of a wellbeing outcome, not just a generic or singular activity related to wellbeing areas or topics but without the express intention *for* wellbeing. The degree to which 3–5-year-old children may possess this skill of intentionality and to which teachers can or try to promote this in children, was not explicitly explored in this survey due to complexity and not wishing to place a time burden on volunteer participants. However, across the data set notions of intentionality were evident. One of the research aims of this study was to explore ways teachers promote children's wellbeing communication, and the data suggested they do this with intention:

- "Children express themselves in many ways and we can support this by providing intentional opportunities to communicate." (P 52)
- "Spending more intentional time with the child, supporting them to understand the language around well-being, creating an environment that guides and facilitates an improvement in their well-being." (P24)
- "Explicitly and incidentally, with intention. I do this through discussion, visual art experiences, children's literature, drama, visual tools, opportunities for physical play and risky play where children can be supported to assess the risks involved." (P45)

Predetermined category - 'Other than the model'

Across the data set, many ways ECEC teachers promote children's wellbeing were offered that did not map directly to the wellbeing literacy model. These were captured and considered under the category of 'other than the model'. None of these contradicted the previous categories or subcategories but reinforced the broad, complex, multimodal and multi-faceted ways teachers promote children's wellbeing and wellbeing communication.

Play, as an overall pedagogical approach was a noteworthy response, as were time in nature and sensory experiences. Each of these pedagogies arguably facilitate language use environments/opportunities, promote avenues for wellbeing words and information to be introduced, and expressive and receptive wellbeing language exchange. Responses and practices that indicate teachers resonate with multimodal and differentiated approaches to wellbeing communication included:

- "Allowing children to take risks supports their development in so many ways. I've seen children's wellbeing soar after mastering the climbing tree. They become more confident and more determined in positive ways. Shy children start to speak out and develop stronger relationships and resilience." (P41)
- "Dialogic book reading, play worlds, dramatic play, adult led drama, visual arts, gosh everything! It depends on the children's loves - we would use their curiosities as a vehicle for curriculum." (P63)
- "All children will express themselves in different ways depending on their developmental stage and abilities. Children need to have a variety of avenues." (P7)

Discussion

In the current study, ECEC teachers provided rich and broad ways they promote children's wellbeing communication through everyday pedagogical approaches and practices. This was done multimodally, providing children opportunities for listening, reading, viewing, speaking, writing and creating, verbally and non-verbally, about and for their wellbeing. Additionally, teachers indicated these teaching practices and pedagogical decisions were made intentionally, embedded in practice, with the belief they were important and that children could adapt their wellbeing communication to context. This evidences multiple ways in which ECEC teacher's everyday wellbeing practices compare to CM-WL (Oades, Jarden et al., 2021). As wellbeing literacy is a new construct in positive education and wellbeing science, this study adds to our understanding of wellbeing literacy and its application to the context of early childhood education.

While interest in positive and wellbeing education has grown internationally and significantly, challenges exist regarding which of its new theories, approaches and applications are relevant and to what context (White, 2023). In many early childhood education contexts wellbeing outcomes are mandated (e.g. AGDE, 2022) but meeting

these outcomes is complex and varied as child wellbeing is a dynamic, multifaceted and contested construct (Dirwan & Thévenon, 2023; Pollard & Lee, 2003). Choosing rigorous, contextually and pedagogically relevant constructs and approaches to apply in support of child wellbeing is therefore critical. As the findings of this study indicate, teachers' child wellbeing practices can be compared to CM-WL indicating alignment between the wellbeing literacy construct and ECEC context. Early childhood teachers indicated strongly that teaching children composition and comprehension skills about and for child wellbeing was important to them, thus a model that can reflect current practices and inform wellbeing pedagogical approaches is not only relevant but necessary and beneficial.

Early literacy is also of interest to the findings of this study. In the current contexts of expanding wellbeing science research and the Australian whole of government focus on educational and wellbeing outcomes in early childhood, wellbeing literacy offers a model to expand ECEC literacies discourse. In ECEC, particularly in the Australian *Early Years Learning Framework* (EYLF) literacy is already framed as multimodal (incorporating a range of communication modes such as music, movement and visual arts; AGDE, 2022) and is therefore synergistic with wellbeing literacy. However, the concept of literacy and learning of literacy skills in the EYLF remains closely aligned with the traditional, linear and developmental outcome of an individual being able extract information through reading and to communicate though writing (Razfar & Gutierrez, 2003). As evidence of how a child may become an effective communicator (Learning Outcome 5), the EYLF suggests children "begin to understand key literacy and numeracy concepts and processes, such as the sounds of language, letter-sound relationships, concepts of print and the ways that texts are structured" and they "display literacy behaviours by incorporating reading and writing approximations and viewing in their play (including digital technologies)" (AGDE, 2022, p. 60-61). However literacy scholars have expanded views of literacy from an individual, cognitive process (where reading and writing is an internal, mental practice), to a socio-cultural one, occurring between people and within a context (Gee, 2015). Literacy is now perceived as plural rather than singular paradigm and the concept of multiple literacies has emerged (Gee, 2015). Wellbeing literacy is one such expansion that could add to ECEC conceptions of literacy.

Baker et al., (2021) have argued the contextual relevance of wellbeing literacy to ECEC and as an opportunity for clarification of best practice. Findings from this current

study, examining the perspectives and practices of ECEC teachers add weight to this position, evidencing how existing wellbeing communication practices align with CM-WL. With child wellbeing a topic of global concern and discourse and the facilitation of wellbeing viewed as a contemporary educational outcome as important as academic proficiency (De Ruyter et al., 2020; OECD, 2017) we argue it is timely for ECEC discussions, expectations and curricula inclusions to expand from 'reading and writing' and include a literacy of wellbeing.

Implications

Positive education broadly, and Wellbeing literacy specifically, is understudied in early education (Baker et al., 2017; Shoshani & Sloane, 2017; Waters, Dussert et al., 2021). While remaining cautious about the findings from one study, implications exist in the examination of an additional context for wellbeing literacy and increasing the expansion of positive education into early childhood. ECEC experiences, settings and teachers are some of the most essential and impactful factors in a child's development and fundamental for children's successful learning, development, and wellbeing in their early years and across their life trajectory (Huppert, 2009; OECD, 2017; Shonkoff & Garner, 2012). Understanding how a literacy of wellbeing may be applied to pedagogy and practice in ECEC and authentically facilitated by teachers, may enhance both educational and wellbeing outcomes for young children and pedagogical avenues for teachers.

Limitations and future directions

The current study has begun to address gaps in existing literature (i.e. wellbeing literacy and ECEC) by hearing from ECEC teachers and comparing their wellbeing practices to the CM-WL. Limitations and opportunities for future research exist.

A limitation was the lack of in-depth exploration of how teachers understand and support children's intentionality for wellbeing, particularly given this skill may not align with 3-to-5-year-old children's trajectories and capacities. While the data suggested teachers recognise the importance of pedagogy and practices for wellbeing, future research is needed to understand how they may promote intentionality in young children's wellbeing communication.

Moreover, the sample offered limited gender and cultural diversity. While it is known that ECEC workforce is predominantly female (Rohrmann et al., 2020), cultural and linguistic diversity percentages of the sector are less clear (Gide et al., 2022). Future research could focus on recruitment strategies to reach a more diverse sample, particularly in indigenous perspectives given the EYLF focus on the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives (AGDE, 2022).

Additionally, the data provided by teachers represented self-report on the wellbeing language opportunities they provide for children and was therefore one step removed from the actual teaching practice or phenomenon of the wellbeing language interaction. Future opportunities exist in video-based methods of data collection for analysis and a richer understanding of the application and existence of the wellbeing literacy model from both the perspective of the teacher (i.e. their pedagogy and how it may be underpinned by wellbeing literacy) and the child (i.e. what elements of the capability of wellbeing literacy may be developed).

The convenience sample of ECEC teachers surveyed is also a limitation in that it may not generalise across early childhood teachers. However, the purpose (and strength) of the current qualitative study was to provide an in-depth and contextualised understanding of teachers' perspectives in the specific area of child wellbeing communication practices, rather than to generalise findings. Future research directions could include replication of this study and/or testing the findings across broader contexts (such as other states and territories in Australia or international ECEC cohorts) for external validity and/or generalisability confidence.

Conclusion

Wellbeing science is an interdisciplinary endeavour with a long and rich lineage founded on fields as broad as psychology, philosophy, economics, sociology, education politics, ancient and indigenous wisdoms. It is deepening and iterating in waves, across time, contexts cultures and disciplines. Research and innovation have been undertaken and applied to let "all flowers bloom" from these spaces (Huppert & Cooper, 2014, p. 36). Wellbeing literacy, as the mindful use of language for and about wellbeing (Oades, Jarden et al., 2021), is one such concept that is ripe for exploration, application and blooming. Using directed qualitative content analysis and the perspectives of teachers working

towards wellbeing and communication outcomes for young children, this study has examined comparisons to CM-WL. Synergies exist in this interdisciplinary exchange, not just for pedagogy and practices and the wellbeing of children during their earliest education, but for children's development and success across the lifespan. Borrowing again from Huppert and Cooper's (2014) analogy, we hope the seeds of this study encourage further research and the blooming of children's wellbeing literacy in their early years.

Bridge – Linking information between published articles of Chapters Eight and Nine

This final bridging section provides a link between Study 2 and Study 3. Specifically, bridging the published articles of the previous two chapters, that reported on *Perspectives* and *Synergies* from the online survey data (Study 2) to the next chapter that discusses *Opportunities* from the focus groups (Study 3).

Having examined data in Study 2 that did *not* predispose participants to wellbeing literacy, the rationale for the focus groups in Study 3 was to intentionally introduce participants to wellbeing literacy and CM-WL prior to engaging in dialogue. In addition, the participant sample was extended to include any ECEC professionals. Study 2 had limited the sample to those directly responsible for wellbeing practices (i.e. ECEC teachers) however Study 3 extended participation to any professionals working in ECEC who had a pedagogical, leadership and/or teaching role. This included pedagogical and/or educational leaders, coaches, mentors and teachers. This broader sample aimed to garner wider input on the potential application of wellbeing literacy to ECEC.

The multi-level child wellbeing framework proposed by Gromada and colleagues' (2020) reminds us that child wellbeing outcomes are influenced by activities and relationships within the child's world. This includes those within an ECEC setting. Additionally, bio-ecological models highlight the interactions not only between the child and their microsystem, but between other exo and macro systems (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007). In this thesis, this means considering not only what directly impacts the child, but what influences those who influence the child. For example, what information, policies or structures affect, inspire or guide the ECEC professionals who work with children every day to promote wellbeing outcomes.

This thesis has aimed to examine how wellbeing literacy may underpin, focus, expand, or inform various influences on child wellbeing. These influences include wellbeing policy, pedagogical practices, and conceptualisations of wellbeing. Given this aim, it was important to present wellbeing literacy directly to ECEC professionals. ECEC professionals, and what they think, know and do, impacts wellbeing outcomes for children. The focus group method allowed for real-time conversation, and an opportunity to clarify and evolve the claim of this thesis with evidence from the ECEC context.

Findings from the directed content analysis reported in the previous chapter indicated ECEC teachers' practices align with multiple aspects of CM-WL. Moreover, it showed that the concept of literacy in ECEC is already framed as multimodal, which is synergistic with wellbeing literacy. However the survey method did not allow for direct engagement with CM-WL or for ECEC teachers to question the concept or applicability of wellbeing literacy. Employing focus groups and broadening participation to include a wider range of ECEC professionals (e.g., mentors and leaders) allowed for perspectives beyond those of teachers and the researcher.

As such research questions for Study 3 were:

1. *How can CM-WL further inform, reflect and/or underpin ECEC professionals wellbeing conceptions, practices, pedagogy and policy?*
2. *How can it expand ECEC professionals' knowledge, theories, pedagogy and practices?*
3. *What alternative or debating views exist about the application of wellbeing literacy to the context of ECEC?*

To scaffold the focus groups participants' knowledge and application of wellbeing literacy to their own pedagogy and practices, a vignette method was created. This is reported briefly in the published article and further in the final *Synthesis* chapter of this thesis (Chapter 10). The full vignettes shared with participants during each focus group can be found in Appendix M.

The following chapter presents the analysis of focus group data, with overall findings that wellbeing literacy and CM-WL has resonance, relevance, and utility in ECEC. Deeper levels of findings other than those reproduced within the published article are included in a table of final themes, descriptions and representative participant quotes in Appendix N. For the purposes of illuminating parts of the Template Analysis (TeA) process beyond the published article, Appendix J and K respectively show the first version (V1) and the final version (V5) 1 of the analysis templates.

CHAPTER NINE: *'OPPORTUNITIES' - PERSPECTIVES OF HOW WELLBEING LITERACY CAN UNDERPIN, EXPAND AND INFORM WELLBEING PRACTICES AND PEDAGOGY*

This co-authored chapter has been accepted for publication in the *Journal of Early Childhood research:*

Baker, L. M., Raban, B., & Oades, L. G. (2025). "This is the crux of what we do"– Early education perspectives of how wellbeing literacy can underpin, expand and inform wellbeing practices and pedagogy. *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, https://doi.org/10.1177/1476718X251369233

Note – this author accepted proof has been reproduced in its entirety here as Chapter 9 but formatted to align with the thesis. For consistency, in-text citations and the numbering of figures and tables have been adjusted to match the formatting of this thesis. Also, for flow of the thesis, references have been integrated into the References on p. 198 rather than at the end of this reproduced publication.

Abstract

Early childhood is a critical life stage for the development of child wellbeing. Early education and care experiences (ECEC) support children's wellbeing, and curriculum documents and frameworks across the world include wellbeing outcomes and foci. However, a dominant neoliberal discourse has resulted in a 'push down' of academic agendas, centring policy and practices on traditional literacy (reading and writing) over play-based and multi-literacy approaches. Instrumental early childhood pedagogues have called for a re-conceptualisation of early education. Wellbeing science proffers a new literacy, that of wellbeing literacy, that can support this reconceptualization and underpin ECEC pedagogies. Focus groups with 28 early childhood professionals (teachers, pedagogical leaders, mentors and coaches) in Australia examined wellbeing literacy and its 5-component capability model to understand how it may inform, reflect, expand and/or underpin ECEC professionals' wellbeing conceptions, practices and pedagogy. Alternate views about the application of wellbeing literacy were raised and debated. Using Template Analysis, hierarchical findings included themes of 'a shared language and lens', 'a learning and planning tool', 'another layer - going deeper, further, expanding' and 'applicability and value'. Integrative themes of 'resonance', 'relevance' and 'utility' reflected participants' views that wellbeing literacy is 'the crux of what we do' in early

childhood education. Wellbeing literacy and the 5-component Capability Model (CM-WL) can offer an additional, vital and contemporary literacy in ECEC, and a framework for conceptualising wellbeing and focusing pedagogy on children's wellbeing skills. This study also addresses the paucity of research and literature about wellbeing literacy in the context of ECEC, contributing to discourse in early childhood education and wellbeing science.

Keywords: wellbeing literacy, early childhood education, wellbeing, literacy and template analysis.

Introduction

This article examines how early childhood education and care programs can support children in these critical years in today's complex world, particularly in the acquisition of skills for wellbeing. There is consensus in research that early childhood is a critical life stage impacting learning, development and wellbeing (Gromada et al., 2020; NSCDC, 2007; OECD, 2024). Generally regarded as birth to eight years of age, these early years are important per se, but also because of their impact on children's futures. Pathways to success across broad domains, including health biomarkers, psychosocial functioning, cognition and intelligence, educational attainment and wage-earning potential, begin in early childhood (Campbell et al., 2014; Clark et al., 2017; NRC, 2000; Grantham-McGregor et al., 2007). Research also supports the notion that children's trajectories and attainment of their potential are impacted by education opportunities in early childhood (Black et al., 2017; Shuey & Kankaraš, 2018). International evidence has confirmed that high quality early childhood education and care (ECEC) experiences in the years before school positively predict health, learning, development and wellbeing across the lifespan (Barnett & Jung, 2021; Johnson et al., 2023; OECD, 2017; Shonkoff, 2010; Shuey & Kankaraš, 2018).

Influences on early childhood education and care

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) services afford children sustained, planned educational activities, provided by educators with pedagogical qualifications, in the years prior to compulsory schooling (OECD, 2024). Neuroscientific evidence in recent decades concerning the importance of early education and its outcomes has become a focus of education policies, government agendas and public attention across the globe (Wasmuth & Nitecki, 2017; Walsh et al., 2024). However, accompanying this public attention, there has been a dominance of neoliberal discourse, resulting in narrow

and reductive thinking around early education's purpose (Sousa & Moss, 2024). Free marketisation, commodification and corporatisation of ECEC, views of education as human capital production, standardised testing, complex workforce issues and the devaluing of 'care' professions are now prevalent (Diaz-Diaz et al., 2019; Mahon, 2010; Sousa & Moss, 2024). In addition, a worldwide 'Global Educational Reform Movement' (GERM), emphasising competition, standardisation of teaching and learning; test-based accountability; and a focus on reading, maths and science has been present since the 1990s (Sahlberg, 2016). Sims (2017) argues this has had "a devastating impact on the early childhood sector with its focus on standardisation, push-down curriculum and its positioning of children as investments for future economic productivity." (p. 1).

ECEC and wellbeing

Wellbeing is within the remit of global early education (OECD, 2017) and many ECEC curriculums and significant frameworks across the world have wellbeing outcomes and foci (e.g. AGDE, 2022; MofE/NZ, 2017; DfE/UK, 2021). However there is room for increased policies and practices in ECEC that focus not only on traditional literacies (of reading and writing; Razfar & Gutiérrez, 2003), but additional, contemporary literacies (such as digital or financial literacy) as well as wellbeing pedagogies to equip children for success in their complex worlds. In fact, education scholars are inviting a reconceptualization of ECEC, moving away from the impacts of neoliberalism and towards democratic, inclusive, relational and socially just frameworks to "realise the rich potentiality of children" (Moss, 2017, p. 24; Mayor et al., 1997). Moreover, in the fields of wellbeing science and positive education there is a call for education to not only seek academic goals but wellbeing outcomes for all children (Norrish et al., 2013; White, 2023).

Inspired by Malaguzzi's idea of a living early education pedagogy (Cagliari et al., 2016), Moss's (2017) concept of the potentiality of ECEC and the provocation of 'fresh thinking' by Shonkoff (2010), this article proffers an additional literacy - wellbeing literacy - to explore within the context of ECEC. Not to replace traditional literacy, which is important for success in the world, but to support much-needed child wellbeing development and to resist curriculum 'push down' in ECEC.

Wellbeing literacy

Wellbeing literacy is defined as the "capability to comprehend and compose wellbeing language, across contexts, with the intention of using such language to

maintain or improve the wellbeing of oneself, others or the world" (Oades, Jarden et al., 2021, p. 4). In line with socio-cultural views of literacy as constructing and making meaning within and between people, influenced by constructivism and contextualism, wellbeing literacy draws attention to the language people have and use around their wellbeing (Oades, Jarden et al., 2021). Baker et al., (2021) assert wellbeing literacy is a necessary and relevant construct to apply to ECEC, particularly considering neoliberalist views and their impact on pedagogy and practice.

Wellbeing literacy, as the mindful use of language about and for wellbeing, is the ability to communicate intentionally, involving language skills that are used for the direct purpose of wellbeing creation, adapted to context (Oades, Jarden et al., 2021). These skills, or necessary components, form the capability of wellbeing literacy (see Table 9.1).

Table 9.1

The CM-WL (adapted from Baker et al., 2021; Oades, Jarden et al., 2021)

	Component	Description
The WHAT? of wellbeing literacy - about *wellbeing*	Vocabulary and knowledge about wellbeing	Words, information about wellbeing
The HOW?	Wellbeing comprehension of multimodal texts	Listening, reading, viewing about and for wellbeing
	Wellbeing composition of multimodal texts	Speaking, writing, creating about and for wellbeing
The WHO? WHEN? WHERE?	Context awareness and adaptability	Awareness of adapting language to context
The WHY? of wellbeing literacy - for *wellbeing*	Intentionality for wellbeing	Habit of intentionally communicating for the purposes of wellbeing – a belief, desire, awareness and intention to use language to maintain or improve wellbeing for self and others

Wellbeing literacy has been studied with primary school children (Francis et al., 2020; Waters, Dussert et al., 2022; Waters, Cartmel et al., 2022), higher education students (Huang et al., 2020; Johnson et al., 2017; Lemon et al., 2024) and adult populations (e.g. Chng et al., 2023; Burns et al., 2024). Many opportunities exist to further understand, explore and apply wellbeing literacy across the lifespan and in diverse contexts and cultures, particularly in early education (Baker et al., 2021; Waters &

Higgins, 2022). Synergies exist between wellbeing literacy and ECEC regarding prioritising wellbeing outcomes and this study aims to continue exploring opportunities to apply wellbeing literacy to early education, beginning with the perspectives of ECEC professionals.

The current study

This article finds its rationale in exploring ways Australian ECEC professionals (teachers, educators, pedagogical leaders, mentors, etc) can continue to support children's developing wellbeing and multiple literacies within their micro-contexts despite macro-level education discourse and geopolitical influences. Also, the research reported here addresses the wellbeing literacy research gap and possible application in ECEC. Specifically, it sought to hear from professionals working in Australian ECEC about their child wellbeing practices to achieve the national *Early Years Learning Framework* (EYLF) Learning Outcome of "Children have a strong sense of wellbeing" (AGDE, 2022, pg. 29). In addition:

- how CM-WL might further *inform, reflect and/or underpin* ECEC professionals wellbeing conceptions, practices, pedagogy and policy.
- how wellbeing literacy might *expand* ECEC professionals' knowledge, theories, pedagogy and practices and what *alternative or debating* views exist about the application of wellbeing literacy to the context of ECEC

Methodology

Qualitative study design

A qualitative, interpretivist approach using focus groups was adopted to elicit responses from ECEC professionals. Qualitative research explores human experiences, and the meanings individuals assign to phenomena or issues (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). An interpretivist approach seeks to understand subjective meanings participants bring to a discussion, generating deeper interpretations of contexts and social worlds (Saunders et al., 2019).

Participants

28 early childhood professionals, working in or with Australian ECEC settings, participated in the research reported here, recruited through known networks, social media (email, Facebook, LinkedIn) and resultant snowball sampling. All participants had

taught or were teaching children between the ages of 3 – 5 years, with one participant additionally teaching toddlers and babies. Those not in teaching positions were in pedagogical/service leader, ECEC consultant, coach, and/or mentor roles. Teaching experience ranged from one year to 26+ years in ECEC services including private/for-profit, council/community/non-profit, long daycare and kindergarten/preschool settings. Participants were female except for one person who preferred not to identify their gender. This represented a convenience sample providing informed and important perspectives and caveats on applying wellbeing literacy to ECEC pedagogy and practices. However, the findings reported here may not generalise across all ECEC professionals or contexts.

Data collection

Five online focus groups (average 90 minutes each) allowed for the collection of extensive data on participants' shared understanding of wellbeing literacy. Participant recruitment and focus groups were conducted between June and August 2024.The purpose and structure of the focus groups were twofold – to inform participants about wellbeing literacy and CM-WL, and to elicit their responses to its potential ECEC application, including any alternate or debating views. LMB managed all participant communication throughout the study. We conducted two pilot tests, extensively reviewed questions and prompts and made necessary adaptations to refine the focus group structure before implementation. Given the nascent nature of wellbeing literacy research, participants received information about CM-WL in advance and an introduction to Wellbeing literacy at the start of each focus group. Key terms of ‘wellbeing’, ‘literacy’ and ‘wellbeing literacy’ were also introduced with definitions from the relevant literature and the EYLF (AGDE, 2022; Oades, Jarden et al., 2021). Audio and visual recording was undertaken with participant consent via the Zoom platform.

At the beginning of each focus group, LMB established rapport, explained the purpose of the group, shared her personal interests in the research, and any known connections within each group. The presence of others (members of the research team and additional non-participatory co-moderators) was acknowledged along with brief participant introductions. To elicit participant's responses, and insights and probe for understanding and debating or alternate views, two vignettes of ‘everyday’ ECEC practices were shared. One vignette concerned strategies for behaviour guidance via zones of regulation and the other, included here, was about children regulating their bodies though the concept of ‘engines’:

Sue is a kindergarten teacher in an integrated program of twenty five 3-5 year old children. There are several children who have difficulty settling into indoor experiences, sometimes racing from one area to another or yelling loudly across the room. There is also a child who is withdrawn and rarely gets involved in play. At a group time, Sue introduces the concept of 'engines' to the children, reading a book about racing cars. She introduces the idea that their bodies and brains are like engines that have many speeds, sometimes needing to go faster and sometimes needing to go slower. Sue explains to the children that to learn well and feel good, they need their engines to be 'just right' for wherever they are. She plays fast-paced music and encourages the children to move their bodies quickly pretending to be cars or machines, saying 'turn up your engines!' and 'you are the boss of your body'. Sue encourages the children to feel their hearts beating and their breath increasing as they move, asking 'how's your engine running?' Sue then plays softer, slower music, inviting the children to lie down and twinkle their toes and fingers gently. She prompts them to feel and think about how their 'engines' are running now. Throughout the day, during indoor, outdoor, rest and routine times, Sue continues to remind the children about their engines, asking them to reflect on how they are moving and changing. At pack up time, she encourages some children to 'turn up' their engine so they can join in, and all the jobs can get done before lunch. Later, when some children are distracted at rest time, Sue asks them how they could 'turn down' their engines so they can rest their bodies. In other conversations, Sue encourages the children to compare what engines they need when running outside and what is the best engine for bedtime at home. As a group, the children begin using the language of 'engines' each day, some suggesting to their peers when it's time to check their engines. Some children tell their families that at kindergarten, they are the boss of their bodies, and they can change their engines whenever they need to.

Possible connections between these scenarios and CM-WL were used to stimulate discussion and debate (Skilling & Stylianides, 2019). Prompts following the information and vignettes included asking participants how they may or may not see wellbeing literacy reflecting or underpinning their wellbeing practices. In addition, how their thoughts about wellbeing and literacy pedagogy and practice may or may not be expanded or informed with this new information. Participants were also prompted to think about how they may apply information about wellbeing literacy or components of CM-WL to their work moving forward.

For credibility, informal and formal member checking was conducted during and after the focus groups (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) with high-level themes and anonymized extracts from each focus group emailed to participants for their comments/feedback/ correction after each group. Access to verbatim transcripts was also offered and following each focus group participants received a retail voucher to thank them for their time. We made field notes during the focus groups (LMB and BR) and compared these afterward to reflect on the facilitation of the groups and potential researcher bias. Transcriptions were checked against the audio files following each focus group. Consistent with a qualitative approach and thematic analysis literature, we made situated and interpretive judgments about 'saturation' (number of focus groups, information redundancy, code and meaning saturation) and when to cease focus groups and coding (Hennink et al., 2019).

Researcher reflexivity

We have backgrounds in ECEC, wellbeing science and psychology. Reflexivity was maintained throughout data analysis via frequent revisiting of the data, debriefings between LMB, BR and LO, and an audit trail and reflective log (Shaw, 2010). The influence of these backgrounds in the focus group prompts, discussion and interpretation of the findings is acknowledged, along with the usefulness of LMB being able to 'know' (to understand from an ECEC background) the context of participant's applications to practice discussion and perspectives.

Ethical considerations

Procedures were approved by the relevant University Human Research Ethics Committee (ID # 25979) and conducted per the Australian National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (National Health et al., 2023). Focus group participation was voluntary. Participants were informed of the purpose, risk and benefits and written consent obtained. Participants were instructed to avoid specific identifiers, maintain confidentiality and were informed of the inherent limitations of anonymity in focus group settings. Data was stored and deleted according to University data management protocols.

Data Analysis

Qualitative thematic analysis of the data was undertaken primarily by LMB guided by King and Brooks (2017) six-step Template Analysis (TeA) – (1) familiarisation with data

(2) preliminary coding (3) clustering (4) producing an initial template (5) applying and developing the template and (6) final interpretation – and is described below.

Step One (familiarisation) included transferring data from audio recording to text, first, via zoom transcription then line-by-line reading and correcting against the video. Each focus group transcript was read in hardcopy in its entirety (LMB and BR) and patterns in the text and extracts of interest were noted and discussed. Preliminary coding (Step Two) was undertaken through the NVivo platform (https://lumwellbeingivero.com/). Consistent with an interpretivist stance and considerations from TeA, 'soft' (tentative) a-priori themes were developed from the research questions and used flexibly and reflexively throughout coding and template development.

During Steps Two to Four the a-priori themes as well as inductive codes were used on focus groups one and five (for diversity of data). Moving backwards and forwards between the Steps generated an initial template, erring on the side of inclusion of codes and to control for quality. A resultant initial template was developed (Step 5) and applied iteratively to the remaining focus groups to reach a final template (Step 6). A-prior themes and new themes were generated, moved or modified through the hierarchical structure of template versions as the data guided deeper interpretations. The research team discussed these iterations. At Step 6 (final interpretations) all themes were reviewed against the data for coherence and the final template developed to represent patterns across the data set. Central organising concepts were written and refined.

According to Brooks et al., (2015) TeA may also generate integrative themes – lateral relationships permeating across clusters that may be thought of as common threads or undercurrents. We agreed upon three integrative themes as pervading the participants' discussions across focus groups and added these themes to the final template. Noting in TeA the template(s) are not the findings of the data analysis but part of the process of analysis and a tool for making sense of the data, assisting with communication of the process (King & Brooks, 2017). The final template is included here. TeA is also characterised by hierarchical indexing of themes and depth rather than breadth for brevity of this article, Table 9.2 outlines only the first two levels of the template. Deeper hierarchical levels can be accessed as Supplemental material (see Appendix K).

Table 9.2

Final thematic analysis template table from focus group data (levels 1 and 2 only), including integrative themes.

	Level one and two themes	Integrative themes
1.	**A Shared Language and Lens** 1.1. provides a new lens 1.2. adds language to practice 1.3. making wellbeing practices visible	< ----- RESONANCE ----- > < ----- RELEVANCE ----- > < ----- UTILITY ----- >
2.	**A Learning and Planning Tool** 2.1. assessment, observation and individual plans 2.2. critical and contextual reflection 2.3. for communication about learning and teaching 2.4. supports planning and documentation 2.5. professional development tool 2.6. use with families	
3.	**Another Layer – Going Deeper, Further, Expanding** 3.1. expanding and informative about child wellbeing 3.2. informing and extending everyday teaching and approaches 3.3. going beyond the children 3.4. supports a holistic view of wellbeing	
4.	**Applicability and Value** 4.1. a potential pedagogical model 4.2. caveats, questions or alternate views 4.3. components of CM-WL 4.4. linking to examples of practice 4.5. utility, validity and appreciation	

Findings

As a result of the TeA, four overarching themes, multiple hierarchical subthemes and three integrative themes were generated. In the following section, each theme and relevant subtheme are briefly discussed, and supporting data extracts that best represent each theme are provided. Congruent with a qualitative approach, quantification of participants and/or individual responses is not presented. However during the TeA process, quality checks were undertaken for internal theme clarity and to ensure the final themes represented meaningful interpretations of the whole dataset (King & Brooks, 2017).

Theme one – 'A Shared Language and Lens'

This theme captures participants' responses that knowledge of wellbeing literacy could support them in introducing and sharing a new language with colleagues and families around wellbeing practices, learning outcomes and play-based pedagogy. This theme also represents the core idea that wellbeing literacy can provide a new lens, making wellbeing practices visible and valuable. One participant said

> *This capability model just provides us with the language to be able to break down wellbeing and explain it to the parents, so that they understand it…break it down in a way that is clear and concise and something that is understood by everyone. So yeah, I think it really really creates that shared language.* (P1, FG5).

Subthemes (Table 9.2) represented views that wellbeing literacy could provide a new lens on literacy and play; planning and documentation; policies and frameworks; and reframing children's behaviours and skills. Participant ideas representing these views and how wellbeing literacy can reflect and inform Australian ECEC practices, such as play-based pedagogy and approaches to literacy included:

- *I don't know where it comes from, but this real push for academics when it's a very play based environment… So I see this model being fabulous because it's set out so clearly that I could … say "Look, this is what it is." And I feel, because it's not so much amorphous, it's really laid out clearly, that it might be really beneficial to get those educators more on board for understanding the value in that.* (P1, FG4)
- *I like the idea of chucking on a new like a pair of glasses, and you're putting it on, and it just builds on what you're looking at, feeling, seeing all those kinds of things in the eyes of wellbeing and opening it up.* (P2, FG4)

Subthemes under 'a shared language and lens' reflected perspectives of wellbeing literacy and CM-WL could add visibility and framing to existing practice and pedagogy, as it could be shared with families and co-educators, bringing professional and consistent language to a complex concept. Participants expressed their belief wellbeing literacy can underpin and inform their child wellbeing practices saying:

- *I think it's a good framework. I think that helps to organise something that's so complex…being alongside children and feelings - is complex messy work.* (P1, FG2)
- *I think actually having it set out that way and having the different components and skills and giving parents the language early on, I think, I'm hoping and anticipating,*

it might make my job easier because they're going to see and recognise a lot more of the work that we're doing and be able to support that on the back end at home as well. (P2, FG4)

Theme two – 'A Learning and planning tool'

This theme explored the views that CM-WL and the language of wellbeing literacy could be used as tools for ECEC professionals to observe, plan for and assess individual children, for critical reflection and as a professional development, learning and documentation tools (see Table 9.2). Ideas of wellbeing literacy underpinning and expanding goal setting, evaluating practice, planning and documentation were evident. Wellbeing literacy also resonated with participants as professional development tools for teams to consider and talk through all aspects of wellbeing, cross reference planning and interactions (like a map or matrix), to challenge themselves and go to a deeper level to embed wellbeing practices:

- *And in terms of like sharing it with a team and whatnot I know one thing that my team likes to do is kind of challenge ourselves with a new topic or a new thing weekly and really deep dive into that. And you know, this component gives us the ability to break it down into 5 areas and challenge ourselves in that space. It might be we're challenging the children because they're not, you know, understanding component 3 as much as Number 1, or it may be our practice. So I feel like it just really gives the perfect map and the perfect shared language for us to be able to do that.* (P1, FG5)

Specifically, participants believed CM-WL had utility as it went 'beyond a formula' and could be a resource for communicating about the importance of wellbeing teaching and learning:

- *I'm thinking is that it's more of a framework. And sometimes what happens is there's a formula that people are using with good intention but without developing our own knowledge and connection around things like comprehension, composition skills, those discrete aspects of wellbeing. Yeah, that's what kind of excites me about reading this, it's not a formula.* (P1, FG2)
- *I think it might help us see the importance of what we're doing with young children. It's a good opportunity - every interaction that we have with children is so important - and we can be explicit in our discussions, in our understandings, it helps. It probably would be useful to share with the team, to see the importance of*

every interaction that we have through all the play that is planned and unplanned throughout the day. (P1, FG3)

Theme three – 'Another layer – going deeper, further, expanding

In this third theme, participants explored how wellbeing literacy and CM-WL add another layer to ECEC work, taking thinking and everyday practices deeper and further, informing and expanding them. One participant commented that wellbeing literacy:

- *Definitely expands what I want to do in future. And yeah, just having this knowledge, I think will definitely support me in implementing this a little bit further with children and making me really reflect on my practice, going further with it*. (P1, FG1)

Subthemes (Table 9.2) reflected how wellbeing literacy could expand and inform ECEC professionals' knowledge, practices and perceptions of child wellbeing, taking it beyond emotions and elevating the importance of teaching. In addition, the concept of wellbeing literacy could extend everyday teaching practices to deepen thinking about areas such as inclusion, body safety and empowering children, indigenous cultural practices, differentiated teaching, music and art, nature-play and the outdoors, relationships and attachment. For example:

- *If I had this model, then I could think about a bit more deeply and be bit more intentional about the wording that I give the children, the prompts that I give to the children, and the asking the questions about their drawings*. (P1, FG2)
- *I can see it being used as a tool for inclusion- ...having it clearly defined as the capability model will support teams of teachers and educators to ensure they are teaching children all the skills they need for wellbeing and centring it when it comes to specific efforts to meet children's emotional needs*. (P1, FG4)

Participants also shared their views that wellbeing literacy supports a holistic view of wellbeing, providing language and a framework to validate their views that wellbeing is individual and different approaches need to be implemented. Also, that children play a part in their wellbeing, children have voice and agency, and child wellbeing is vast and multifaceted. One participant commented:

- *We've put in all of the supports to give them the language, to give them the skills to be able to use in different contexts and adapt in different contexts so that they can really take ownership and have that agency to guide their own wellbeing*. (P3, FG3)

Also in this theme, participants signalled the concept of wellbeing literacy could be used 'beyond the children' and would not only support and guide professionals in their work, bringing meaning to interactions, but also ways to think about their own wellbeing literacy:

- *I always think about how can we support educators to have more meaningful interactions with children? And I think this model could be a really great way of supporting that thinking.* (P3, FG4)
- *I think it's not just about wellbeing literacy for children, it's wellbeing literacy for us. It's us understanding what we're hoping literacy is, and how we can be intentional about that, that's it's that's how it's coming across to me* (P2, FG1)

Theme four – 'Applicability and value'

Finally, participants reflected on ways in which wellbeing literacy is relatable and applicable, adding value to complex wellbeing work. Participants specifically linked examples of their current wellbeing practices to CM-WL (words and information; composition/expressive language; comprehension/receptive language; context adaptability and intentionality; see also Table 9.1) and shared how it resonated with them.

- *I think it does encapsulate a lot of what we are already doing, but it gives again it being called literacy and coming under that umbrella, does give a bit more weight and purpose.* (P2, FG4)
- *I see this model being fabulous because it's set out so clearly that I could go to the educators … and say "Look, this is what it is." And I feel, because it's not so much amorphous, it's really laid out clearly, that it might be really beneficial to get those educators more on board for understanding the value in that, if that makes sense.* (P1, FG3)

The focus group prompts encouraged participants to share alternate or debating views regarding how wellbeing literacy may or may not be applicable or useful in ECEC. This theme additionally represents that while participants felt there were many avenues for wellbeing literacy utility with children, families, co-educators and teams, caveats exist to its use and contextualisation in ECEC. Cautions were raised about ensuring a model is not implemented without intention or understanding, and ECEC professionals respond to children, considering their individual needs and age:

- *I do often find children are at that composition skill level first as you said they may have some words and everything, but they're not able to articulate that yet. So it's just an observation and being aware of where children are on that scale.* (P3, FG1)

Participants also reflected that the ability to teach children Wellbeing literacy skills through providing practices that support this capability would be dependent upon the Wellbeing literacy of the educator. One participant questioned:

- *Does it rely on the experience of the educator and the knowledge? …And if you are a quality educator, does that mean that you're really great at wellbeing literacy?* (P3, FG4)

Integrative themes

Three integrative themes (resonance, relevance and utility, Table 9.2) permeate the higher and lower order hierarchical themes, reflecting lateral relationships amongst the data:

- 'Resonance' relates to the participants views that the concept of wellbeing literacy and CM-WL resonates with them, connecting to their beliefs and experiences. Not only did participants appreciate the knowledge of wellbeing literacy, but it echoed their practices and philosophies of wellbeing, resonating with their values of the foundational importance of child wellbeing.
- 'Relevance' reflects frequent responses from participants that wellbeing literacy is relevant to the work they do every day in supporting children's wellbeing, aligning with their teaching practices and could be immediately used in their planning, professional interactions and conversations.
- 'Utility' represents the pervading thread that the knowledge of wellbeing literacy and its component parts would be a valuable addition to ECEC pedagogy and practice. Participants articulated the utility and potential impact of the model for their documentation, planning, professional development and communications with families and colleagues.

While 'relevance' and 'utility' were explicitly voiced by participants across multiple focus groups and in relation to many thematic clusters and levels, 'resonance' was implicit, described by King and Brooks (2017) as an undercurrent running through participants accounts. Combined with the many hierarchal themes and subthemes generated from the data, the integrative themes support the findings wellbeing literacy,

and the 5-component CM-WL have the potential to expand and inform ECEC professionals (teachers, educators, pedagogical leaders, mentors, etc) thinking and practices around child wellbeing. Additionally, the data signals wellbeing literacy reflects and underpins wellbeing practices and pedagogy of ECEC professionals. Areas of policy were less explicitly discussed, although reference to the Learning Outcomes of the Australian EYLF (AGDE, 2022) were made. One participant comment perhaps sums up much of the data and the three integrative themes of resonance, relevance and utility:

> *I think we know all this but maybe we forget? But by reframing it in this wellbeing literacy, we're refocusing on it through a different lens. And I really think that maybe that's what some educators need, because they're exhausted with the framework, they're exhausted with outcomes. But this is the crux of what we do.* (P3, FG4)

Discussion

The positive reception of the wellbeing literacy model by ECEC professionals suggests its potential to enhance current pedagogical practices**.** Findings illustrated wellbeing literacy resonates in ECEC and would be relevant and useful in practical areas from curriculum planning to professional development.

Young children are growing up in a volatile and uncertain world where the benefits of early education and wellbeing learning are vital. Educational opportunities in early childhood for children to develop wellbeing literacy capabilities have never been more important. A 'polycrisis' of climate change, war, inflation, pandemics, mental health concerns and other global issues (Lawrence et al., 2024) requires education to attend to wellbeing outcomes with as much vigilance as has been given to traditional literacy. ECEC professionals are mandated to work towards both wellbeing and literacy outcomes for young children and wellbeing literacy offers a way these can be conceptualised and attended to.

At a time when academic-driven approaches to literacy, numeracy and 'school readiness' dominate ECEC policy and discourse (Moss, 2017), wellbeing literacy can expand thinking, broadening views of literacy in line with contemporary multiliteracies (Gee, 2015). Rather than bend to neoliberal constraints and inappropriate 'pushed down' curricula prioritising children's academic success and future workforce worth (Harmon & Viruru, 2018), ECEC professionals can expand their focus and underpin their practices

with wellbeing literacy. Jalongo et al., (2004) argue decisions about pedagogy and curriculum must be governed by the needs of children rather than replicating or racing towards test-driven academic outcomes. These needs include teaching children the skills to understand wellbeing concepts, express and receive wellbeing communication, and be adaptable and intentional about and for their wellbeing (Baker, et al., 2021; Oades, Jarden et al., 2021).

Further value of wellbeing literacy to ECEC comes in the conceptualisation of wellbeing. While wellbeing definitions are varied, literature concurs it is an intangible, complex, multidimensional and nuanced concept (Dodge et al., 2012). Child wellbeing is a particularly dynamic and elusive notion; difficult to measure and define as it changes over time and is impacted by cultural and contextual limits, expectations and opportunities, along with children's relative interdependence and vulnerability in the world (Dirwan & Thévenon, 2023; Pollard & Lee, 2003).

Findings reported here concur, describing wellbeing as amorphous and ECEC wellbeing pedagogy as complex and messy. Wellbeing literacy and the 5-component model presents a way for ECEC professionals to conceptualise wellbeing as a capability that can be learned and taught. Skills of developing wellbeing knowledge and vocabulary and being able to comprehend and compose intentional, adaptable wellbeing communication (Baker et al., 2021), can be fostered and potentially measured in early childhood in ways useful and relevant for young children. Rather than nebulous wellbeing conceptions, wellbeing literacy offers practical, visible, and teachable skills that can be embedded in ECEC programs, practices, philosophies and interactions.

Wellbeing literacy is a language-based resource that can support education settings and professionals to scaffold children's skills of wellbeing communication, building life-long and ongoing capabilities transferable across contexts and time. In practice, the 5 components can be used to underpin curriculum planning, expand language interactions with children, inform pedagogical conversations and professional development, and support play-based, multi-modal pedagogies.

Strengths, limitations and future directions

Limitations of this study are acknowledged in its focus group method, including issues such as group dynamics influencing participant responses, restricted depth of individual exploration, potential moderator bias or participant social desirability bias, and ethical concerns of confidentiality (Krueger, 2014). Conversely, by utilising focus groups

this study has collected rich, in-depth data from ECEC professionals about the real-world potential applications of wellbeing literacy to their work. This addresses a current gap in the literature and opens future directions for further consultation with ECEC professionals and exploration of wellbeing literacy in this educational context.

Conclusion

ECEC settings and professionals are increasingly important in the lives of young children not just to support academic outcomes, but their role in enhancing wellbeing and other life skills. Scholars have called for the reconstruction of ECEC, and its potentiality or change based on contemporary conditions and discourses (Cagliari, et al., 2016; Moss, 2017; Sousa & Moss, 2024). Given the resonance, relevance and utility of wellbeing literacy and CM-WL to ECEC, it offers a valid arrow in the quiver of reconceptualising early education pedagogy and practice. With wellbeing literacy as an additional perspective on literacy and wellbeing, ECEC professionals may well 'push back' on forces that 'push down' academics and traditional literacy. Relational, play-based and multi-modal practices that support child wellbeing are the crux of quality early education – these can be underpinned, expanded and informed by championing wellbeing literacy for young children.

CHAPTER 10: '*INTEGRATION*' – OVERARCHING THESIS DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Overview of this chapter

The aim of this thesis was to examine how wellbeing literacy can be applied to ECEC in Australia. Specifically, this study sought to understand and provide evidence for ways in which the knowledge of wellbeing literacy and CM-WL may expand, focus, inform and/or underpin ECEC wellbeing conceptualisations, policy, pedagogy and practices.

The purpose of this final chapter is that of integration - to discuss relationships across the findings of the three studies undertaken for this thesis, how they can be contextualised within existing literature, and how they address the overarching research aim and question.

As an integrative meta-discussion, this chapter synthesises and summarises this thesis' findings and body of work, speaking to its implications and how the overall aim and research question have been addressed. As a final integration, this chapter shares how the research that was conducted and the articles published inform the context of ECEC, add to wellbeing and ECEC literature and can impact early education policy, pedagogy and practices. Implications and limitations of the work are also considered along with recommendations for future directions. A summary list of key recommendations is also provided.

Revisiting the overview of this thesis and findings from its three sequential studies

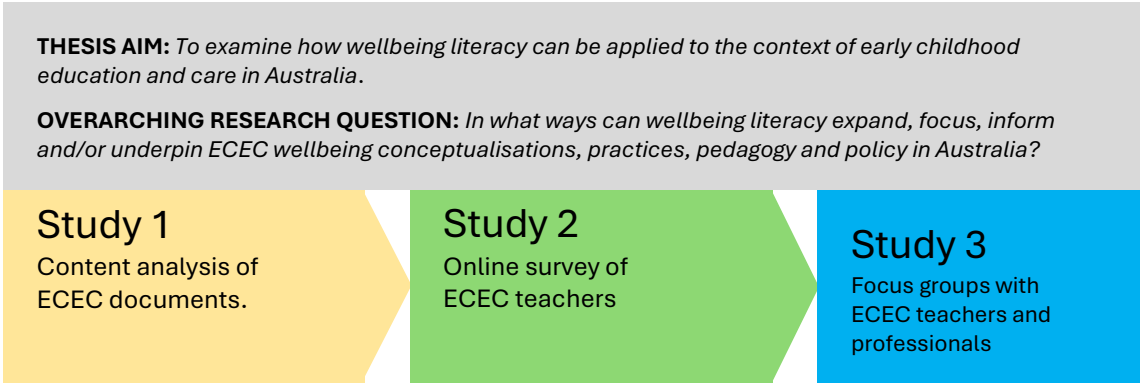
Chapters 2 and 3 of this thesis have examined literature related to context of ECEC and the concept of wellbeing literacy. Based on this literature, Chapter 4 introduced the provocation that wellbeing literacy could be a relevant and necessary concept to facilitate and conceptualise child wellbeing, validating quality ECEC practices with 'fresh thinking' (see p. 42). Through the published position paper of Chapter 4, the initial thinking and claim of this thesis was stated, offering an early articulation of research directions for this thesis.

Chapter 5 discussed the methodology and research paradigm, including my positionality as an early childhood professional with extensive ECEC experience and how

this drove the initiation and construction of this thesis. It also presented the three sequential studies, designed to scrutinise the initial provocations of Chapter 4, seek empirical findings to examine and evolve Chapter 4's claim, and address the overall aim and research question. A reiteration of the study design of this thesis is presented in Figure 10.1:

Figure 10.1

Study design of this thesis



Chapters 6 through 9 reported findings of the three studies conducted. Together with this *Integration* chapter, and the previous chapters 1 through 5, the cohesive narrative of this thesis has been presented. A brief overview of the findings of the individual studies is now offered, followed by the final integrative meta-discussion.

Study 1 investigated policy, law, regulations and pedagogical documents that regulate and guide ECEC practices, finding that the term 'wellbeing' is used in multiple and disparate ways. The lack of contemporary research in the definitions and descriptions of wellbeing across the analysed documents, juxtaposed with the national *Early Learning Framework* (EYLF) key Learning Outcome of 'Children have a strong sense of wellbeing' (AGDE, 2022, p. 29) revealed a varied landscape ready for contemporary wellbeing science input and the addition of ways to focus ECEC child wellbeing practices.

Study 2 surveyed ECEC professionals (specifically teachers) about how they define and describe children's wellbeing, and the pedagogical practices used to teach for and about wellbeing. Results demonstrated ECEC professionals also understand wellbeing to be multifaceted but offered a nuanced and deeply contextual view of child

wellbeing within ECEC settings. Framed as a 'constant crossing' between children's internal and external environments (see Figure 7.3, p. 115), these findings captured the specific perspective of ECEC teachers. It demonstrated that they understand child wellbeing to be participatory, dynamic, malleable and learnable within the policy landscape and the interactions, pedagogies, and language practices they provide.

Study 2 also analysed survey data to examine ways ECEC professional report they develop children's wellbeing through pedagogy and practice, and how these examples compared to the Capability Model of wellbeing literacy (CM-WL). Strong evidence was found that teachers' practices align with multiple aspects of CM-WL literacy, adding weight to the proposition of the contextual relevance of wellbeing literacy to ECEC.

Findings from Studies 1 and 2 provided the impetus for *Study 3* which further addressed the research aim of examining ways wellbeing literacy can be applied to ECEC. Focus groups allowed for dialogue with ECEC professionals about their wellbeing practice and the opportunity to hear alternate or debating views about the application of wellbeing literacy. Results revealed ECEC professionals believed wellbeing literacy can be applied to their pedagogy and wellbeing practices and would be relevant and useful in practical areas of their work. Moreover, that wellbeing literacy offers a way to conceptualise and attend to both wellbeing *and* literacy outcomes in ECEC. A significant finding from Study 3 was the integrative theme of 'resonance' whereby participants expressed wellbeing literacy, and CM-WL offered an applicable and valuable shared language, lens and planning tool that could expand and deepen their child wellbeing understanding and practices.

Specific contributions of this thesis' studies in relation to the research aim and question.

The three studies and five publications forming this thesis reflect a journey of proposing, examining, understanding and evidencing applications of wellbeing literacy to ECEC.

Contributions resulting from this process will now be considered as a meta-discussion, highlighting synergies and opportunities between the context of ECEC and the concept of wellbeing literacy. Specifically, how ECEC and wellbeing literacy work in

synergy, with CM-WL underpinning and supporting areas of ECEC child wellbeing conceptualisations, policy, pedagogy and practices. Also, how areas of ECEC can be expanded and built upon, and/or made more accessible or focused through the application of wellbeing literacy. Furthermore, this thesis has also illuminated opportunities that arise from the application of wellbeing literacy to ECEC, and how this may inform the context of ECEC and the scholarly field of wellbeing literacy. Per the overall research question, the synergies, opportunities and contributions of this thesis are represented in Table 10.1 and then discussed.

Table 10.1

Synergies, Opportunities and Contributions Arising from The Studies of This Thesis

Research Aim and question	**Synergies, opportunities and contributions**		
Research aim: *To examine how wellbeing literacy can be applied to the context of early childhood education and care in Australia.* **Research question:** *In what ways can wellbeing literacy expand, focus, inform and/or underpin wellbeing conceptualisations, practices, pedagogy and policy in Australia?*	Wellbeing conceptualisations	Informing contextualised perspectives	
		Wellbeing literacy as a focused view of wellbeing	
		Expanding wellbeing conceptions beyond emotions	
		Informing views of wellbeing as a capability that can be taught and learned	
	Early childhood education pedagogy and practices	Underpinning pedagogies	Relational pedagogy
			Place-based pedagogy
		Informing teaching practices of the *Early Years Learning Framework*	Responsive teaching
			Play-based practices
			Intentionality
		Expanding quality educational practices for children's development	Emotional development
			Language development
	Australian early childhood education and care policy	Informing contemporary and contextual perspectives of child wellbeing	
		Expanding multiliteracy approaches	

Before discussing these applications in detail however, it is important to note the significant degree of overlap that occurs in these areas. ECEC policy, conceptualisations, pedagogy and practices for wellbeing and/or literacy, do not occur in isolation. Policy impacts pedagogy, pedagogy guides practices, and understandings of important concepts (such as child wellbeing) are influenced by all three. Notwithstanding this, for the purposes of clarity in this final chapter and to highlight the contributions of this thesis, these sections will be addressed separately, aiming to mitigate repetition where possible.

Wellbeing conceptualisations – synergies, opportunities and contributions

Conceptualisation is the process of specifying what is meant by a given term (Babbie, 2020). This thesis has evidenced ways wellbeing literacy may expand, focus, inform and/or underpin wellbeing conceptualisations in ECEC. Four areas where wellbeing conceptualisation contributions result from this thesis are *informing contextualised perspectives, a focused view of wellbeing, expanding wellbeing conceptions beyond emotions,* and *informing wellbeing as a capability that can be taught and learned* (see Table 10.1). These areas will now be individually addressed.

Informing contextualised perspectives. This thesis has examined how wellbeing is defined and described at several layers of influence on children and ECEC, from the macro levels of international documents such as the UNCRC, and exo-systems of Australian National policies, Regulations and Law, to meso and microsystems that include ECEC professionals. Echoing the wellbeing science literature presented in Chapter 2, Studies 1 and 2 found wellbeing conceptualisations across these systems are multifaceted and complex, differing across contexts and levels. Of particular interest was the difference in usage patterns as examined in Study 1 between the legal/regulatory documents, where wellbeing conceptions focused on risk, protection, safety, and health (see also Table 6.1 on p. 87), versus the pedagogical documents, emphasising learning, outcomes and resilience (see also Figure 7.3 on p. 115). Such multifold and disparate usage of the term 'wellbeing' potentially creates ambiguity, diffused focus and complication for ECEC professionals, particularly when the educational outcome of the national framework is explicitly concerned with a ‘sense’ of wellbeing (AGDE, 2022).

In examining how ECEC professionals conceive of child wellbeing, Study 2 facilitated a more nuanced understanding of how those charged with interpreting and

delivering ECEC policy, regulatory and pedagogical documents view child wellbeing. Here this thesis argues that the 'constant crossings' conceptualisation of child wellbeing contributes a deeper understanding of child wellbeing contextualised to the ECEC setting and therefore supporting ECEC professionals' to focus their wellbeing pedagogy and practices. Synergies are present with these findings, wellbeing literature and some ECEC documents. Moreover, the perspectives captured in Study 2 provide a focus for teachers to understand about, and teach for, child wellbeing through the themes identified. For example, using wellbeing language and multi-modal communication (wellbeing literacy) to support the internal capacities of the child (such as building resilience or a sense of belonging) through the stable relationships afforded by the ECEC environment.

Perspectives garnered though this thesis also provide a framework for ECEC professionals to focus wellbeing conceptualisations. This can include thinking beyond facets of child safety and protection from harm which are dominant in the law and regulation documents, to underscoring deeply embedded quality ECEC pedagogies and socio-cultural approaches, for example zones of proximal development or relational pedagogy (AGDE, 2022; Fleer et al., 2004; Wang et al., 2011; Vygotsky, 1978). This contribution is notable given the importance of individuals being able to pursue their own conceptions of wellbeing, grounded in their culture and context (Nussbaum, 2011; Ransome, 2010) and Forgeard and colleagues' (2011) call for a move away from broad and blurry definitions of wellbeing.

Wellbeing literacy as a focused view of wellbeing. Despite extensive research and widespread use, 'wellbeing' remains a contested and complex concept, particularly when applied to children (Christopher, 1999; Dodge et al., 2012). Varying social and cultural constructions of childhood, children's vulnerability, and the multifaceted environmental factors influencing their wellbeing add to this complexity (Barblett & Maloney, 2010; Gromada et al., 2020). This is further compounded by wellbeing being impacted at various levels of a child's bioecological system, including families, educators, communities, and governmental policies (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007; Darling, 2007). Given this, a structured approach to understanding and promoting child wellbeing in ECEC settings through CM-WL is an important opportunity.

The five components of CM-WL add a clear structure and integrated view of wellbeing as a literacy and skill set. Conceptualising wellbeing through CM-WL provides a framework for ECEC professionals to focus on wellbeing language as a component of, and pathway towards, wellbeing outcomes. Wellbeing literacy frames child wellbeing as a set of evolving capacities, aligning with ECEC pedagogy and learning approaches. It is not proposed here that ECEC settings and professionals should discontinue addressing other facets of children's wellbeing – quality pedagogy understands and promotes all areas of children's development, learning and wellbeing (OECD, 2015; Torii et al., 2017). Rather, wellbeing literacy offers additional opportunities for ECEC professionals to focus their wellbeing pedagogy and practices.

Expanding wellbeing conceptions beyond emotions. Conceptions of wellbeing within emotional domains are embedded in ECEC policy, pedagogies and practices (ACECQA, 2023; AGDE, 2022; Denham et al., 2012; OECD, 2015; Nix, 2013). Emotional support and building children's socio-emotional capabilities in early childhood positively influences educational, developmental and life outcomes (Bagdi & Vacca; 2005; Durlak et al., 2011; Heckman, 2011; OECD, 2015b; Sharp, 2000; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). While a focus on emotions and emotional literacy is valid in ECEC, this thesis highlights opportunities for further informing conceptualisations of child wellbeing beyond spheres of feelings and emotions. As discussed in Chapter 2, there is more to wellbeing than the hedonia perspective of emotional pleasure and the pursuit of happiness (Kahneman et al., 1999). Additionally, facilitating wellbeing outcomes in ECEC requires more than teaching children to label and identify their feelings (Ben-Arieh et al., 2014; Lippman et al., 2011; Oades et al., 2017).

As the mindful and contextual use of vocabulary, knowledge and skills to improve or maintain wellbeing, wellbeing literacy offers an umbrella term that *encompasses* the wellbeing domain of emotions but extends *beyond* it (Oades, Taylor et al., 2021). Support for this expanded view was articulated in Studies 2 and 3. Findings identified essential wellbeing knowledge for children in areas of inclusion, bodily safety and autonomy, cultural identity and the complexity of interactions and relationships. These findings demonstrate a conceptualisation of child wellbeing in ECEC settings as more than emotional competence. Wellbeing literacy supports and informs ECEC professionals as they conceive of child wellbeing in these broader areas. Furthermore, CM-WL includes

skills of intentional language use and adaptability to context, adding depth to conceptions of wellbeing beyond words and knowledge of emotions and better addressing wellbeing's multi-faceted nature.

Informing views of wellbeing as a capability that can be taught and learned. Wellbeing is dynamic and pliable across the lifespan, changing with time and the impact of external forces and contexts (Thoilliez, 2011; Dodge, et al., 2012; Gromada et al., 2020; Jones & Sumner, 2009; White, 2008). Wellbeing literacy similarly views wellbeing as contextually and culturally influenced; experiential and the result of dynamic processes between the individual and the environment (Hou et al., 2021; Johnston et al., 2017; Oades, Jarden et al., 2021).

Findings of Studies 2 and 3 echo these theoretical perspectives. ECEC professionals reported child wellbeing as adaptable, oscillating and malleable - a skill that can be taught and learned. Wellbeing literacy and CM-WL present a framework aligning with the conceptualisations of wellbeing as a teachable capability. It also offers a structured way for ECEC professionals to understand intentional, adaptable and multi-modal pathways to cultivate wellbeing. As such, CM-WL can support ECEC professionals to conceptualise wellbeing as a set of interrelated skills that can be taught, developed, learned and evolved over time.

Early childhood education pedagogy and practices - synergies, opportunities and contributions

This thesis has argued wellbeing literacy can be applied to pedagogy and practices as ECEC professionals seek to promote child wellbeing. Alongside traditional academic goals education frameworks and policies internationally seek wellbeing outcomes for children (Barblett, Cartmel et al., 2021; De Ruyter et al., 2020; OECD, 2017, 2015). In Australia, this is reflected in the EYLF (AGDE, 2022) and the national *Early Years Strategy* (EYS) both of which include wellbeing outcomes for children (Commonwealth of Australia, 2024).

In ECEC, such wellbeing goals and outcomes are met through pedagogy and practices. As noted in Chapter 2, 'pedagogy' is the art and science of educating, informed by theories, values, beliefs and philosophies (ADGE, 2022; Moyles et al., 2002). 'Practices'

are the techniques, actions, methods, experiences and interactions undertaken in the day-to-day work of educating children (Nutbrown & Clough, 2014). Pedagogy informs teaching practices and in turn, practices implement pedagogy (Hedges & Cullen, 2012). Particularly relevant here is the EYLF as the guiding pedagogical and practices framework. Studies 2 and 3 demonstrated ways ECEC professionals work towards child wellbeing and communication Learning Outcomes of the EYLF through their pedagogy and practices. This section expands on pedagogy and practice synergies, opportunities and contributions of wellbeing literacy as *underpinning pedagogies*. Specifically through relational and place-based pedagogies and *informing teaching practices of the Early Years Learning Framework* of *responsive teaching, play-based practices* and *intentionality* (see Table 10.1).

Underpinning pedagogies. The EYLF directs Australian ECEC professionals in their pedagogical approaches "to facilitate all children's learning, development and wellbeing" (AGDE, 2022, p. 7). The named pedagogies in the EYLF are *relational* (focusing on trusting, respectful relationships) and *place-based* (acknowledging the influence of educator's knowledge of their setting and context) (AGDE, 2022).

The EYLF's directive of *relational* pedagogy, along with ECEC professionals' perspectives of wellbeing presented in this thesis, are synergistic with wellbeing literacy. Wellbeing literacy involves the ability to understand and articulate aspects of wellbeing and is necessarily relational. Education itself is deeply relational (De Ruyter et al., 2020). Relationships are critical in early education (Bradshaw & Richardson; 2009; Melhuish et al., 2015; Thompson, 2016) and socio-cultural and systems theories of child wellbeing and development position wellbeing within relationships (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007; Perry, 2012; Gromada et al, 2020).

Across Studies 2 and 3, ECEC professionals reflected that their conceptions of child wellbeing in their settings included it being participatory, relational, social and influenced by community, context and connections. Wellbeing literacy is a key capability for navigating and enhancing relationships (Oades, Jarden et al., 2021). Principally, effective, contextual and adaptable communication for and about wellbeing in education settings is an enabler of respectful, positive and trusting relationships and wellbeing learning (Johnson, et al., 2017; Oades, Jarden et al., 2021). Wellbeing literacy therefore

contributes a way for ECEC professionals to communicate about the importance of relationships for children's wellbeing. Moreover, how words and information about and for wellbeing can be applied multimodally and with specific sensitivity to the context and needs of individual children.

Place-based pedagogies focus on developing curriculum, experiences and relationships that are relevant to the local context, building on the knowledge of children, families, communities and educators (AGDE, 2022). The protective factors for children's wellbeing of cultural identity, kinship structures and connection are recognised in place-based pedagogies (Dockery, 2020; Salmon et al., 2019). The EYLF notes the cultural responsiveness of place-based pedagogy, explicitly highlighting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their deep connection to land and place (AGDE, 2022).

Wellbeing literacy underpins these place-based approaches through context awareness and adaptability. Developing and understanding words and information to expressly communicate about cultural connections and identity, ancestral knowledge and ways of being, through written, oral and spiritual traditions, supports children's wellbeing (AGDE, 2022; Department of Health, 2017). CM-WL includes and recognises multimodal communication such as written, oral, visual and auditory texts and modes. It offers ways to understand communication that includes and respects children with diverse skills, backgrounds, strengths and challenges and can be applied across cultures to support different wellbeing approaches and interventions (Oades, Baker et al. 2021). In this way CM-WL serves to focus ECEC professionals on place-based knowledge and supports within their ECEC system of peers, families, and communities.

Informing teaching practices of the *Early Years Learning Framework*. The *Guide to the National Quality Framework* (NQF; ACECQA, 2025) states that when considering teaching practices ECEC professionals will "…draw on their pedagogy, knowledge of individual children, the approved learning frameworks, the *National Quality Standard* and the underpinning law and regulations" (p. 105). The EYLF explicitly discusses seven teaching practices including *responsiveness to children,* and *play-based learning and intentionality* (AGDE, 2022, p. 11).

Responsiveness to children, through relationships with children, cultural responsiveness and provision of a quality learning environment, is associated with

wellbeing and academic outcomes in ECEC (Blewitt et al., 2018; Eadie et al., 2019; Hatfield et al., 2016). This thesis argues there are synergies between wellbeing literacy and responsive teaching practices, expressly noted in findings from Studies 2 and 3. Professionals shared their conceptions of child wellbeing as a dynamic and continual response between the children and their environment. This included ECEC professionals being able to 'see' who children are, respecting and valuing them, and responding to their unique needs (see Chapter 7). Wellbeing literacy underpins and informs these views and practices of being intentionally attuned to children's capabilities and cultures in the ECEC environment, focusing teaching on responsive relationships, interactions and wellbeing learning.

Play-based teaching practices position play as a fundamental and evolutionary driver for learning, development and wellbeing (ACECQA, 2023; Rogers, 2015; Sutton-Smith, 2008; Wood & Hedges, 2016). In the EYLF, play is characterised as activities freely chosen, self-directed, meaningful and intrinsically motivating (AGDE, 2022). Play-based practices are learning processes and contexts where children engage with and make sense of their social worlds (Danniels & Pyle, 2018). CM-WL highlights multimodal skills, encompassing various opportunities for play. For example, play-based activities for wellbeing such as creating, drawing, painting, singing, dancing, and understanding wellbeing through books, music, visual tools and media. Aligning with CM-WL, play-based learning is described as multi-modal, allowing for individual expression, developing knowledge and concepts in context and strengthening wellbeing (AGDE, 2022).

ECEC professionals in Study 3 conveyed wellbeing literacy offered a new lens on play, expanding their conceptions of play related to literacy, and elevating the visibility and value of play-based wellbeing practices (see Appendix N). Wellbeing literacy and components of CM-WL have synergies with play while also expanding ECEC professionals play-based practices for the express purposes of wellbeing creation. Moreover, play-based practices in ECEC could also be viewed as laying the foundation for wellbeing literacy development as children engage in autonomous, meaning making communication for and about their wellbeing.

Regarding the teaching practice of *intentionality*, the EYLF describes this as "being thoughtful and purposeful in actions and making decisions" in the roles ECEC

professionals take and how they plan the environment and experiences (AGDE, 2022, p. 66). Wellbeing literacy describes intentionality as a desire, belief, awareness or intention that is ongoing – a "habit of intention" (Oades, Jarden et al., 2021, p. 699). While wellbeing literacy limits intentionality to that of language use, and intentionality *for wellbeing*, there are synergies with the EYLF approach to intentionality. By virtue of the document landscape in which they work (e.g. NQF; ACECQA, 2023; Child Wellbeing and Safety Act, 2025; UN Rights of the Child; UNCRC; 1989), ECEC professionals have a habit of intention for children's wellbeing and pursue this through interactions, experiences, communication and relationships. This thesis argues the knowledge of wellbeing literacy informs ECEC professionals' principles and practices of intentionality through providing specific, intentional focus on wellbeing communication.

Expanding quality educational practices for children's development

As discussed in Chapter 2, ECEC programs typically aim to support children's early cognitive, language, physical, social and emotional development and wellbeing (OECD, 2015). Findings from this thesis illustrate wellbeing literacy and CM-WL can underpin and inform ECEC practices that facilitate these areas. This is particularly relevant to children's *emotional development* and *language development* (see Table 10.1).

Practices to facilitate children's *emotional development* are well established in ECEC (Bagdi & Vacca, 2005; Denham et al., 2012; Nix et al., 2013). Quality emotionally supportive ECEC environments improve children's emotional skills and positively impact their learning and wellbeing (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012; Blewitt et al., 2018; Edwards, 2021; Shuey & Kankaraš, 2018; Yoshikawa et al., 2016). The EYLF explicitly encourages supporting children's emotional development through its named teaching practices and five key Learning Outcomes. "Emotional environments" are noted (AGDE, 2022, p. 20) and Learning Outcomes includes children becoming strong in their emotional wellbeing and ability to express feelings.

Wellbeing literacy, as examined by this thesis, can offer both an underpinning and expanding practice perspective and framework for ECEC professionals to promote children's emotional development. Findings have demonstrated ECEC professionals intend to support emotional development through their wellbeing practices. However, finding also show ECEC professionals believe wellbeing literacy provides 'another layer',

expanding and informing emotional development teaching practices. Indeed, it could be argued that not only does wellbeing literacy expand ECEC teaching practices for emotional development, but that the navigation and communication of children's emotions and feelings cannot be achieved without the capability of wellbeing literacy.

Children's *language development* is innate, rapid and crucial in early childhood (Huttenlocher et al., 2010; Raban, 2012; Rogers, et al., 2015). By school entry, children typically acquire a vocabulary of over 2000 words and can participate in narrative conversations (Paul & Norbury, 2012). ECEC settings and experiences focus on, and are significant contributors to, children's expressive and receptive language development (OECD, 2015), with effective communication a key EYLF Learning Outcome (AGDE, 2022).

Wellbeing literacy is synergistic with the ECEC practices of facilitating expressive and receptive language skills. As the capability of "how we control the use of wellbeing language" (Oades & Johnson, 2017, p. 2), wellbeing literacy offers ECEC professionals a way to focus language development practices with an intentionally for wellbeing. Moreover, the application of wellbeing literacy to ECEC focuses language practices on the valuable skills of learning words and information about wellbeing. With the knowledge of wellbeing literacy, ECEC professionals can capitalise on the early childhood language development phase, teach children wellbeing-related words and information with intentionality and context awareness, and support children with strategies to express and understand their own wellbeing.

In addition, through its multi-modal pathways of composing and comprehending wellbeing language that are not necessarily reliant on spoken language (such as creating, viewing, drawing, listening, reading etc; Oades, Jarden et al., 2021), wellbeing literacy supports children's non and preverbal communication. The EYLF explicitly addresses and promotes non-verbal language and interactions as effective communication (AGDE, 2022, see p. 58). Constructivist theories and developmental perspectives advocate that children have an ability to interpret nonverbal information and develop communicative competence and non-verbal behaviour (Brey & Shutts, 2015; Carpenter et al., 1998). Findings of this thesis concur, with ECEC professionals aligning CM-WL with their differentiated teaching practices that support children's non-verbal communication.

This thesis argues wellbeing literacy contributes a language-based resource to inform ECEC professionals as they scaffold children's language use and wellbeing communication skills, both verbally and non or preverbally. Additionally, CM-WL offers a framework for ECEC professionals to be more explicit and intentional about the use of language in the service of children's wellbeing.

Australian early childhood education and care policy – synergies, opportunities and contributions

Children's wellbeing is impacted not only by the immediate actions and conditions within their family, but also the larger world of social, health and education policies (Gromada et al., 2020). ECEC in Australia is delivered as part of a system of policies and services that support families to raise children. Recently, significant polices and reforms have been introduced to support this endeavour, with particular attention to children's wellbeing (e.g. ARACY and UNICEF Australia, 2023; Australian Government, 2023; NMHC, 2021).

The NQF forms a key component of Australian government policy for education in the early years (see also Chapter 2). Combined under this national policy framework are regulations, laws, standards and approved frameworks that immediately govern ECEC quality, pedagogy and practices. Other Australian policies directly or indirectly impact ECEC service provision related to funding, workforce strategy, universal access, child and family participation and the like (e.g. Child Care Subsidy, National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education; National Preschool reform agreement; National Workforce Strategy; EYS, Inclusion Support Program). However the EYLF, under the NQS, explicitly guides ECEC professionals in their daily work.

As already indicated in this chapter, ECEC policy impacts wellbeing pedagogy, practices and conceptualisations. The application, synergies and contribution of wellbeing literacy to ECEC policy have been examined across the course of this thesis but will now be reviewed briefly through the lenses of *informing contemporary and contextual perspectives of child wellbeing* and *expanding multiliteracy approaches* (see Table 10.1).

Findings from Study 1 indicate a lack of contemporary and/or contextual perspectives of child wellbeing in the wellbeing definitions and descriptions across the

document landscape (see Chapter 4). Specifically, the EYLF glossary term for wellbeing references Lavers (1994) - a 30-year-old source. Following a literature review by Barblett, Cartmel and colleagues (2021), the EYLF 2.0 saw the 'wellbeing' glossary term updated, 'mental health' added to the wellbeing Learning Outcome 3 (AGDE, 2022, p. 44) and a significantly increased use of the word 'wellbeing' across the document. A recommendation of the EYLF review was to extend understanding and practice of wellbeing by integrating additional facets, such as social and emotional competence and mental health promotion (Barblett, Cartmel et al., 2021).

While the EYLF V2.0 and wellbeing literacy both seek to improve and maintain wellbeing in its many facets, wellbeing was not one of the 12 focus areas of the EYLF literature review (Barblett, Cartmel et al., 2021). This raises the question of the relevance or completeness of the resultant EYLF V2.0 wellbeing glossary term. Given the findings of this thesis and the positive response of ECEC professionals to wellbeing literacy, opportunities remain to further inform the EYLF and areas of the NQF abut wellbeing literacy and CM-WL.

Regarding multiliteracy approaches, notions of multimodal literacy, socio-cultural perspectives and literacy scholarship recognise the necessity of being literate across multiple modalities and knowledge areas (Cope & Kalantzis, 2013; Gee, 1991; Jewitt, 2005). Sociocultural views are reflected in the policy landscape of ECEC in Australia with the NQF, EYLF and the EYS giving focus to children's learning within relationships, place, community connections and cultural contexts (ACECQA,2023; AGDE, 2022; Australian Government, 2023; Barblett, Cartmel et al., 2021). Furthermore, the EYLF recognises these perspectives of literacy incorporating "a range of modes of communication including music, movement, gesture, dance, song, drama, storytelling, visual arts, digital literacies, and media" (AGDE, 2022, p.66).

Synergies exist with CM-WL as it incorporates multimodal communication through creating and composing (Oades, Jarden et al., 2021). Findings from this thesis indicate ECEC professionals also value multi-modal communication avenues, with a particular sensitivity to the importance of recognising children's non-verbal communication. However further opportunities exist for ECEC policy to expand views of multiliteracies beyond traditional or digital literacy. Given the EYL F states "Being literate is the capacity,

confidence and disposition to use language in all its forms through written, oral, visual and auditory." (AGDE, 2022, p. 57), the alignment of wellbeing literacy is evident.

Implications arising from this thesis

The synergies, opportunities and contributions discussed above provide a platform from which specific implications of this thesis can now be succinctly presented. These will be highlighted as implications for *literature*, *practice* and *policy*.

Implications for literature

This thesis and it's five publications is the first to examine the application of wellbeing literacy to the context of ECEC. In focusing on wellbeing literacy, aspects and conceptualisations of child wellbeing, and anthropological perspectives in the context of early childhood education policy, pedagogy and practices, this thesis has linked the fields of education, wellbeing science, psychology and social sciences. This interdisciplinary approach has implications for child wellbeing literature. Findings of this thesis support fields of research that show child wellbeing is complex and multifaceted, and impacted by socio-cultural factors and systems. However it adds a nuanced and contextual offering, deeply situated in the ECEC context. This thesis contributes to literature generally, but chiefly literature that adopts a socio-cultural perspective on child wellbeing. It aligns with Rogoff's (2003) emphasis on understanding children within their dynamic and evolving cultural contexts. The findings of this thesis, particularly the published 'constant crossings' conceptualisation of child wellbeing (Chapter 7) responds to Rogoff's call for examining not just the child, but the social, historical, organisational, and cultural contexts in which they live.

Additionally, the interdisciplinary approach of this thesis is significant in applying wellbeing science concepts to ECEC pedagogy, practices and policy. Specifically, in pioneering the application of wellbeing literacy to ECEC, a gap in the literature has been identified and begun to be addressed as a result of the studies undertaken. This thesis represents an original contribution to the ECEC pedagogy and practice literature, establishing wellbeing literacy as a relevant and important area of examination within research and practice.

Moreover, this thesis has implications for the study of wellbeing literacy. As a relatively new concept, briefly proposed in 2017 (Oades & Johnston, 2017) and not explicated until 2021 (Oades, Jarden et al., 2021), wellbeing literacy has not, until now, been examined in ECEC. The synergies, opportunities and contributions discussed in this final, integrative chapter, and publications of this thesis, present a novel contribution. This thesis is the first investigation of wellbeing literacy and CM-WL within the context of ECEC. As such, it has established a new area of inquiry at the intersection of wellbeing literacy and ECEC policy, pedagogy and practices.

The undertakings of this thesis have resulted in advances in knowledge at the intersection of ECEC and wellbeing science, which have been shared in education, wellbeing, policy, and research journals. The five peer-reviewed publications resulting from this investigation serve as foundational literature in this nascent intersection, providing future researchers with empirical data, conceptual and pedagogical perspectives, and a methodological approach for further investigation. Many future direction and opportunities for further research now exist and are expanded below.

Implications for practice

New understandings have arisen from the undertaking of this thesis with specific implications for ECEC pedagogy and practices. This thesis has highlighted how wellbeing literacy can provide a new and common language for ECEC professionals in their wellbeing work, a targeted and shared knowledge and framework to meet wellbeing learning outcomes, and a holistic model for communication with children, colleagues and families.

As introduced above, ECEC professionals can utilise wellbeing literacy as a framework to impact relational and place-based pedagogies, responsive teaching practices, multimodal language approaches and planning for intentional and play-based wellbeing communication interactions. Similarly, the components of CM-WL provide a framework to view, enact and communicate about these for practices with families, other ECEC professionals, stakeholders and policy makers.

Additionally, in a context where planning, documentation, critical reflection and ongoing professional learning are embedded in quality education, wellbeing literacy and

CM-WL have relevant and practical implications for the daily administrative work in ECEC settings. ECEC professionals are required to "examine what happens in their settings and reflect on what they might change" (ACECQA, 2023, p. 653), and CM-WL can bring focus to this important reflective practice and further inform critical reflection on wellbeing pedagogy and practices.

A specific insight developed over the course of this thesis has been the potential development of a pedagogical model of wellbeing literacy. This will be explicated in the future directions section below; however implications exist in supporting ECEC professionals to plan for wellbeing communication, adapt pedagogy and practices to their context and teach relevant wellbeing words, information and modalities to children.

As has been discussed across this thesis, ECEC professionals in Australia are mandated and held accountable to Learning Outcomes that focus on children's wellbeing and effective communication (AGDE, 2022). Wellbeing literacy offers a practical model that can support these endeavours. Moreover, CM-WL resonates with, and is adaptable to quality place-based, relational, responsive, play-based and intentional teaching practices that are the crux of ECEC pedagogy.

Implications for policy

Policy and systems levels decisions directly impact the microsystem of interactions and outcomes within ECEC services, pedagogy and practices (Gromada et al., 2020). Likewise, each individual child or learner's experience is shaped by the broader education policy landscape (Bell & Stevenson, 2006). ECEC does not occur in isolation, but in a system connecting policy, practice, and research across people, policy makers, technologies and environments (Kagan & Neuman, 2000; Urban et al. 2012). Impact and change for children's wellbeing literacy cannot occur without policy focus.

With Greenberg and colleagues' (1977) seminal caveat noted - that policies emerge from complex causes and relationships, involving numerous decision points and lengthy evolving processes - implications from this thesis exist for the EYLF, NQS and ECEC strategic directions in Australia. Specifically, adding wellbeing literacy to the EYLF, and more broadly, using wellbeing literacy as a unifying framework to systematise wellbeing related language across government, wellbeing and early education initiatives.

This thesis has already raised questions about wellbeing being positioned as a Learning Outcome of the EYLF, theorising that wellbeing may be better viewed as a *process* or *pedagogical objective* in ECEC rather than an outcome (see Chapter 6). Also that wellbeing literacy may be more accurately seen as the learning outcome of ECEC pedagogy and practices rather than the current 'sense' of wellbeing. Given the ability of CM-WL to be measured and scaled in education contexts (Hou et al., 2021), implications exist for future iterations of the EYLF regarding what is positioned as a Learning Outcome. Including wellbeing literacy in future versions of the EYLF would add contemporary and wellbeing science perspectives, provide an expanded view of literacy that incorporates multiple, multimodal and non-verbal literacies and recognise views of literacy in addition to traditional and/or digital literacies.

Furthermore, wellbeing literacy could form part of a common language and agenda that drives ECEC policy and actions. The CM-WL bridges a complex and disjointed document landscape in ECEC and could provide a unifying model to systematise wellbeing related language, practices and policy. Significant global research highlights the need to prioritise children's early wellbeing and language development for their functioning and flourishing (Gromada et al., 2020; Kong et al., 2020; NSCDC, 2007; McAdams, 2019; Saffran et al., 2006). Wellbeing literacy addresses this need in a comprehensive CM-WL that can be used across contexts, policy initiatives and governing frameworks.

CM-WL is scalable, measurable, relevant across the lifespan and adaptable to the diverse and complex contexts of ECEC. CM-WL intersects with and supports not only the EYLF, but the recent national EYS (CoA, 2024) in areas of being strength-based, child-centred, cognisant of place, diversity and inclusion. As well as underpinning existing initiatives, CM-WL can be communicated across families, children's services, and government programs for improved coordination and alignment, providing a shared language and a common framework to understand children's wellbeing capabilities.

Wellbeing literacy can also be used to understand other wellbeing models and reports that influence policy development, such the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth's 'Nest' (ACARY, 2024) or Wellbeing Index (AVARY & UNICEF, 2023),

UNCRC (1989) and the like. On a broader scale, Oades, Slade and Jarden (2017) have posited that a population-based approach to wellbeing literacy represents a possible future. Such broad implications are beyond the scope and findings of this thesis, however ECEC services are a direct policy lever available to governments through which much can be done to promote child wellbeing (Shuey & Kankaras, 2018; Torii et al, 2017). Wellbeing literacy offers a proximal and measurable goal (Hou et al., 2021) that should be the outcome of early childhood policies and strategies.

Implications for policy also include the need to provision wellbeing literacy resources and investment in professional development and knowledge building for ECEC professionals. Additionally, the investment of research funding to further understand wellbeing literacy in early childhood to progress its adoption and application in ECEC.

Limitations of this thesis and the studies conducted

Limitations and strengths of Studies 1, 2 and 3 have been discussed as part of each published article/relevant chapter. In addition, this overall body of work is bounded by limits that are addressed here. These limitations are related to research methods, study scope, and researcher positionality.

First, while the survey and focus group methods facilitated the engagement of participants with highly relevant knowledge of ECEC context, pedagogy and practices, the one-off nature of both methods constrained the collection of deeper, ongoing pedagogical and practice data. Surveys lack opportunities for probing participants about their knowledge and perspectives, and focus groups, while facilitating conversation, are a single time point interaction. These limits were narrowed further due to participants limited knowledge of wellbeing literacy. Informed perspectives of applying wellbeing literacy to ECEC require an understanding of the concept of wellbeing literacy and CM-WL. This was provided via a short information session at the beginning of each focus group and the use of vignettes, however participants' ability to grasp and apply the components of CM-WL were bounded by the focus group session timeframe. Moreover participants were required to apply the new knowledge in theory rather than transfer the information to their settings and apply it to practices. This could be addressed in future research (discussed below) but nonetheless remains a limitation of the data collected for this thesis.

Similarly, the methods of this thesis restricted data to ECEC professional's recounts of their wellbeing practices, rather than observation and examination of actual practices or perspectives in real time. These methods were valid for the purpose of answering the research questions and, for this, the first PhD level examination of wellbeing literacy in ECEC. However further research could expand beyond these boundaries.

Second, the scope of this thesis – with Australian ECEC professions working with 3- to 5-year-old children – also limits the findings that can be drawn. ECEC is generally bracketed as between birth to five or eight years of age. Pedagogy and practices are varied according to these ages, stages and trajectories – not only according to children's developmental needs, but the policies, assumptions and expectations of the country or territory in which the ECEC service operates. For pragmatic reasons of time and resources available during this PhD thesis, data collection was restricted to the 3-to-5-year age group, and within the ECEC policy and contextual boundaries of Australia. Findings therefore may not be relevant beyond these age and country limits.

Third, positionality also creates boundaries. The overall viewpoint of this thesis is that significant experience and knowledge of ECEC is an inherent strength brought to the research (see also Chapter 5). However, it is acknowledged that this thesis has been conducted through my Eurocentric lens, experience and epistemology, primarily reflecting Western viewpoints and methodologies. This cultural bias is a limitation to note as this thesis cannot fully represent or capture diverse global perspectives, non-Western systems or alternate cultural interpretations of ECEC child wellbeing conceptualisations, pedagogies and/or practices.

While the methodological, scope and researcher positionality constraints influenced the depth and nature of data collected for this thesis, it is important to note that these intentional boundaries also played a positive role in focusing and shaping the research analysis, findings and outcomes.

Future directions arising from this thesis

Future directions resulting from this thesis come from both the individual studies undertaken as well as insights gained from conducting the research as a whole. Future

directions have been discussed in each of the published articles; however the three studies represent the beginning of the intersection of wellbeing literacy and ECEC policy, pedagogy and practices. Future directions are evident. This thesis calls for continued collaboration between ECEC and wellbeing science to engage in research and articulation of practical applications.

Studies comprising this thesis consulted with ECEC professionals (teachers, mentors, pedagogical and educational leaders and the like) whose wellbeing conceptualisations, pedagogy and practices were focused on children aged between 3-5 years of age. However, ECEC services in Australia are also offered to children aged up to 6 years as well as to infants and toddlers. Wellbeing pedagogy and practices, and perceptions of what is required to support wellbeing for children across these various ages, stages and trajectories, differs. Supplementary to this, ECEC services are also delivered by those without a bachelor or teaching degree (e.g. Certificate III in or Diploma of ECEC). Future research should be undertaken to examine wellbeing literacy applied to pedagogy and practices that include children from birth to 6 years old, covering the full range of ECEC services in Australia. Also to compare wellbeing perspectives and practices among ECEC professionals with different qualification levels. The impact of targeted wellbeing literacy professional development with ECEC professionals could also be examined.

Future research opportunities

Future research should build on the specific and novel findings of this thesis. For example, taking the 'constant crossings' perceptions of child wellbeing (see Chapter 7) back to ECEC professionals for their feedback or iterations. Additionally, recognising that while children have a right to be heard, their voices are often absent from research (Correia & Aguiar, 2022; Mahoney et al., 2024; UNCRC, 1989), subsequent studies could consult with children about their own perceptions of wellbeing.

This thesis has examined ECEC professionals' reports about what they think and do for and about children's wellbeing, however this is one step removed from the phenomenon of the actual wellbeing language interaction. Potential avenues for exploration exist in different methodologies, such as direct observation, video/audio

recording, conversational analysis or linguistic ethnography.

Articulation of practical applications and wellbeing literacy training

Ongoing exploration and development of practical strategies and tools for applying wellbeing literacy to ECEC is also required. Findings of this thesis have emphasised that CM-WL would be a relevant tool for ECEC professionals in their curriculum planning, family and collegiate communications, child assessment and observations, and critical reflections. The development of practical resources such as checklists, practice manuals, self-reflective frameworks, evaluation tools and the like would bridge the gap between the theoretical understanding of wellbeing literacy and its practical application in ECEC settings.

Additionally, to make the research design feasible and focused, this thesis pragmatically 'separated' the wellbeing literacy of ECEC professionals from their wellbeing pedagogy and practices. However quality practice and developmental outcomes for children in ECEC settings are linked to the wellbeing of educators and their opportunities for professional development (Brunsek, et al., 2020; Cumming et al., 2021; Egert et al., 2020). Future research, directions or applications of wellbeing literacy need to focus on the important area of improving the wellbeing literacy of ECEC professionals. For example, training of pre-service ECEC teachers in wellbeing literacy for the development of their own wellbeing skills and awareness. As discussed above regarding a policy focus on training, professional development for those already working in ECEC contexts is a relevant next step to address the boundaries of this thesis.

Emergent insights for further exploration and elaboration

In theorising and evidencing how CM-WL could be applied to ECEC, a specific insight about the development of a wellbeing literacy pedagogical model arose. The 5 key components of CM-WL indicate skills that form the capability of wellbeing literacy. Despite frequently being presented in a table these components have no order or hierarchy and are not necessarily acquired or used in a linear manner (Oades et al., 2025). Instead, the five components can be thought of as the 'what', 'how', 'who, when, where' and 'why' of wellbeing literacy (Oades, Jarden et al., 2021) (see Table 10.2).

Table 10.2

The frequent representation of components of the CM-WL (adapted from Oades, Jarden et al., 2021).

Wellbeing literacy component	
The WHAT? of wellbeing literacy - about *wellbeing*	Vocabulary and knowledge about wellbeing
The HOW?	Wellbeing comprehension of multimodal texts
	Wellbeing composition of multimodal texts
The WHO? WHEN? WHERE?	Context awareness and adaptability
The WHY? of wellbeing literacy - for *wellbeing*	Intentionality for wellbeing

Thinking emerging from this thesis suggests an 'inversion' of the tabularised CM-WL would be relevant to ECEC professionals as a pedagogical model for use in their planning for child wellbeing. ECEC professionals are required to respond to and support children's learning, development and wellbeing through a continuous cycle of planning, documentation, assessment, critical reflection and intentionality (AGDE, 2022). An inverted pedagogical model of wellbeing literacy could provide a framework for ECEC to support this process of planning, delivery and reflection. Namely, to guide and support ECEC educators as they first consider *why* they are planning experiences and interactions (intentionally for wellbeing), then for *whom* the experiences will be delivered (which child or groups of children), followed by *where* and *when* they will take place (factoring in the context of the child and the ECEC setting), and finally *how* the intended wellbeing experience/s will be enacted (what modes of play and communication will be utilised) and *what* they will teach (what wellbeing words and information).

Several factors have influenced and evolved this thinking – the examination of how CM-WL can be applied to ECEC pedagogy and practices (Chapter 8 and 9), the EYLY's focus on intentionality and teachers' conceptualisation of child wellbeing as a crossing of internal and external contexts (see Chapter 7). An immediate future direction is to elucidate this 'inversion' insight more fully and include co-design and feedback from ECEC professionals to examine its utility and relevance.

Finally, while analysing data from Study 2 (surveys), preparing for Study 3 (focus groups) and analysing resultant data, a research method was developed. This has been preliminarily named ‘WellMet’.

The CM-WL is a formal conceptual model designed to facilitate understanding of how the five language-use components of wellbeing literacy are related. While CM-WL can be used as a lens to analyse and understand wellbeing communications, wellbeing language exchanges are interactional, complex and dynamic. As an overarching method for analysing wellbeing literacy and language communication was not available while analysing data from Study 2 and preparing for Study 3, ‘WellMet’ was developed. Based on using vignettes in qualitative research (Hughes & Huby, 2004; Skilling & Stylianides, 2020), the purpose was to bridge the gap between the conceptual model of wellbeing and what occurs in practice. Through vignettes and colour coding, the components of wellbeing literacy were identified in a practical and systematic way and used to give focus group participants a method to apply CM-WL to practice, making sense of the complexity of language interactions.

Complementing the quantitative foundation of the Well-Lit 6 (Hou et al., 2021) and underpinned by conversation analysis (Goodwin & Heritage, 1990) and a vignette approach (Skilling & Stylianides, 2020), ‘Well-Met’ is a new qualitative method of analysing and understanding wellbeing literacy. Moreover, it is a method through which CM-WL can have utility for practice and research. This method was referred to briefly in the published paper of Chapter 9, however it has not been fully developed, articulated or validated. Future directions include full articulation of the method’s theoretical underpinning and procedural steps, validation studies, as peer-reviewed publication for broader academic feedback and scrutiny.

Key Recommendations

The contributions, implications, limitations and future directions discussed in this integrative chapter contain implicit recommendations for wellbeing literacy and early childhood education and care. To summarise, explicit key recommendations are now listed:

Recommendations for Literature

- Integrate wellbeing literacy concepts into early childhood education literature, **expanding the conceptualisation of literacy** to include wellbeing literacy's contemporary, multimodal approach. Ensure alignment with the EYLF's existing multimodal view of literacy to provide a more comprehensive and contextualised understanding of child wellbeing and literacy in ECEC settings.
- Synthesise existing **definitions of child wellbeing** to develop a more nuanced, contextual understanding specific to ECEC settings, reflecting the 'constant crossings' conceptualisation. Incorporate interdisciplinary perspectives to further bridge wellbeing science and early education fields.
- Review and update existing ECEC literature to reflect contemporary wellbeing science concepts, including wellbeing literacy, such as articulating how **wellbeing literacy can be viewed as a capability** that can be taught and learned in ECEC settings, rather than wellbeing as an outcome.
- Develop theoretical frameworks that **integrate wellbeing literacy** with existing ECEC pedagogical approaches, such as relational and place-based pedagogies.

Recommendations for Future Research

- Continue and expand wellbeing literacy research to include **diverse ECEC contexts**. For example, including different age groups, cultures, and settings, with a specific focus on incorporating Indigenous perspectives and knowledge systems about child wellbeing and communication.
- Develop and validate the **'WellMet' method.** For instance, as a participatory tool during research data collection and/or an analytical tool to analyse, understand, and communicate about wellbeing literacy in real-world or virtual language interactions
- Further elaborate and test the **'inverted' pedagogical model** of wellbeing literacy with ECEC professionals. This may include action research or co-design project.
- Validate and refine the **'constant crossings' conceptualisation** of child wellbeing with ECEC teachers, exploring its practical applications.
- Investigate the relationship between **ECEC professionals' wellbeing literacy capabilities** and their effectiveness in promoting children's wellbeing.

- Examine wellbeing literacy in **real-world language interactions** in ECEC using different methodologies, such as direct observation and/or video/audio recordings, to
- Develop and validate **assessment tools** for wellbeing literacy specific to ECEC contexts. For example teacher report tools or child self-report.
- Investigate **children's perspectives** on wellbeing literacy using appropriate methodologies, exploring how young children understand, express, and use language related to their own and others' wellbeing. This could also be extended to family and care giver perspectives within ECEC contexts.
- Further explore the concept of multi-literacies and those **intersecting with wellbeing literacy** e.g. physical literacy or health literacy.

Recommendations for Pedagogy and Practice

- Integrate wellbeing literacy concepts into **daily ECEC practices**, emphasising the intentional use of language for and about wellbeing across experiences and interactions. For example, using the Capability Model of Wellbeing Literacy (CM-WL) as a **framework** for planning, implementing, communicating, documenting and reflecting on wellbeing practices.
- **Apply the 'constant crossings'** conceptualisation of child wellbeing and the 'inverted' wellbeing literacy **pedagogical model** to inform and support ECEC professionals' wellbeing pedagogy and practices.
- **Enhance communication** with families and other ECEC professionals about wellbeing pedagogy practices using wellbeing literacy concepts, such as how ECEC practice supports the development of capabilities within the wellbeing literacy Capability Model.
- Implement **professional development programs** for ECEC professionals to improve their understanding and application of wellbeing literacy, including adapting existing pedagogies (such as play-based, relational, and place-based approaches) to incorporate wellbeing literacy components.

Recommendations for ECEC Policy

- Incorporate wellbeing literacy concepts into **ECEC frameworks**, such as Australia's national Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF), to provide a

contemporary wellbeing science perspective alongside existing wellbeing outcomes.

- Revise the **positioning of wellbeing** as a Learning Outcome in Australian ECEC policy documents. For example, articulating wellbeing as a process and/or pedagogical objective and considering wellbeing literacy as a capability.
- Use wellbeing literacy as a **unifying framework** to systematise wellbeing-related language across government, wellbeing, and early education initiatives.
- **Include wellbeing literacy** in quality standards, policy guidelines and assessment criteria for ECEC services, emphasising its role in promoting children's wellbeing and effective communication.
- Allocate funding for **professional development** programs that enhance ECEC professionals' understanding and application of wellbeing literacy concepts and practices.

Conclusion

This thesis has proposed, articulated and evidenced how wellbeing literacy may be applied to ECEC, from initial claim through to a final meta-discussion of findings, contributions and implications from its three related studies. Wellbeing literacy has emerged as a potentially relevant and valuable framework for ECEC professionals, bridging wellbeing policy, research, conceptualisations, pedagogy and practices. Initial evidence has been provided that the concept of wellbeing literacy resonates with ECEC professionals and could provide a structure and shared language for understanding and promoting child wellbeing in ECEC settings.

Moreover, CM-WL offers a possible and powerful framework for ECEC professionals to build conceptual and practical links across various aspects of their practice, adding insights and purpose to their work with children. Furthermore, CM-WL has potential for contextualisation as a pedagogical model that would enable ECEC professionals to plan, implement, reflect and collaborate on practices for child wellbeing with greater context awareness and intentionality.

This thesis also highlights that by underpinning and focusing the complex concept of wellbeing, wellbeing literacy could make critical pedagogies and practices more tangible and actionable for ECEC professionals. Moreover, wellbeing literacy may offer a

prospective language and holistic framework to support communication between ECEC professionals, families, communities and stakeholders, aligning policy and practice, and informing future directions in ECEC research and policy advancement.

REFERENCES

ACARA. (2020). *Literacy*. https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/general-capabilities/literacy/

Adams, M., Bell, L. A., & Griffin, P. (Eds.). (2007). *Teaching for diversity and social justice* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Adamson, P. (2013). *Child well-being in rich countries: A comparative overview*. UNICEF Office of Research. https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/rc11_eng.pdf

Ainsworth, M. D. S., Blehar, M. C., Waters, E., & Wall, S. (1978). *Patterns of attachment: A psychological study of the strange situation*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Akalın, M. B., & Işık, Ş. (2024). Adaptation of Well-being Literacy Scale to Turkish: Validity and Reliability Study. *Turkish Psychological Counseling and Guidance Journal*, *14*(74), 426-439. https://doi.org/10.17066/tpdrd.1359668

Alder, A., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2016). Using wellbeing for public policy: Theory, measurement, and recommendations. *International Journal of Wellbeing*, 6(1), 1-15. https://doi.org/10.5502/ijw.v6i1.429

Alexandrova, A. (2017). *A philosophy for the science of well-being*. Oxford University Press.

Al-Harbi, S. S. (2020). Language development and acquisition in early childhood. *Journal of Education and Learning*, 14(1), 69-73. https://doi.org/10.11591/edulearn.v14i1.14209

American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed.). https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.books.9780890425596

An, N., Vesty, G., & Cheong, C. (2023). Defining digital wellbeing literacy in remote work integrated learning. *Australasian Journal of Information Systems*, 27. https://doi.org/10.3127/ajis.v27i0.3969

Angner, E. (2011). The evolution of eupathics: The historical roots of subjective measures of wellbeing. *International Journal of Wellbeing*, *1*(1), 4-41. https://doi.org/10.5502/ijw.v1i1.14

Antonovsky, A. (1993). The structure and properties of the sense of coherence scale. *Social Science & Medicine*, *36*(6), 725-733. https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-9536(93)90033-Z

Ashdown, D. M., & Bernard, M. E. (2012). Can explicit instruction in social and emotional learning skills benefit the social-emotional development, well-being, and academic achievement of young children? *Early Childhood Education Journal*, *39*(6), 397-405. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-011-0481-x

Assarroudi, A., Heshmati Nabavi, F., Armat, M. R., Ebadi, A., & Vaismoradi, M. (2018). Directed qualitative content analysis: The description and elaboration of its

underpinning methods and data analysis process. *Journal of Research in Nursing*, 23(1), 42-55. https://doi.org/10.1177/1744987117741667

Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority. [ACECQA] (2023). Guide to the National Quality Framework. https://www.acecqa.gov.au/national-quality-framework

Australian Education Research Organisation. (2023). *Early childhood education and care*. https://www.edresearch.edu.au/practice-hub/early-childhood-education-and-care

Australian Government. (2023). The early years strategy: Discussion paper. https://engage.dss.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/early-years-strategy-discussion-paper.pdf

Australian Government Department of Education [AGDE]. (2022). Belonging, being and becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (V2.0). https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-01/EYLF-2022-V2.0.pdf

Australian Human Rights Commission. (2018). National principles for child safe organisations. https://childsafe.humanrights.gov.au/national-principles

Babbie, E. R. (2020). *The practice of social research* (15th ed.). Cengage.

Bagdi, A., & Vacca, J. (2005). Supporting early childhood social-emotional well being: The building blocks for early learning and school success. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 33(3), 145-150. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-005-0038-y

Baker, L., Green, S., & Falecki, D. (2017). Positive early childhood education: Expanding the reach of positive psychology into early childhood. *European Journal of Applied Positive Psychology*, 1(8), 1-12. Newsletter

Baker, L. M., Oades, L. G., & Raban, B. (2021). Wellbeing literacy and early childhood education. *New Zealand International Research in Early Childhood Education*, 23(2), 4-19.

Bakken, L., Brown, N., & Downing, B. (2017). Early childhood education: The long-term benefits. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, 31(2), 255-269. https://doi.org/10.1080/02568543.2016.1273285

Bahm, A. J. (1993). *Axiology: The science of values*. Rodopi.

Barblett, L., Bobongie-Harris, F., Hadley, F., Harrison, L., & Irvine, S. (2021). Discussion paper: 2021 National Quality Framework Approved Learning Frameworks Update. Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority.

Barblett, L., Cartmel, J., Hadley, F., Harrison, L. J., Irvine, S., Bobongie-Harris, F., & Lavina, L. (2021). National Quality Framework Approved Learning Frameworks Update: Literature Review. Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority.

Barblett, L., & Maloney, C. (2010). Complexities of assessing social and emotional competence and wellbeing in young children. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 35(2), 13-18. https://doi.org/10.1177/183693911003500203

Barnett, W. S., & Boocock, S. S. (Eds.). (1998). *Early care and education for children in poverty: Promises, programs, and long-term results*. SUNY Press.

Barnett, W. S., & Jung, K. (2021). Effects of New Jersey's Abbott Preschool Program on children's achievement, grade retention, and special education through tenth grade. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 56, 248-259. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2021.04.001

Barton, D., & Hamilton, M. (2000). Literacy practices. In D. Barton, M. Hamilton, & R. Ivanic (Eds.), *Situated literacies: Reading & writing in context* (pp. 7-15). Routledge.

Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, *117*(3), 497-529. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.117.3.497

Baumeister, R. F., & Vohs, K. D. (2007). Self-regulation, ego depletion, and motivation. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 1(1), 115-128. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9004.2007.00001.x

Bell, L., & Stevenson, H. (2006). *Education policy: Process, themes and impact* (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203088579

Ben-Arieh, A. E., Casas, F. E., Frønes, I. E., & Korbin, J. E. (Eds.). (2014). *Handbook of child well-being: Theories, methods and policies in global perspective* (Vols. 1-5). Springer Science+ Business Media.

Bengtsson, M. (2016). How to plan and perform a qualitative study using content analysis. *NursingPlus Open*, *2*, 8-14. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.npls.2016.01.001

Berkman, N. D., Davis, T. C., & McCormack, L. (2010). Health literacy: What is it? *Journal of Health Communication*, 15(S2), 9-19. https://doi.org/10.1080/10810730.2010.499985

Black, M. M., Walker, S. P., Fernald, L. C., Andersen, C. T., DiGirolamo, A. M., Lu, C., McCoy, D. C., Fink, G., Shawar, Y. R., Shiffman, J., Devercelli, A. E., Wodon, Q. T., Vargas-Barón, E., & Grantham-McGregor, S. (2017). Early childhood development coming of age: Science through the life course. *The Lancet*, 389(10064), 77-90. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(16)31389-7

Blair, C., & Raver, C. C. (2015). School readiness and self-regulation: A developmental psychobiological approach. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 66(1), 711-731. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-010814-015221

Blewitt, C., Fuller-Tyszkiewicz, M., Nolan, A., Bergmeier, H., Vicary, D., Huang, T., McCabe, P., McKay, T., & Skouteris, H. (2018). Social and emotional learning associated with universal curriculum-based interventions in early childhood

education and care centers: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *JAMA Network Open*, 1(8), Article e185727. https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2018.5727

Boddy, C. R. (2016). Sample size for qualitative research. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, *19*(4), 426-432. https://doi.org/10.1108/QMR-06-2016-0053

Bowlby, J. (1969). *Attachment and loss: Vol. 1. Attachment*. Basic Books.

Bradshaw, J., & Richardson, D. (2009). An index of child well-being in Europe. *Child Indicators Research*, 2, 319-351. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12187-009-9037-7

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2013). *Successful qualitative research: A practical guide for beginners*. SAGE Publications.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2022). *Thematic analysis: A practical guide*. Sage.

Braun, V., Clarke, V., Boulton, E., Davey, L., & McEvoy, C. (2021). The online survey as a qualitative research tool. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 24(6), 641-654. https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2020.1805550

Bredekamp, S., & Copple, C. (1997). *Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs* (Rev. ed.). National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Brey, E., & Shutts, K. (2015). Children use nonverbal cues to make inferences about social power. *Child Development*, 86(1), 276-286. https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.12334

Brighouse, H. (2006). *On education*. Routledge.

Brogaard-Clausen, S., Guimaraes, S., Rubiano, C., & Tang, F. (2022). International perspectives on wellbeing and democratic living in early childhood curricula. *Early Years*, 1-15. https://doi.org/10.1080/09575146.2022.2037270

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1974). Developmental research, public policy, and the ecology of childhood. *Child Development*, 45(1), 1-5. https://doi.org/10.2307/1127743

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development*. Harvard University Press.

Bronfenbrenner, U., & Morris, P. A. (2007). The bioecological model of human development. In W. Damon & R. M. Lerner (Eds.), *Handbook of child psychology* (6th ed., Vol. 1, pp. 793-828). John Wiley & Sons.

Brooks, J., McCluskey, S., Turley, E., & King, N. (2015). The utility of template analysis in qualitative psychology research. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 12(2), 202-222. https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2014.955224

Brunsek, A., Perlman, M., McMullen, E., Falenchuk, O., Fletcher, B., Nocita, G., Kamkar, N., & Shah, P. S. (2020). A meta-analysis and systematic review of the associations between professional development of early childhood educators and children's outcomes. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 53, 217-248. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2020.03.003

Burns, R. A., Sargent, K., & Crisp, D. A. (2024). Mental health and wellbeing literacy: A cross-national comparison. *Applied Research in Quality of Life*, 1-26. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11482-024-10330-z

Burr, V. (2003). *Social constructionism* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Byrne, D. (2022). A worked example of Braun and Clarke's approach to reflexive thematic analysis. *Quality & Quantity*, 56(3), 1391-1412. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-021-01182-y

Byrne, M. M. (2001). Evaluating the findings of qualitative research. *AORN Journal*, 73(3), 703-703. https://doi.org/10.1016/s0001-2092(06)61966-2

Cagliari, P., Castagnetti, M., Giudici, C., Rinaldi, C., Vecchi, V., & Moss, P. (2016). *Loris Malaguzzi and the Schools of Reggio Emilia: A selection of his writings and speeches, 1945-1993*. Routledge.

Camfield, L., Streuli, N., & Woodhead, M. (2010). Children's well-being in developing countries: A conceptual and methodological review. *European Journal of Development Research*, *22*(3), 398-416. https://doi.org/10.1057/ejdr.2010.11

Campbell, F., Conti, G., Heckman, J. J., Moon, S. H., Pinto, R., Pungello, E., & Pan, Y. (2014). Early childhood investments substantially boost adult health. *Science*, 343(6178), 1478-1485. https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1248429

Campbell-Barr, V., & Nygård, M. (2014). Losing sight of the child? Human capital theory and its role for early childhood education and care policies in Finland and England since the mid-1990s. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 15(4), 346-359. https://doi.org/10.2304/ciec.2014.15.4.346

Cardno, C. (2018). Policy document analysis: A practical educational leadership tool and a qualitative research method. *Educational Administration: Theory & Practice*, 24(4), 623-640.

Carlin, E., Cowdrey-Fong, S., Cox, Z., Orazi, K., & Dudgeon, P. (2025). Exploring an Indigenous approach to wellbeing literacy through the work of Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services. In L. G. Oades, N. Lemon, J. Francis, & T. Lomas (Eds.), *Wellbeing Literacy: Theory and Practice Through Multidisciplinary and Transdisciplinary Lenses* (1st ed., pp. 103-114). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003644293

Carpenter, M., Nagell, K., Tomasello, M., Butterworth, G., & Moore, C. (1998). Social cognition, joint attention, and communicative competence from 9 to 15 months of age. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, 63(4), i-174.

Casas, F. (1997). Children's rights and children's quality of life: Conceptual and practical issues. *Social Indicators Research*, 42, 283-298. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1006836909395

Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University. (2007). A science-based framework for early childhood policy: Using evidence to improve outcomes in learning, behavior, and health for vulnerable children. http://www.developingchild.harvard.edu

Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University. (2009). In brief: The science of early childhood development. http://developingchild.harvard.edu/

Chambers, B., Cheung, A. C., & Slavin, R. E. (2016). Literacy and language outcomes of comprehensive and developmental-constructivist approaches to early childhood education: A systematic review. *Educational Research Review*, 18, 88-111. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2016.03.003

Charmarbagwala, R., Ranger, M., Waddington, H., & White, H. (2004). The determinants of child health and nutrition: a meta-analysis. *Washington, DC: World Bank*.

Chen, J., Walker, A. D., & Riley, P. (2023). Reconceptualizing principal well-being: State, measurement and consequences. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 61(5), 495-513. https://doi.org/10.1108/JEA-12-2022-0224

Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic.) (Austl.). https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/child-wellbeing-and-safety-act-2005/030

Chng, J., Burns, R., Murray, K., & Crisp, D. (2022). A community mental health and wellbeing literacy study among Australian adults. *Journal of Happiness and Health*, 2(1), 12-30. https://doi.org/10.47602/johah.v2i1.13

Christopher, J. C. (1999). Situating psychological well-being: Exploring the cultural roots of its theory and research. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 77(2), 141-152. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6676.1999.tb02434.x

Clark, A., Flèche, S., & Lekfuangfu, W. (2017). The long-lasting effects of family and childhood on adult wellbeing: Evidence from British cohort data (CEP Discussion Paper No. 1493). Centre for Economic Performance.

Clinton, J. M., & Smith, L. E. (2025). Deconstructing wellbeing literacy: Rebuilding a multidimensional hierarchical model. In L. G. Oades, N. Lemon, J. Francis, & T. Lomas (Eds.), *Wellbeing Literacy: Theory and Practice Through Multidisciplinary and Transdisciplinary Lenses* (1st ed., pp. 103-114). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003644293

CMEC. (2012). CMEC early learning and development framework. https://www.cmec.ca/Publications/Lists/Publications/Attachments/327/2014-07-Early-Learning-Framework-EN.pdf

Coelho, V. A., Marchante, M., & Sousa, V. (2015). "Positive Attitude": A multilevel model analysis of the effectiveness of a Social and Emotional Learning Program for Portuguese middle school students. *Journal of Adolescence*, 43, 29-38. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2015.05.016

Colla, R., Williams, P., Oades, L. G., & Camacho-Morles, J. (2022). "A new hope" for positive psychology: A dynamic systems reconceptualization of hope theory. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, Article 809053. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.809053

Collins. (n.d.). Policy. In *Collins online dictionary*. Retrieved February 22, 2025, from https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/policy#google_vignette

Collins, C. S., & Stockton, C. M. (2018). The central role of theory in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *17*(1), 1-10. https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406918797475

Commonwealth of Australia. (2011). Education and care services national regulations. http://www.acecqa.gov.au/national-regulations

Commonwealth of Australia. (2024). Early Years Strategy 2024-2034. https://www.dss.gov.au/system/files/resources/early-years-strategy-2024-2034.pdf

Corballis, M. C. (2017). Language evolution: A changing perspective. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 21(4), 229-236. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2017.01.013

Cornish, F., & Gillespie, A. (2009). A pragmatist approach to the problem of knowledge in health psychology. *Journal of Health Psychology*, 14(6), 800-809. https://doi.org/10.1177/1359105309338974

Cope, B., & Kalantzis, M. (2013). "Multiliteracies": New literacies, new learning. In M. R. Hawkins (Ed.), *Framing languages and literacies: Socially situated views and perspectives* (pp. 105-135). Routledge.

Correia, N., & Aguiar, C. (2022). Children's right to participate: The Lundy model applied to early childhood education and care. *The International Journal of Children's Rights*, 30(2), 378-405. https://doi.org/10.1163/15718182-30020010

Corr, L., LaMontagne, A. D., Cook, K., Waters, E., & Davis, E. (2015). Associations between Australian early childhood educators' mental health and working conditions: A cross-sectional study. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 40(3), 69-78. https://doi.org/10.1177/183693911504000309

Council of Ministers of Education, Canada. (2012). *CMEC early learning and development framework*. https://www.cmec.ca/Publications/Lists/Publications/Attachments/327/2014-07-Early-Learning-Framework-EN.pdf

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2023). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (6th ed.). Sage.

Cresswell-Smith, J., Solin, P., Wahlbeck, K., & Tamminen, N. (2023). Conceptualising and measuring positive mental health literacy: A systematic literature review. *Journal of Public Mental Health*, 22(2), 47-59. https://doi.org/10.1108/JPMH-06-2022-0066

Crivello, G., Camfield, L., & Woodhead, M. (2009). How can children tell us about their wellbeing? Exploring the potential of participatory research approaches within young lives. *Social Indicators Research*, 90, 51-72. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-008-9312-x

Crous, G. (2017). Child psychological well-being and its associations with material deprivation and type of home. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 80, 88-95. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2017.06.051

Csikszentmihalyi, M., Abuhamdeh, S., & Nakamura, J. (2014). Flow. In M. Csikszentmihalyi (Ed.), *Flow and the foundations of positive psychology: The collected works of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi* (pp. 227-238). Springer.

Cumming, T., Wong, S., & Logan, H. (2021). Early childhood educators' wellbeing, work environments and 'quality': Possibilities for changing policy and practice. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 46(1), 50-65. https://doi.org/10.1177/1836939120979064

Cummins, R. A. (2010). Subjective wellbeing, homeostatically protected mood and depression: A synthesis. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, *11*(1), 1-17. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-009-9167-0

Daneshfar, S., & Moharami, M. (2018). Dynamic assessment in Vygotsky's sociocultural theory: Origins and main concepts. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 9(3), 600-607. https://doi.org/10.17507/jltr.0903.20

Danniels, E., & Pyle, A. (2018). Defining play-based learning. In R. E. Tremblay, M. Boivin, & R. D. Peters (Eds.), *Encyclopedia on early childhood development*. http://www.child-encyclopedia.com/play-based-learning/according-experts/defining-play-based-learning

Darling, N. (2007). Ecological systems theory: The person in the center of the circles. *Research in Human Development*, 4(3-4), 203-217. https://doi.org/10.1080/15427600701663023

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2008). Hedonia, eudaimonia, and well-being: An introduction. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 9, 1-11. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-006-9018-1

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2012). Self-determination theory. In P. A. M. Van Lange, A. W. Kruglanski, & E. T. Higgins (Eds.), *Handbook of theories of social psychology* (pp. 416-436). Sage Publications. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446249215.n21

Department of Education, Skills and Employment. (2021). *National Early Language and Literacy Strategy*. Australian Government. https://www.dese.gov.au/nells

Department of Health and Human Services. (2015). *Head Start early learning outcomes framework: Ages birth to five*. https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/school-readiness/article/head-start-early-learning-outcomes-framework

De Ruyter, D., Oades, L. G., Waghid, Y., Ehrenfeld, J., Gilead, T., & Singh, N. C. (2022). Education for flourishing and flourishing in education. In *Reimagining Education: The International Science and Evidence Based Education Assessment*. https://doi.org/10.56383/xbxz7711

De Ruyter, D., Oades, L., & Waghid, Y. (2020). Meaning(s) of human flourishing and education. Research brief by the International Science and Evidence based Education Assessment. UNESCO MGIEP.

Denham, S. A. (2003). Social and emotional learning, early childhood. In T. P. Gullotta et al. (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of primary prevention and health promotion*. Springer.

Denham, S. A., Bassett, H. H., & Zinsser, K. (2012). Early childhood teachers as socializers of young children's emotional competence. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 40, 137-143. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-012-0504-2

Department for Education. (2014). Statutory framework for the early years' foundation stage: Setting the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework—2

Department for Education. (2021). *Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage*. Crown Copyright.

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. (2009). *Belonging, being & becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*. Commonwealth of Australia. https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2018-02/belonging_being_and_becoming_the_early_years_learning_framework_for_australia.pdf

Department of Education and Training. (2016). *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework* (2nd ed.). https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/childhood/providers/edcare/veyldframework.pdf

Department of Education and Training. (2019). Belonging, being & becoming: The early years learning framework for Australia. https://www.dese.gov.au/national-quality-framework-early-childhood-education-and-care/resources/belonging-being-becoming-early-years-learning-framework-australia

Department of Health and Human Services. (2015). Head Start: Early learning outcomes framework: Ages birth to five. https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/school-readiness/article/head-start-early-learning-outcomes-framework

Department of Health, Australian Government. (2017). National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Mental Health and Social and Emotional Wellbeing 2017-2023. https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/national-strategic-framework-for-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples-mental-health-and-social-and-emotional-wellbeing-2017-2023

Department of Social Services. (2024). *Early Years Strategy 2024-2034*. Commonwealth of Australia. https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/01_2024/early-years-strategy-2024-2034.pdf

Diaz-Diaz, C., Semenec, P., & Moss, P. (2019). Opening for debate and contestation: OECD's International Early Learning and Child Well-being Study and the testing of children's learning outcomes. *Policy Futures in Education*, 17(1), 1-10. https://doi.org/10.1177/1478210318823464

Diener, E. (1984). Subjective well-being. *Psychological Bulletin*, 95(3), 542-575. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.95.3.542

Diener, E., & Seligman, M. E. (2002). Very happy people. *Psychological Science*, 13(1), 81-84. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9280.00415

Diener, E., Suh, E. M., Lucas, R. E., & Smith, H. L. (1999). Subjective well-being: Three decades of progress. *Psychological Bulletin*, 125(2), 276-302. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.125.2.276

Dirwan, G., & Thévenon, O. (2023). Integrated policy making for child well-being: Common approaches and challenges ahead. OECD Papers on Well-being and Inequalities, No. 16. OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/1a5202af-en

Dockery, A. M. (2020). Inter-generational transmission of Indigenous culture and children's wellbeing: Evidence from Australia. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 74, 80-93. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2019.11.001

Dodge, R., Daly, A., Huyton, J., & Sanders, L. (2012). The challenge of defining wellbeing. *International Journal of Wellbeing*, 2(3), 222-235. https://doi.org/10.5502/ijw.v2i3.4

Donnelly, K. (2007). Australia's adoption of outcomes-based education: A critique. *Issues in Educational Research*, 17(2), 183-206.

Duncan, G., Kalil, A., Mogstad, M., & Rege, M. (2023). Investing in early childhood development in preschool and at home. In S. Bradley & C. Green (Eds.), *Handbook of the Economics of Education* (Vol. 6, pp. 1-91). Elsevier.

Duraiappah, A., Van Atteveldt, N. M., Buil, J. M., Singh, K., & Wu, R. (2022). *Reimagining Education: The International Science and Evidence Based Education (ISEE) Assessment*. UNESCO MGIEP.

Durand, M. (2015). The OECD Better Life Initiative: How's Life? and the Measurement of Well-Being. *Review of Income and Wealth*, *61*(1), 4-17. https://doi.org/10.1111/roiw.12156

Durie, M. H. (1985). A Māori perspective of health. *Social Science & Medicine*, 20(5), 483-486. https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-9536(85)90363-6

Durlak, J. A., Weissberg, R. P., Dymnicki, A. B., Taylor, R. D., & Schellinger, K. B. (2011). The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-

analysis of school-based universal interventions. *Child Development*, 82(1), 405-432. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2010.01564.x

Eadie, P., Stark, H., & Niklas, F. (2019). Quality of interactions by early childhood educators following a language-specific professional learning program. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 47, 251-263. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-019-00929-5

Eadie, P., Page, J., Levickis, P., Elek, C., Murray, L., Wang, L., & Lloyd-Johnsen, C. (2022). Domains of quality in early childhood education and care: A scoping review of the extent and consistency of the literature. *Educational Review*, 76(4), 1057-1086. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2021.1997701

Eckersley, R. (2000). The mixed blessings of material progress: Diminishing returns in the pursuit of happiness. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 1, 267-292. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1010040010239

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 (Cth) (Austl.). https://content.legislation.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-11/10-69aa020-authorised.pdf

Edwards, S. (2021). Process quality, curriculum and pedagogy in early childhood education and care. OECD Education Working Papers, No. 247. OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/eba0711e-en

Egert, F., Dederer, V., & Fukkink, R. G. (2020). The impact of in-service professional development on the quality of teacher-child interactions in early education and care: A meta-analysis. *Educational Research Review*, 29, 1-14. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2019.100309

Elias, M. J. (2009). Social-emotional and character development and academics as a dual focus of educational policy. *Educational Policy*, 23(6), 831-846. https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904808330167

Elo, S., & Kyngäs, H. (2008). The qualitative content analysis process. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, *62*(1), 107-115. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2648.2007.04569.x

Engdahl, I. (2019). OMEP policy forum: UN convention on the rights of the child has become policy in many countries. *International Journal of Early Childhood*, 51(3), 259-264. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13158-019-00253-4

Enworo, O. C. (2023). Application of Guba and Lincoln's parallel criteria to assess trustworthiness of qualitative research on indigenous social protection systems. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 23(4), 372-384. https://doi.org/10.1108/qrj-08-2022-0116

Ergas, O. (2022). *Education and time: A philosophical exploration*. Routledge.

Eurostat, & UNESCO Institute for Statistics. (2015). *ISCED 2011 operational manual: Guidelines for classifying national education programmes and related qualifications*. OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264228368-en.

Farquhar, S. (2010). *Ricoeur, identity and early childhood*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Fenech, M., Giugni, M., & Bown, K. (2012). A critical analysis of the National Quality Framework: Mobilising for a vision for children beyond minimum standards. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 37(4), 5-14. https://doi.org/10.1177/183693911203700402

Fleer, M., Anning, A., & Cullen, J. (2004). A framework for conceptualising early childhood education. In A. Anning, J. Cullen, & M. Fleer (Eds.), *Early childhood education: Society and culture* (pp. 175-189). SAGE Publications.

Fleer, M., & Raban, B. (2006). A cultural-historical analysis of concept formation in early education settings: Conceptual consciousness for the child or only the adult? *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 14(2), 69-80. https://doi.org/10.1080/13502930285209921

Forgeard, M. J. C., Jayawickreme, E., Kern, M., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2011). Doing the right thing: Measuring wellbeing for public policy. *International Journal of Wellbeing*, 1(1), 79-106. https://doi.org/10.5502/ijw.v1i1.15

Fowler, J. H., & Christakis, N. A. (2008). Dynamic spread of happiness in a large social network: Longitudinal analysis over 20 years in the Framingham Heart Study. *BMJ*, 337, a2338. https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.a2338

Francis, J., Chin, T. C., & Vella-Brodrick, D. (2020). Examining emotional literacy development using a brief online positive psychology intervention with primary school children. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(20), 7612. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17207612

Francis, J., & Baker, L. M. (2025). Moving to the beat and with the times: Arts and wellbeing literacy education. In A. Giraldez-Hayes, M. Seligman & J. Bourke (Eds.), Routledge *International Handbook of Wellbeing Arts*. Routledge.

Fredrickson, B. L. (2013). Positive emotions broaden and build. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 47, 1-53. https://doi.org/10.1016/b978-0-12-407236-7.00001-2

García, J. L., Heckman, J. J., Leaf, D. E., & Prados, M. J. (2020). Quantifying the life-cycle benefits of an influential early-childhood program. *Journal of Political Economy*, 128(7), 2502-2541. https://doi.org/10.1086/705718

Gee, J. (1991). Socio-cultural approaches to literacy (literacies). *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 12, 31-48. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190500002130

Gee, J. P. (1998). What is literacy? In V. Zamel & R. Spack (Eds.), *Negotiating academic literacies: Teaching and learning across languages and cultures* (pp. 51-59). Lawrence Erlbaum.

Gee, J. P. (2015). The new literacy studies. In J. Rowsell & K. Pahl (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of literacy studies* (pp. 35-48). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203809068.ch26

Giamminuti, S. (2013). *Dancing with Reggio Emilia: Metaphors for quality*. Pademelon Press.

Gibbons, A., Stratford, R., & White, E. J. (2017). A 'good life' for infants in early childhood education and care? The place of wellbeing in ECE curriculum, pedagogy and policy. In E. J. White & C. Dalli (Eds.), *Policy and pedagogy with under three-year-olds: Cross disciplinary insights and innovations* (pp. 41-56). Springer.

Gide, S., Wong, S., Press, F., & Davis, B. (2022). Cultural diversity in the Australian early childhood education workforce: What do we know, what don't we know and why is it important? *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 47(1), 48-61. https://doi.org/10.1177/18369391211057292

Goodwin, C., & Heritage, J. (1990). Conversation analysis. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, *19*, 283-307. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.an.19.100190.001435

Golden, J., Conroy, R. M., & Lawlor, B. A. (2009). Social support network structure in older people: Underlying dimensions and association with psychological and physical health. *Psychology, Health & Medicine*, *14*(3), 280-290. https://doi.org/10.1080/13548500902730135

González-Pérez, L. I., & Ramírez-Montoya, M. S. (2022). Components of Education 4.0 in 21st century skills frameworks: Systematic review. *Sustainability*, 14(3), 1493. https://doi.org/10.3390/su14031493

Gough, P. B. (1995). The new literacy: Caveat emptor. *Journal of Research in Reading*, 18(2), 79-86. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9817.1995.tb00075.x

Grant, C., & Osanloo, A. (2014). Understanding, selecting, and integrating a theoretical framework in dissertation research: Creating the blueprint for your "house". *Administrative Issues Journal*, 4(2), 4. https://doi.org/10.5929/2014.4.2.9

Grantham-McGregor, S., Cheung, Y. B., Cueto, S., Glewwe, P., Richter, L., & Strupp, B. (2007). Developmental potential in the first 5 years for children in developing countries. *The Lancet*, 369(9555), 60-70. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(07)60032-4

Green, S., Dulagil, A., & Baker, L. M. (in press). Wellbeing literacy and its role in evidence-based coaching. In L. G. Oades, N. Lemon, J. Francis, & T. Lomas (Eds.), *Wellbeing literacy: Theory and practice through multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary lenses*. Routledge.

Greenberg, G. D., Miller, J. A., Mohr, L. B., & Vladeck, B. C. (1977). Developing public policy theory: Perspectives from empirical research. *American Political Science Review*, 71(4), 1532-1543. https://doi.org/10.2307/1961494

Grieshaber, S., & Graham, L. J. (2017). Equity and educators enacting the Australian early years learning framework. *Critical Studies in Education*, 58(1), 89-103. https://doi.org/10.1080/17508487.2015.1126328

Gromada, A., Rees, G., & Chzhen, Y. (2020). Worlds of influence: Understanding what shapes child well-being in rich countries. Innocenti Report Card 16. UNICEF Office of Research-Innocenti. https://doi.org/10.18356/9789210053037

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage Publications.

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed., pp. 191-215). Sage Publications Ltd.

Guevara, J. (2022). Comparative studies of early childhood education and care: Beyond methodological nationalism. *Comparative Education*, 58(3), 328-344. https://doi.org/10.1080/03050068.2022.2030936

Guilfoyle, A., Saggers, S., Sims, M., & Hutchins, T. (2010). Culturally strong childcare programs for Indigenous children, families and communities. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 35(3), 68-76. https://doi.org/10.1177/183693911003500309

Guo, J., Xie, Y., & Wang, F. (2024, July). The relationship between anxiety, depression, and well-being literacy in college students: Based on a dual-factor model of mental health. In 2024 5th International Conference on Mental Health, Education and Human Development (MHEHD 2024) (pp. 65-70). Atlantis Press.

Gupta, G. (2021). Pedagogy in theory and practice. *LEARNing landscapes*, *14*(1), 143-151.

Harmon, F., & Viruru, R. (2018). Debunking the myth of the efficacy of "push-down academics": How rigid, teacher-centered, academic early learning environments dis-empower young children. *Journal of Family Strengths*, 18(1), 11.

Harrison, L. J., Wong, S., Press, F., Gibson, M., Ryan, S., & Ordóñez-Jasis, R. (2024). *Contemporary issues in early childhood education and care*. Oxford University Press.

Hatfield, B. E., Burchinal, M. R., Pianta, R. C., & Sideris, J. (2016). Thresholds in the association between quality of teacher-child interactions and preschool children's school readiness skills. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 36, 561-571. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2015.09.005

Hathaway, R. S. (1995). Assumptions underlying quantitative and qualitative research: Implications for institutional research. *Research in Higher Education*, *36*(5), 535-562. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02208830

Hattie, J. (2008). *Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*. Taylor & Francis.

Headey, B., & Wearing, A. (1991). Subjective well-being: A stocks and flows framework. In F. Strack, M. Argyle, & N. Schwarz (Eds.), *Subjective well-being: An interdisciplinary perspective* (pp. 49-73). Pergamon Press.

Heckman, J. J. (2011). The economics of inequality: The value of early childhood education. *American Educator*, 35(1), 31-35.

Heckman, J. J., & Karapakula, G. (2019). The Perry Preschoolers at late midlife: A study in design-specific inference (No. w25888). National Bureau of Economic Research.

Hedges, H., & Cullen, J. (2012). Participatory learning theories: A framework for early childhood pedagogy. *Early Child Development and Care*, 182(7), 921-940. https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2011.597504

Hennink, M. M., Kaiser, B. N., & Weber, M. B. (2019). What influences saturation? Estimating sample sizes in focus group research. *Qualitative Health Research*, 29(10), 1483-1496. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732318821692

Heron, J., & Reason, P. (1997). A participatory inquiry paradigm. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *3*(3), 274-294. https://doi.org/10.1177/107780049700300302

Hewitt, B., & Walter, M. (2014). Preschool participation among Indigenous children in Australia. *Family Matters*, 95, 41-50.

Hogan, M. J. (2008). Modest systems psychology: A neutral complement to positive psychological thinking. *Systems Research and Behavioral Science*, 25(6), 717-732. https://doi.org/10.1002/sres.923

Holmes, A. G. D. (2020). Researcher positionality - A consideration of its influence and place in qualitative research - A new researcher guide. *Shanlax International Journal of Education*, 8(4), 1-10. https://doi.org/10.34293/education.v8i4.3232

Hosker, D. K., Elkins, R. M., & Potter, M. P. (2019). Promoting mental health and wellness in youth through physical activity, nutrition, and sleep. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Clinics*, *28*(2), 171-193.

Hou, H., Chin, T. C., Slemp, G. R., & Oades, L. G. (2021). Wellbeing literacy: Conceptualization, measurement, and preliminary empirical findings from students, parents and school staff. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(4), 1485. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18041485

Hsieh, H. F., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, 15(9), 1277-1288. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732305276687

Huang, L., Kern, M. L., & Oades, L. G. (2020). Strengthening university student wellbeing: Language and perceptions of Chinese international students. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(15), 5538. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph1715553

Hughes, P. (2010). Paradigms, methods and knowledge. In G. Mac Naughton, S. A. Rolfe, & I. Siraj-Blatchford (Eds.), *Doing early childhood research: International perspectives on theory and practice* (2nd ed., pp. 35-61). Allen & Unwin.

Hughes, R., & Huby, M. (2004). The construction and interpretation of vignettes in social research. *Social Work and Social Sciences Review*, *11*(1), 36-51. https://doi.org/10.1921/swssr.v11i1.428

Huppert, F. (2009). Psychological well-being: Evidence regarding its causes and consequences. *Applied Psychology: Health and Well-being*, 1(2), 137-164. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1758-0854.2009.01008.x

Huppert, F. A., & Cooper, C. L. (2014). Interventions and policies to enhance wellbeing. In F. A. Huppert & C. L. Cooper (Eds.), *Wellbeing: A complete reference guide* (Vol. VI). Wiley. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118539415.wbwell01

Huppert, F. A., & So, T. T. (2013). Flourishing across Europe: Application of a new conceptual framework for defining well-being. *Social Indicators Research*, 110, 837-861. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-011-9966-7

Huttenlocher, J., Waterfall, H., Vasilyeva, M., Vevea, J., & Hedges, L. V. (2010). Sources of variability in children's language growth. *Cognitive Psychology*, *61*(4), 343-365. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cogpsych.2010.08.002

Immordino-Yang, M. H., Darling-Hammond, L., & Krone, C. R. (2019). Nurturing nature: How brain development is inherently social and emotional, and what this means for education. *Educational Psychologist*, 54(3), 185-204. https://doi.org/10.1080/00461520.2019.1633924

Isaacs, B. (2018). *Understanding the Montessori approach: Early years education in practice*. Routledge.

Jahoda, M. (1958). *Current concepts of positive mental health.* Basic

Jalongo, M. R., Fennimore, B. S., Pattnaik, J., Laverick, D. M., Brewster, J., & Mutuku, M. (2004). Blended perspectives: A global vision for high-quality early childhood education. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 32, 143-155. https://doi.org/10.1023/B:ECEJ.0000048966.13626.be

Jaramillo, J. A. (1996). Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and contributions to the development of constructivist curricula. *Education*, *117*(1), 133-140.

Jarden, A., & Roache, A. (2023). What is wellbeing? *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 20(6), 5006. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20065006

Jewitt, C. (2005). Multimodality, "reading", and "writing" for the 21st century. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 26(3), 315-331. https://doi.org/10.1080/01596300500200011

Jia, Z., Zheng, F., Wang, F., & Yang, G. (2024). Psychometric properties of the wellbeing literacy 6-item scale in Chinese military academy cadets. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 15, 1293845. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1293845

Johnson, M. (2008). What makes a body? *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, 22(3), 159-169. https://doi.org/10.1353/jsp.0.0046

Johnson, A. D., Partika, A., Martin, A., Horm, D., & Phillips, D. A. (2023). A deeper dive, a wider pool: Preschool benefits sustain to first grade on a broader set of outcomes. *Child Development*. https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.13928

Johnston, A. L., Oades, L. G., & Slemp, G. R. (2017). Toward building sustainable well-being literacy in higher education: Strategies and indicators of success. In M. A. White, G. R. Slemp, & A. S. Murray (Eds.), *Future directions in well-being* (pp. 307-311). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-56889-8_29

Jones, N., & Sumner, A. (2009). Does mixed methods research matter to understanding childhood well-being? *Social Indicators Research*, 90(1), 33-50. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-008-9311-y

Jorm, A. F., Korten, A. E., Jacomb, P. A., Christensen, H., Rodgers, B., & Pollitt, P. (1997). "Mental health literacy": a survey of the public's ability to recognise mental disorders and their beliefs about the effectiveness of treatment. *Medical journal of Australia, 166*(4), 182-186. https://doi.org/10.5694/j.1326-5377.1997.tb140071.x

Kagan, S. L., & Neuman, M. J. (2000). Early care and education: Current issues and future strategies. In J. P. Shonkoff & S. J. Meisels (Eds.), *Handbook of early childhood intervention* (2nd ed., pp. 339-360). Cambridge University Press.

Kagan, S. L. (Ed.). (2019). *The early advantage 2: Building systems that work for young children*. Teachers College Press.

Kahneman, D., Diener, E., & Schwarz, N. (Eds.). (1999). *Well-being: The foundations of hedonic psychology*. Russell Sage Foundation.

Kemp, A. H., & Edwards, D. J. (2022). *Broadening the scope of wellbeing science*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Kern, M. L., Williams, P., Spong, C., Colla, R., Sharma, K., Downie, A., ... & Oades, L. G. (2020). Systems informed positive psychology. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, *15*(6), 705-715. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2019.1639799

Keyes, C. L. M. (2002). The mental health continuum: From languishing to flourishing in life. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, *43*(2), 207-222. https://doi.org/10.2307/3090197

Keyes, C. L. M. (2007). Promoting and protecting mental health as flourishing: A complementary strategy for improving national mental health. *American Psychologist*, *62*(2), 95-108. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.62.2.95

Keyes, C. L. M. (1998). Social well-being. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 61(2), 121-140. https://doi.org/10.2307/2787065

Khaw, D., & Kern, M. (2014). A cross-cultural comparison of the PERMA model of well-being. *Undergraduate Journal of Psychology at Berkeley, University of California*, 8(1), 10-23.

Kim, B. (2001). Social constructivism. In M. Orey (Ed.), *Emerging perspectives on learning, teaching, and technology*

King, N., & Brooks, J. (2017). *Template analysis for business and management students*. SAGE Publications Ltd. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473983304

Kitson, R., & Bowes, J. (2010). Incorporating Indigenous ways of knowing in early education for Indigenous children. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 35(4), 81-89. https://doi.org/10.1177/183693911003500410

Kleinheksel, A. J., Rockich-Winston, N., Tawfik, H., & Wyatt, T. R. (2020). Demystifying content analysis. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*, *84*(1), 7113. https://doi.org/10.5688/ajpe7113

Knudsen, E. I., Heckman, J. J., Cameron, J. L., & Shonkoff, J. P. (2006). Economic, neurobiological, and behavioral perspectives on building America's future workforce. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 103(27), 10155-10162. https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.0600888103

Kochanska, G. (2001). Emotional development in children with different attachment histories: The first three years. *Child Development*, 72(2), 474-490. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8624.00291

Kong, F., Heller, A. S., van Reekum, C. M., & Sato, W. (2020). Positive neuroscience: The neuroscience of human flourishing. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, 14, 47. https://doi.org/10.3389/fnhum.2020.00047

Krueger, R. A. (2014). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research* (5th ed.). Sage Publications.

Kwon, J., Kim, S. W., Ungar, W. J., Tsiplova, K., Madan, J., & Petrou, S. (2018). A systematic review and meta-analysis of childhood health utilities. *Medical Decision Making*, *38*(3), 277-305. WRAP-systematic-review-meta-analysis-childhood-utilities-Petrou-2017.pdf

Kukla, A. (2000). *Social constructivism and the philosophy of science*. Routledge.

Laevers, F. (1994). *Defining and assessing quality in early childhood education*. Studia Paedagogica. Leuven University Press.

Laszlo, A., & Krippner, S. (1998). Systems theories: Their origins, foundations, and development. In J. S. Jordan (Ed.), *Systems theories and a priori aspects of perception* (pp. 47-74). Elsevier Science.

Lawrence, M., Homer-Dixon, T., Janzwood, S., Rockström, J., Renn, O., & Donges, J. F. (2024). Global polycrisis: The causal mechanisms of crisis entanglement. *Global Sustainability*, 7, e6. https://doi.org/10.1017/sus.2023.37

Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, appraisal, and coping*. Springer Publishing Company.

Lee, D. J., & Sirgy, M. J. (2004). Quality-of-life (QOL) marketing: Proposed antecedents and consequences. *Journal of Macromarketing*, 24(1), 44-58. https://doi.org/10.1177/0276146704263922

Lemon, N., Francis, J., & Baker, L. M. (2024). Well-being literacy in the academic landscape: Trioethnographic inquiry into scholarly writing. *Brock Education Journal*, 33(1), 27-48. https://doi.org/10.26522/brocked.v33i1.1120

Lemon, N., O'Brien, S., Later, N., Britton, S., & Prendergast, J. (2024). Pedagogy of belonging: Cultivating wellbeing literacy in higher education. *Higher Education*, 1-15. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-024-01317-8

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage Publications.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1986). But is it rigorous? Trustworthiness and authenticity in naturalistic evaluation. *New Directions for Program Evaluation*, 1986(30), 73-84. https://doi.org/10.1002/ev.1427

Lincoln, Y. S., Lynham, S. A., & Guba, E. G. (2011). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences, revisited. *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*, *4*(2), 97-128.

Lippman, L. H., Moore, K. A., & McIntosh, H. (2011). Positive indicators of child well-being: A conceptual framework, measures, and methodological issues. *Applied Research in Quality of Life*, 6(4), 425-449. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11482-011-9138-6

Lomas, T. (2019). The elements of eco-connection: A cross-cultural lexical enquiry. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 16(24), 5120. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph16245120

Lomas, T. (2022). Making waves in the great ocean: A historical perspective on the emergence and evolution of wellbeing scholarship. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 17(2), 257-270. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2021.2016900

Lomas, T., Waters, L., Williams, P., Oades, L. G., & Kern, M. L. (2021). Third wave positive psychology: Broadening towards complexity. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, *16*(5), 660-674. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2020.1805501

Lundy, L., Murray, C., Smith, K., & Ward, C. (2024). Young children's right to be heard on the quality of their education: Addressing potential misunderstandings in the context of early childhood education. *British Educational Research Journal*. https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3908

Lyubomirsky, S., King, L., & Diener, E. (2005). The benefits of frequent positive affect: Does happiness lead to success? *Psychological Bulletin*, 131(6), 803-855. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.131.6.80

Lykken, D., & Tellegen, A. (1996). Happiness is a stochastic phenomenon. *Psychological Science*, 7(3), 186-189. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9280.1996.tb00355.x

Mahmic, S., Kern, M. L., & Janson, A. (2021). Identifying and shifting disempowering paradigms for families of children with disability through a system informed positive psychology approach. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 663640. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.663640

Mahon, R. (2010). After neo-liberalism? The OECD, the World Bank and the child. *Global Social Policy*, 10(2), 172-192. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468018110366615

Mahon, R. (2016). Early childhood education and care in global discourses. In K. Mundy, A. Green, B. Lingard, & A. Verger (Eds.), *The handbook of global education policy* (pp. 224-240). Wiley-Blackwell.

Main, G., Montserrat, C., Andresen, S., Bradshaw, J., & Lee, B. J. (2019). Inequality, material well-being, and subjective well-being: Exploring associations for children across 15 diverse countries. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 97, 3-13. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2017.06.033

Mahony, L., McLeod, S., Salamon, A., & Dwyer, J. (2024). Why the voices of young children matter. In L. Mahony, S. McLeod, A. Salamon, & J. Dwyer (Eds.), *International perspectives on early childhood education and development* (pp. 3-16). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-56484-0_1

Malaguzzi, L. (1994). Your image of the child: Where teaching begins. *Child care information exchange*, 52-52.

Malle, B. F., & Knobe, J. (1997). The folk concept of intentionality. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 33(2), 101-121. https://doi.org/10.1006/jesp.1996.1314

Malterud, K., Siersma, V. D., & Guassora, A. D. (2016). Sample size in qualitative interview studies: Guided by information power. *Qualitative Health Research*, 26(13), 1753-1760. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732315617444

Marbina, L., Mashford-Scott, A., Church, C., & Tayler, C. (2015). Assessment of wellbeing in early childhood education and care: Literature review. Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority. https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Documents/earlyyears/EYLiteratureReview.pdf

Marmot, M., Friel, S., Bell, R., Houweling, T. A., & Taylor, S. (2008). Closing the gap in a generation: Health equity through action on the social determinants of health. *The Lancet*, 372(9650), 1661-1669. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(08)61690-6

Marshall, B., Cardon, P., Poddar, A., & Fontenot, R. (2013). Does sample size matter in qualitative research? A review of qualitative interviews in IS research. *Journal of Computer Information Systems*, 54(1), 11-22. https://doi.org/10.1080/08874417.2013.11645667

Marshan, J., & Pritadrajati, D. (2023). Maternal education and children's well-being: Evidence from four Pacific countries (ADBI Working Paper No. 1390). Asian Development Bank Institute.

Martin, K. (2007). Ma(r)king tracks and reconceptualising Aboriginal early childhood education: An Aboriginal Australian perspective. *Childrenz Issues: Journal of the Children's Issues Centre*, 11(1), 15-20.

Mashford-Scott, A., Church, A., & Tayler, C. (2012). Seeking children's perspectives on their wellbeing in early childhood settings. *International Journal of Early Childhood*, 44, 231-247. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13158-012-0069-9

Maslow, A. H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review, 50*(4), 370–396. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0

Maslow, A. H. (1970). *Motivation and personality* (2nd ed.). Harper & Row.

Mayor, F., Sema, T., & UNESCO. (1997). *UNESCO – an ideal in action: The continuing relevance of a visionary text*. UNESCO.

McAdams, D. (2019). "First we invented stories, then they changed us": The evolution of narrative identity. *Evolutionary Studies in Imaginative Culture*, 3(1), 1-18. https://doi.org/10.26613/esic.3.1.110

MCEECDYA (Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs). (2010). Engaging families in the early childhood development story: Neuroscience and early childhood development: Summary of selected literature and key messages for parenting. http://www.educationcouncil.edu.au/archive/Publications.aspx

Melhuish, E., Ereky-Stevens, K., Petrogiannis, K., Ariescu, A., Penderi, E., Rentzou, K., Tawell, A., Slot, P., Broekhuizen, M., & Leseman, P. (2015). A review of research on the effects of early childhood education and care (ECEC) on child development. CARE Project Report.

Millennium Ecosystem Assessment. (2005). *Ecosystems and human well-being: Synthesis*. Island Press. https://www.millenniumassessment.org/documents/document.356.aspx.pdf

Miller, M. G. (2015). Consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in early childhood education: The impact of colonial discourses. *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 42(5), 549-565. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-015-0186-z

Ministry of Education. (2017). *Te Whāriki. He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa: Early childhood curriculum*. Te Whāriki Early Childhood Curriculum

Moffitt, T. E., Arseneault, L., Belsky, D., Dickson, N., Hancox, R. J., Harrington, H., Houts, R., Poulton, R., Roberts, B. W., Ross, S., Sears, M. R., Thomson, W. M., & Caspi, A. (2011). A gradient of childhood self-control predicts health, wealth, and public safety. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 108(7), 2693-2698. https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1010076108

Mohammadabadi, A. M., Ketabi, S., & Nejadansari, D. (2019). Factors influencing language teacher cognition: An ecological systems study. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, 9(4), 657-680. https://doi.org/10.14746/ssllt.2019.9.4.5

Morgan, K. J. (2002). Forging the frontiers between state, church, and family: Religious cleavages and the origins of early childhood education and care policies in France, Sweden, and Germany. *Politics & Society*, 30(1), 113-148. https://doi.org/10.1177/0032329202030001005

Moss, P. (2015). There are alternatives! Contestation and hope in early childhood education. *Global Studies of Childhood*, 5(3), 226-238. https://doi.org/10.1177/2043610615597130

Moss, P. (2017). Power and resistance in early childhood education: From dominant discourse to democratic experimentalism. *Journal of Pedagogy*, 8(1), 11-32. https://doi.org/10.1515/jped-2017-0001

Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Sage Publications.

Moyles, J., Adams, S., & Musgrove, A. (2002). SPEEL: Study of pedagogical effectiveness in early learning. Department for Education and Skills.

NAEYC. (2002). Early learning standards, creating the conditions for success. National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education (NAECS/SDE) Joint Position Statement. https://oldweb.naeyc.org/about/positions/earlylearningstandards.asp

Nakamura, J., & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2002). The concept of flow. In C. R. Snyder & S. J. Lopez (Eds.), *Handbook of positive psychology* (pp. 89-105). Oxford University Press.

Nakata, M. (2007). The cultural interface. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, 36(S1), 7-14. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1326011100004646

National Health and Medical Research Council, Australian Research Council and Universities Australia. (2023). *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*. https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/national-statement-ethical-conduct-human-research-2023

National Mental Health Commission. (2021). The national children's mental health and wellbeing strategy. https://www.mentalhealthcommission.gov.au/getmedia/e369a330-f8c3-4b9e-ab76-7a428f9ff0e3/national-children-s-mental-health-and-wellbeing-strategy---full-report.pdf

National Research Council. (2000). *From neurons to neighborhoods: The science of early childhood development*. The National Academies Press. https://doi.org/10.17226/9824

National Research Council (US); Institute of Medicine (US). Children's Health, The Nation's Wealth: Assessing and Improving Child Health. Washington (DC): National Academies Press (US); 2004. PMID: 22536616. Children's Health, The Nation's Wealth: Assessing and Improving Child Health - PubMed

National Scientific Council on the Developing Child. (2004). Children's emotional development is built into the architecture of their brains: Working Paper No. 2. http://www.developingchild.net

National Scientific Council on the Developing Child. (2007). The timing and quality of early experiences combine to shape brain architecture: Working paper No. 5. https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/the-timing-and-quality-of-early-experiences-combine-to-shape-brain-architecture/

Neal, J. W., & Neal, Z. P. (2013). Nested or networked? Future directions for ecological systems theory. *Social Development*, *22*(4), 722-737. https://doi.org/10.1111/sode.12018

Nix, R. L., Bierman, K. L., Domitrovich, C. E., & Gill, S. (2013). Promoting children's social-emotional skills in preschool can enhance academic and behavioral functioning in kindergarten: Findings from Head Start REDI. *Early Education & Development*, 24(7), 1000-1019. https://doi.org/10.1080/10409289.2013.825565

Noble, K., Rehill, P., Sollis, K., Dakin, P., & Harris, D. (2023). *The wellbeing of Australia's children. ARACY & UNICEF Australia*. The wellbeing of Australia's children | UNICEF Australia

Nolan, A., & Raban, B. (2015). Reflection on one's practice: Research about theories espoused by practitioners–the grand and the personal. In T. David, K. Goouch, & S. Powell (Eds.), *The Routledge international handbook of philosophies and theories of early childhood education and care* (pp. 246-256). Routledge.

Norrish, J. M., Williams, P., O'Connor, M., & Robinson, J. (2013). An applied framework for positive education. *International Journal of Wellbeing*, 3(2), 147-161. https://doi.org/10.5502/ijw.v3i2.2

Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16(1), 1-13. https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847

Nussbaum, M. (2011). *Creating capabilities: The human development approach*. Harvard University Press. https://doi.org/10.4159/harvard.9780674061200

Nutbeam, D. (2008). The evolving concept of health literacy. *Social Science & Medicine, 67*(12), 2072-2078. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2008.09.050

Nutbrown, C., & Clough, P. (2014). *Early childhood education: History, philosophy and experience*. SAGE Publications Ltd. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446288863

Oades, L. G. (2017). Wellbeing literacy: The missing link in positive education. In M. White, G. Slemp, & A. Murray (Eds.), *Future directions in well-being*. Springer.

Oades, L. G., Slemp, G. R., & Siokou, C. L. (2019). Coaching and mentoring research: A practical guide.

Oades, L. G. (2020). Towards a wellbeing literate society. In K. Andrews (Ed.), *Innovations in a changing world* (pp. 14-18). ResearchGate.

Oades, L.G., Lemon, N., Francis, J., & Lomas, T. (Eds.). (2025). *Wellbeing Literacy: Theory and Practice Through Multidisciplinary and Transdisciplinary Lenses* (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003644293

Oades, L. G., & Johnston, A. L. (2017). Wellbeing literacy: The necessary ingredient in positive education. *Psychology and Behavioral Science International Journal*, 3(5), 1-3. https://doi.org/10.19080/PBSIJ.2017.03.555621

Oades, L. G., & Mossman, L. (2017). The science of wellbeing and positive psychology. In M. Slade, L. Oades, & A. Jarden (Eds.), *Wellbeing, recovery and mental health* (pp. 7-23). Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316339275.003

Oades, L., Slade, M., & Jarden, A. (2017). Wellbeing and recovery. In M. Slade, L. Oades, & A. Jarden (Eds.), *Wellbeing, recovery and mental health* (pp. 324-332). Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316339275.027

Oades, L. G., Ozturk, C., Hou, H., & Slemp, G. R. (2020). Wellbeing literacy: A language-use capability relevant to wellbeing outcomes of positive psychology intervention. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, *15*(5), 696-700.

Oades, L. G., Baker, L. M., Francis, J. J., & Taylor, J. A. (2021). Wellbeing literacy and positive education. In M. L. Kern & M. L. Wehmeyer (Eds.), *The Palgrave handbook of positive education* (pp. 325-343). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-64537-3_13

Oades, L. G., Hou, H., Francis, J. J., Baker, L. M., & Huang, L. (2021). Wellbeing literacy: Language use as a way to contextualise the process of positive education. In M. J. Furlong, R. Gilman, & E. S. Huebner (Eds.), *Handbook of positive psychology in schools* (3rd ed., pp. 316-332). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203106525-27

Oades, L. G., Jarden, A., Hou, H., Ozturk, C., Williams, P., Slemp, G. R., & Huang, L. (2021). Wellbeing literacy: A capability model for wellbeing science and practice. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *18*(2), 719. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18020719

Oades, L. G., Ozturk, C., Hou, H., & Slemp, G. R. (2020). Wellbeing literacy: A language-use capability relevant to wellbeing outcomes of positive psychology interventions. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, *15*(5), 696-700. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2020.1789711

Oades, L. G., Taylor, J. A., Francis, J., & Baker, L. M. (2021). Wellbeing literacy as an emancipatory and transformative capability. In M. A. White & F. McCallum (Eds.), *Wellbeing and resilience education* (pp. 209-231). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003044673-12

OECD. (2015a). *Starting Strong IV: Monitoring quality in early childhood education and care*. OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264233515-en

OECD. (2015b). *Skills for social progress: The power of social and emotional skills*. OECD Skills Studies, OECD Publishing.

OECD. (2017). *Starting strong 2017: Key OECD indicators on early childhood education and care*. OECD Publishing. http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264276116-en

OECD. (2019). *PISA 2018 assessment and analytical framework*. OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/b25efab8-en

OECD. (2020a). *Early learning and child well-being: A study of five-year-olds in England, Estonia, and the United States*. OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/3990407f-en

OECD. (2020b). *How's Life? 2020: Measuring well-being*. OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/9870c393-en

OECD. (2021). Enrolment rate in early childhood education (indicator). https://doi.org/10.1787/ce02d0f9-en

OECD. (2024). *Education at a glance 2024: OECD indicators*. OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/c00cad36-en

OECD/Eurostat/UNESCO Institute for Statistics. (2015). *ISCED 2011 operational manual: Guidelines for classifying national education programmes and related qualifications*. OECD Publishing. http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264228368-en

Pacheco, T., Gagnon, J., & Coulombe, S. (2025). Measuring and Studying wellbeing literacy. In L. G. Oades, N. Lemon, J. Francis, & T. Lomas (Eds.), *Wellbeing Literacy: Theory and Practice Through Multidisciplinary and Transdisciplinary Lenses* (1st ed., pp. 103-114). Routledge. *https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003644293*

Page, J., & Tayler, C. (2016). *Learning and teaching in the early years*. Cambridge University Press.

Passmore, J., Bajaj, B., & Oades, L. G. (Eds.). (2024). *The health and wellbeing coaches' handbook: A practitioner's guide for clinicians, coaches and health professionals*. Taylor & Francis.

Paul, R., & Norbury, C. (2012). *Language disorders from infancy through adolescence: Listening, speaking, reading, writing, and communicating* (4th ed.). Elsevier Mosby.

Penn, H. (2009). Public and private: The history of early education and care institutions in the United Kingdom. In K. Scheiwe & H. Willekens (Eds.), *Childcare and preschool development in Europe: Institutional perspectives* (pp. 105-125). Palgrave Macmillan.

Perry, K. H. (2012). What is literacy? A critical overview of sociocultural perspectives. *Journal of Language and Literacy Education*, 8(1), 50-71.

Peterson, C. (2004). Classification and measurement of character strengths: Implications for practice. In P. A. Linley & S. Joseph (Eds.), *Positive psychology in practice* (pp. 433-446). John Wiley & Sons. https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470939338.ch27

Piasta, S. B. (2016). Current understandings of what works to support the development of emergent literacy in early childhood classrooms. *Child Development Perspectives*, 10(4), 234-239. https://doi.org/10.1111/cdep.12188

Pollard, E. L., & Davidson, L. (2001). *Foundations of child well-being*. UNESCO Education Sector. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000124620

Pollard, E. L., & Lee, P. D. (2003). Child well-being: A systematic review of the literature. *Social Indicators Research*, 61, 59-78. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1021284215801

Polit, D. F., & Beck, C. T. (2006). The content validity index: Are you sure you know what's being reported? Critique and recommendations. *Research in Nursing & Health*, 29(5), 489-497. https://doi.org/10.1002/nur.20147

Potter, W. J., & Levine-Donnerstein, D. (1999). Rethinking validity and reliability in content analysis. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, *27*(3), 258-284. https://doi.org/10.1080/00909889909365539

Powell, K. C., & Kalina, C. J. (2009). Cognitive and social constructivism: Developing tools for an effective classroom. *Education*, 130(2), 241-250.

Prada, A., & Sanchez-Fernandez, P. (2021). World child well-being index: A multidimensional perspective. *Child Indicators Research*, 14(6), 2119-2144. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12187-021-09843-y

Press, F., Woodrow, C., Logan, H., & Mitchell, L. (2018). Can we belong in a neo-liberal world? Neo-liberalism in early childhood education and care policy in Australia and New Zealand. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, *19*(4), 328-339. https://doi.org/10.1177/1463949118781909

Prilleltensky, I. (2008). The role of power in wellness, oppression, and liberation: The promise of psychopolitical validity. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 36(2), 116-136. https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.20225

Prochner, L. (2000). A history of early education and child care in Canada, 1820-1966. In L. Prochner & N. Howe (Eds.), *Early childhood care and education in Canada: Past, present, and future* (pp. 11-65). UBC Press.

Prout, S. (2012). Indigenous wellbeing frameworks in Australia and the quest for quantification. *Social Indicators Research*, 109(2), 317-336. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-011-9905-7

Pulotu-Endemann, F. K. (2001). Fonofale model of health. https://www.nelsontasmankindergartens.com/uploads/1/4/4/2/14426744/fonofale_modelexplanation.pdf

Raban, B. (2012). Early literacy-audience, context and purpose. *Practically Primary*, 17(2), 4-5. https://doi.org/10.37517/978-1-74286-555-3_12

Raban, B., & Kilderry, A. (2019). The development of early childhood education and care in Australia. *Journal of Education*, 47(2), 23-40.

Raban, B., & Scull, J. (2023). Literacy. In S. Garvis & D. Pendergast (Eds.), *Teaching early years* (pp. 35-48). Routledge.

Raban, B., Ure, C., & Waniganayake, M. (2003). Multiple perspectives: Acknowledging the virtue of complexity in measuring quality. *Early Years*, 23(1), 67-77. https://doi.org/10.1080/0957514032000045573

Rahmatirad, M. (2020). A review of socio-cultural theory. *Siasat*, 5(3), 23-31.

Ransome, B. (2010). Sen and Aristotle on wellbeing. *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, 45(1), 41-52. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1839-4655.2010.tb00162.x

Razfar, A., & Gutiérrez, K. (2003). Reconceptualizing early childhood literacy: The sociocultural influence. In N. Hall, J. Larson, & J. Marsh (Eds.), *Handbook of early childhood literacy* (pp. 34-47). Sage. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781848608207.n4

Richardson, L., & St. Pierre, E. A. (2005). Writing: A method of inquiry. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed., pp. 959-978). SAGE Publications.

Rigney, L. I., & Kelly, S. (2023). Reterritorialising pedagogies of listening: Bringing into dialogue culturally responsive pedagogies with Reggio Emilia principles. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 44(1), 147-161. https://doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2022.2095243

Roache, A., George, J., & Baker, L. M. (2025). Connection, momentum, and growth: Exploring the benefits and challenges of 'Shut Up & Research' for researcher wellbeing. In N. Lemon, A. Bozle, M. Santa Cruz, & R. Saunders (Eds.), *Cultivating Wellbeing and Community through Writing in Academia: Shifting the Culture with Shut Up & Write!* Routledge.

Roffey, S. (2013). Inclusive and exclusive belonging: The impact on individual and community wellbeing. *Educational and Child Psychology*, *30*(1), 38-49.

Rogers, C. R. (1963). The concept of the fully functioning person. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research & Practice*, *1*(1), 17-26. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0088567

Rogers, S. (2015). Positioning play in early childhood curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. In D. Wyse, L. Hayward, & J. Pandya (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment* (pp. 590-606). SAGE Publications.

Rogers, C. R., Nulty, K. L., Betancourt, M. A., & DeThorne, L. S. (2015). Causal effects on child language development: A review of studies in communication sciences and disorders. *Journal of Communication Disorders*, 57, 3-15. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcomdis.2015.06.004

Rogoff, B. (2003). *The cultural nature of human development*. Oxford University Press.

Rohrmann, T., Brody, D. L., & Plaisir, J. Y. (2020). A diversity of cultural and institutional contexts. In T. Rohrmann, D. L. Brody, & J. Y. Plaisir (Eds.), *Exploring career trajectories of men in the early childhood education and care workforce* (pp. 28-40). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003048473-4

Rosa, E. M., & Tudge, J. (2013). Urie Bronfenbrenner's theory of human development: Its evolution from ecology to bioecology. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, *5*(4), 243-258. https://doi.org/10.1111/jftr.12022

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 68-78. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.55.1.68

Ryff, C. D. (1989). Happiness is everything, or is it? Explorations on the meaning of psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *57*(6), 1069-1081. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.57.6.1069

Ryff, C. D., & Keyes, C. L. M. (1995). The structure of psychological well-being revisited. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 69(4), 719-727. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.69.4.719

Ryff, C. D., & Singer, B. (2003). Flourishing under fire: Resilience as a prototype of challenged thriving. In C. L. M. Keyes & J. Haidt (Eds.), *Flourishing: Positive psychology and the life well-lived* (pp. 15-36). American Psychological Association.

Saffran, J. R., Werker, J. F., & Werner, L. A. (2006). The infant's auditory world: Hearing, speech, and the beginnings of language. In D. Kuhn, R. S. Siegler, W. Damon, & R. M. Lerner (Eds.), *Handbook of child psychology: Cognition, perception, and language* (pp. 58-108). John Wiley & Sons.

Sahlberg, P. (2016). The global educational reform movement and its impact on schooling. In K. Mundy, A. Green, B. Lingard, & A. Verger (Eds.), *The handbook of global education policy* (pp. 128-144). Wiley-Blackwell.

Salmon, M., Doery, K., Dance, P., Chapman, J., Gilbert, R., Williams, R., & Lovett, R. (2019). Defining the indefinable: Descriptors of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures and their links to health and wellbeing. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

Saracho, O. N. (2019). Research, policy, and practice in early childhood literacy. In O. N. Saracho (Ed.), *Research in young children's literacy and language development* (pp. 7-23). Routledge.

Saunders, M. N., Lewis, P., Thornhill, A., & Bristow, A. (2019). Understanding research philosophy and approaches to theory development. In M. N. K. Saunders, P. Lewis, & A. Thornhill (Eds.), *Research methods for business students* (pp. 128-171). Pearson.

Scheier, M. F., & Carver, C. S. (1985). Optimism, coping, and health: Assessment and implications of generalized outcome expectancies. *Health Psychology*, 4(3), 219-247. https://doi.org/10.1037/0278-6133.4.3.219

Schleicher, A. (2020). The impact of COVID-19 on education: Insights from Education at a Glance 2020. OECD. https://www.oecd.org/education/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-education-insights-education-at-a-glance-2020.pdf

Schreyer, I., & Krause, M. (2016). Pedagogical staff in children's day care services in Germany – links between working conditions, job satisfaction, commitment and work-related stress. *Early Years*, 36(2), 132-147. https://doi.org/10.1080/09575146.2015.1115390

Schull, C. P., La Croix, L., Miller, S. E., Austin, K. S., & Kidd, J. K. (2021). Examining theories that support literacy development. In C. P. Schull, L. La Croix, S. E. Miller, K. S. Austin, & J. K. Kidd (Eds.), *Early childhood literacy: Engaging and empowering emergent readers and writers, birth-age 5* (pp. 21-44). Cognella.

Schwalbe, M. L. (1983). Language and the self: An expanded view from a symbolic interactionist perspective. *Symbolic Interaction*, 6(2), 291-306. https://doi.org/10.1525/si.1983.6.2.291

Schull, J., Nolan, A., & Raban, B. (2013). Young learners: Interpreting literacy practice in the preschool years. *The Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, 36(1), 38-47.

Searle, J. R. (1995). *The construction of social reality*. Simon and Schuster.

Seligman, M. E. P. (2011). *Flourish: A visionary new understanding of happiness and wellbeing*. Heinemann.

Seligman, M. E. P., & Adler, A. (2018). Positive education. In Global Happiness Council (Ed.), *Global happiness policy report 2018* (pp. 52-74).

Seligman, M. E., & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2000). Positive psychology: An introduction. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 5-14. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.55.1.5

Seligman, M. E., Ernst, R. M., Gillham, J., Reivich, K., & Linkins, M. (2009). Positive education: Positive psychology and classroom interventions. *Oxford Review of Education*, 35(3), 293-311. https://doi.org/10.1080/03054980902934563

Sen, A. (1993). Capability and wellbeing. In M. C. Nussbaum & A. Sen (Eds.), *The quality of life* (pp. 30-53). Clarendon Press.

Senge, P. (1990). *The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization*. Doubleday/Currency.

Serini, L., Riva, E., Meilstrup, C. B., Nelausen, M. K., & Nielsen, L. (2024). Co-creating a podcast with students: Working together to promote wellbeing literacy through digital pedagogies in higher education. *Routledge Open Research*, 3(38), 38. https://doi.org/10.12688/routledgeopenres.18677.1

Shapiro, S. L., Carlson, L. E., Astin, J. A., & Freedman, B. (2006). Mechanisms of mindfulness. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 62(3), 373-386. https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.20237

Sharp, P. (2000). Promoting emotional literacy: Emotional literacy improves and increases your life chances. *Pastoral Care in Education*, 18(3), 8-10. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0122.00165

Sharp, P. (2014). *Nurturing emotional literacy: A practical guide for teachers, parents and those in the caring professions*. Routledge.

Shaw, R. (2010). Embedding reflexivity within experiential qualitative psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 7(3), 233-243. https://doi.org/10.1080/14780880802699092

Shin, D. C., & Johnson, D. M. (1978). Avowed happiness as an overall assessment of the quality of life. *Social Indicators Research*, *5*(1-4), 475-492. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00352944

Shonkoff, J. P. (2010). Building a new biodevelopmental framework to guide the future of early childhood policy. *Child Development*, 81(1), 357-367. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2009.01399.x

Shonkoff, J. P. (2012). Leveraging the biology of adversity to address the roots of disparities in health and development. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 109(Suppl 2), 17302-17307. https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1121259109

Shonkoff, J. P., & Garner, A. S. (2012). The lifelong effects of early childhood adversity and toxic stress (Technical Report). *Pediatrics*, 129(1), e232-e246. https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2011-2663

Shonkoff, J. P., & Phillips, D. A. (Eds.). (2000). *From neurons to neighborhoods: The science of early childhood development*. National Academies Press.

Shonkoff, J. P., Garner, A. S., Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health, Committee on Early Childhood, Adoption, and Dependent Care, and Section on Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics. (2012). The lifelong effects of early childhood adversity and toxic stress. *Pediatrics*, 129(1), e232-e246. https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2011-2663

Shoshani, A., & Slone, M. (2017). Positive education for young children: Effects of a positive psychology intervention for preschool children on subjective well being and learning behaviors. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 8, 1866. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.01866

Shuey, E., & Kankaraš, M. (2018). The power and promise of early learning (OECD Education Working Papers, No. 186). OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/f9b2e53f-en

Simpson, B. (2018). Pragmatism: A philosophy of practice. In C. Cassell, A. L. Cunliffe, & G. Grandy (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative business and management research methods* (pp. 54-68). SAGE Publications.

Sims, M. (2017). Neoliberalism and early childhood. *Cogent Education*, 4(1), 1365411. https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2017.1365411

Siraj-Blatchford, I., Sylva, K., Muttock, S., Gilden, R., & Bell, D. (2002). Researching effective pedagogy in the early years (REPEY). Department for Education and Skills, Research Report, 356.

Sirgy, M. J. (2018). The psychology of material well-being. *Applied Research in Quality of Life*, 13(2), 273-301. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11482-017-9590-z

Skilling, K., & Stylianides, G. J. (2020). Using vignettes in educational research: A framework for vignette construction. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 43(5), 541-556. https://doi.org/10.1080/1743727x.2019.1704243

Sklad, M., Diekstra, R., De Ritter, M., Ben, J., & Gravesteijn, C. (2012). Effectiveness of school-based universal social, emotional, and behavioral programs: Do they enhance students' development in the area of skill, behavior, and adjustment? *Psychology in the Schools*, 49(9), 892-909. https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.21641

Smid, D., Mercer, S., Murillo-Miranda, C., & Baum, M. T. (2024). Understanding the well-being literacy of EFL learners: Towards a framework of learners' knowledge and skills. *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, 80(4), 333-353. https://doi.org/10.3138/cmlr-2023-0031

Snow, C. E. (2017). Early literacy development and instruction: An overview. In N. Kucirkova, C. E. Snow, V. Grøver, & C. McBride (Eds.), *The Routledge international handbook of early literacy education* (pp. 5-13). Routledge.

Snyder, C. R. (Ed.). (2000). *Handbook of hope: Theory, measures, and applications*. Academic Press.

Sousa, D., & Moss, P. (2024). From anger to dreaming to real utopias: Re-thinking, re-conceptualising and re-forming (early childhood) education in the conditions of the times. *Global Studies of Childhood*, 14(3), 250-263. https://doi.org/10.1177/20436106231219435

Statham, J., & Chase, E. (2010). Childhood wellbeing: A brief overview. Childhood Wellbeing Research Centre. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/242676811_Childhood_Wellbeing_A_Brief_Overview

Steiner, C. (2003). *Emotional literacy: Intelligence with a heart*. Personhood Press.

Street, B. V. (2014). *Social literacies: Critical approaches to literacy in development, ethnography and education*. Routledge.

Steger, M. F. (2009). Meaning in life. In S. J. Lopez & C. R. Snyder (Eds.), *Oxford handbook of positive psychology* (2nd ed., pp. 679-687). Oxford University Press.

Suh, E. M., & Koo, J. (2008). Comparing subjective well-being across cultures and nations: The "what" and "why" questions. In M. Eid & R. J. Larsen (Eds.), *The science of subjective well-being* (pp. 414-427). Guilford Press.

Sun, J., Schwartz, H. A., Son, Y., Kern, M. L., & Vazire, S. (2020). The language of well-being: Tracking fluctuations in emotion experience through everyday speech. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 118(2), 364-387. https://doi.org/10.1037/pspp0000244

Sutton-Smith, B. (2008). Play theory: A personal journey and new thoughts. *American Journal of Play*, 1(1), 80-123.

Tayler, C. (2016). Reforming Australian early childhood education and care provision (2009–2015). *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, *41*(2), 27-31. https://doi.org/10.1177/183693911604100205

Tayler, C., Thorpe, K., Nguyen, C., Adams, R., & Ishimine, K. (2016). The E4Kids study: Assessing the effectiveness of Australian early childhood education and care programs: Overview of findings at 2016. Melbourne School of Graduate Education, The University of Melbourne.

Terry, G., Hayfield, N., Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2017). Thematic analysis. In W. Stainton Rogers & C. Willig (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research in psychology* (pp. 17-37). Sage. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781526405555.n2

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. (2019). Child and youth wellbeing strategy. https://childyouthwellbeing.govt.nz/resources/child-and-youth-wellbeing-strategy

Thoilliez, B. (2011). How to grow up happy: An exploratory study on the meaning of happiness from children's voices. *Child Indicators Research*, 4(2), 323-351. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12187-011-9107-5

Thompson, R. A. (2016). What more has been learned? The science of early childhood development 15 years after neurons to neighborhoods. *Zero to Three Journal*, 36(3), 18-24.

Thomas, J. (2009). Working paper: Current measures and the challenges of measuring children's wellbeing. Office for National Statistics. https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20160105160709/http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171766_233272.pdf

Torii, K., Fox, S., & Cloney, D. (2017). Quality is key in early childhood education in Australia. Mitchell Institute Policy Paper No. 01/2017. Mitchell Institute, Victoria University. Quality is Key in Early Childhood Education in Australia.docx

Tzuriel, D. (2021). The socio-cultural theory of Vygotsky. In D. Tzuriel (Ed.), *Mediated learning and cognitive modifiability* (pp. 45-68). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-75692-5_3

UNICEF Office of Research. (n.d.). UNICEF Innocenti Report Card series. https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/series/report-card/

UNICEF Office of Research. (2013). Child well-being in rich countries: A comparative overview (Innocenti Report Card 11). UNICEF Office of Research.

United Nations. (1989). Convention on the rights of the child. UN Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights. https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child

United Nations. (2013). *Happiness: Towards a holistic approach to development*. United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/67/238. https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/745843?ln=en

United Nations. (2015). *Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda

United Nations. (2022). *The Sustainable Development Goals report 2022*. https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2022/

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (1990). *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention

UNESCO. (2000). The Dakar framework for action: Education for all – Meeting our collective commitments. UNESCO.

UNESCO. (2016). Education for people and planet: Creating sustainable futures for all (Global Education Monitoring Report 2016). UNESCO Publishing.

UNESCO. (2022). World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education: Tashkent Declaration and Commitments to Action for Transforming Early Childhood Care and Education. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000384419

Urban, M., Vandenbroeck, M., Van Laere, K., Lazzari, A., & Peeters, J. (2012). Towards competent systems in early childhood education and care. Implications for policy and practice. *European Journal of Education*, 47(4), 508-526. https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12010

Van de Pol, J., Volman, M., & Beishuizen, J. (2010). Scaffolding in teacher–student interaction: A decade of research. *Educational Psychology Review*, 22, 271-296. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-010-9127-6

Van Manen, M. (2017). But is it phenomenology? *Qualitative Health Research*, 27(6), 775-779. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732317699570

Varpio, L., Paradis, E., Uijtdehaage, S., & Young, M. (2020). The distinctions between theory, theoretical framework, and conceptual framework. *Academic Medicine*, 95(7), 989-994. https://doi.org/10.1097/ACM.0000000000003075

Vaughn, S., Schumm, J. S., & Sinagub, J. (1996). *Focus group interviews in education and psychology*. SAGE Publications.

Vo, D. T., Allen, K. A., Reupert, A., & Waters, L. (2023). Using metaphors to shine a light on wellbeing education. In K. A. Allen, M. Kern, D. Dulagil, & M. White (Eds.), *New research and possibilities in wellbeing education* (pp. 207-226). Springer Nature Singapore.

Von Suchodoletz, A., Lee, D. S., Henry, J., Tamang, S., Premachandra, B., & Yoshikawa, H. (2023). Early childhood education and care quality and associations with child outcomes: A meta-analysis. *PLoS One*, 18(5), e0285985. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0285985

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.

Walsh, K., L'Estrange, L., Smith, R., Burr, T., & Williams, K. E. (2024). Translating neuroscience to early childhood education: A scoping review of neuroscience-based professional learning for early childhood educators. *Educational Research Review*, 45, Article 100585. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2023.100585

Wang, X. C., Bernas, R., & Eberhard, P. (2011). Engaging ECEC children with indigenous and western ways of knowing and learning. *Young Children*, *66*(5), 48-55.

Wasmuth, H., & Nitecki, E. (2017). Global early childhood policies: The impact of the global education reform movement and possibilities for reconceptualization. *Global Education Review*, 4(2), 1-17.

Waters, L. (2011). A review of school-based positive psychology interventions. *The Australian Educational and Developmental Psychologist*, 28(2), 75-90. https://doi.org/10.1375/aedp.28.2.75

Waters, L., Cameron, K., Nelson-Coffey, S. K., Crone, D. L., Kern, M. L., Lomas, T., Oades, L., Owens, R. L., Pawelski, J. O., Rashid, T., Warren, M. A., White, M. A., & Williams, P. (2022). Collective wellbeing and posttraumatic growth during COVID-19: How positive psychology can help families, schools, workplaces and marginalized communities. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, *17*(6), 761-789. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2021.1940251

Waters, L., Dussert, D., & Loton, D. (2022). How do young children understand and action their own well-being? Positive psychology, student voice, and well-being literacy in early childhood. *International Journal of Applied Positive Psychology*, *7*(1), 91-117. https://doi.org/10.1007/s41042-021-00056-w

Waters, L., & Higgins, M. C. (2022). The impact of a teacher-based positive education intervention on student wellbeing literacy. *Journal of School and Educational Psychology*, *2*(1), 22-43. https://doi.org/10.47602/josep.v2i1.12

Warren, D., O'Connor, M., Smart, D., & Edwards, B. (2016). A critical review of the early childhood literature. Australian Institute of Family Studies.

White, M. A. (2023). New international research priorities for wellbeing education. In M. A. White (Ed.), *New research and possibilities in wellbeing education* (pp. 385-402). Springer Nature Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-5609-8_18

White, M. A., & McCallum, F. (Eds.). (2021). *Wellbeing and resilience education: COVID-19 and its impact on education*. Routledge.

White, S. C. (2008). But what is wellbeing? A framework for analysis in social and development policy and practice (WeD Working Paper No. 43). Wellbeing in Developing Countries ESRC Research Group, University of Bath.

Wohlwend, K. E. (2015). *Playing their way into literacies: Reading, writing, and belonging in the early childhood classroom*. Teachers College Press.

Wolfe, P. (2006). Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native. *Journal of Genocide Research*, 8(4), 387-409. https://doi.org/10.1080/14623520601056240

Wong, P. T. (2011). Positive psychology 2.0: Towards a balanced interactive model of the good life. *Canadian Psychology/Psychologie Canadienne*, 52(2), 69-81. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0022511

Wong, P. T. (2016). Meaning-seeking, self-transcendence, and well-being. In A. Batthyány (Ed.), *Logotherapy and existential analysis: Proceedings of the Viktor Frankl Institute Vienna, Volume 1* (pp. 311-321). Springer International Publishing.

Wong, P. T. P. (2019). Second wave positive psychology's (PP 2.0) contribution to counselling psychology. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly*, *32*(3-4), 275-284. https://doi.org/10.1080/09515070.2019.1671320

Wong, S., & Press, F. (2020). The development of early childhood education and care in Australia. In M. Gasper & R. Walker (Eds.), *Understanding early childhood education and care in Australia* (pp. 13-33). Routledge.

Wood, E., & Hedges, H. (2016). Curriculum in early childhood education: Critical questions about content, coherence, and control. *The Curriculum Journal*, 27(3), 387-405. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585176.2015.1129981

World Health Organization. (1948). *Constitution of the World Health Organization*. https://apps.who.int/gb/bd/PDF/bd47/EN/constitution-en.pdf

World Health Organization. (2018). *International classification of diseases for mortality and morbidity statistics* (11th rev.). https://icd.who.int/

World Health Organization. (2021). Health promotion glossary of terms 2021. https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240038349

World Health Statistics 2025: Monitoring health for the SDGs, Sustainable Development Goals. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2025. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO. World health statistics 2025: monitoring health for the SDGs, sustainable development goals

Xu, J.-Q., Tang, Y.-M. J., & Chen, H. Y. K. (2025). Impact of an online mindfulness-based program on wellbeing and trait mindfulness for research postgraduate students: A randomized-controlled trial. *BMC Psychology*, 13(28). https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-024-02233-3

Yildirim, M., Dilekçi, Ü., Aksoy, Ş., & Mohammed Abdullah Alkhulayfi, A. (2025). Investigating the impact of well-being literacy on psychological adjustment problems, life satisfaction, and psychological well-being in Turkish undergraduate students: the mediating role of optimism. *BMC psychology*, *13*(1), 1291.

Yilmaz, K. (2013). Comparison of quantitative and qualitative research traditions: Epistemological, theoretical, and methodological differences. *European Journal of Education*, 48(2), 311-325. https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12014

Yoshikawa, H., Weiland, C., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2016). When does preschool matter? *The Future of Children*, 26(2), 21-35. https://doi.org/10.1353/foc.2016.0010

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A - Full Qualtrics Survey Questions for Online Survey (Study 2)

1. What is your current role? (Please select all that apply) - *Selected Choice* / Other (please state, for example coach, other leadership role) – *Text*
2. Which age group/s do you usually work with? (Tick all that apply) - *Selected Choice / Other (please state) - Text*
3. What is your highest qualification in education? (That you have or are currently studying) - Selected Choice / Other (Please specify) - *Text*
4. Which best describes your gender?
5. How would you describe your cultural background? (Your cultural background is the cultural/ethnic group(s) to which you feel you belong or identify. It may be the same as your family or your heritage, the country you were born in or have spent a great amount of time in, or you feel more closely tied to). *Selected Choice / Other (Please specify) - Text*
6. Apart from English, in which language/s could you have a conversation about a lot of everyday things? - Selected Choice / Other language/s (please specify) - Text
7. Are you of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin? Selected Choice
8. In the following section, I would like to hear your perspectives about children's wellbeing. This will help me understand what teachers think and do, and where information and ideas come from. There are no right or wrong answers. I simply ask for your opinion, based on your experience and knowledge. The term 'wellbeing' can mean many different things. It appears frequently in the Early Years Learning Framework V2.0 (EYLF) with respect to children's learning, development and wellbeing. If you had to choose 5 words to define or describe 'child wellbeing' what would they be? (Please provide up to 5) Text
9. Where do you go to learn about children's wellbeing or ways you can promote it? (Please tick all that apply) - Selected Choice / Other (please specify) - Text
10. From the list below, how often do you use the following documents to inform your practices/strategies about children's wellbeing, or to help you understand about child wellbeing? - United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

11. From the list below, how often do you use the following documents to inform your practices/strategies about children's wellbeing, or to help you understand about child wellbeing? - Child Wellbeing and Safety Act
12. From the list below, how often do you use the following documents to inform your practices/strategies about children's wellbeing, or to help you understand about child wellbeing? - Guide to the National Quality Framework
13. From the list below, how often do you use the following documents to inform your practices/strategies about children's wellbeing, or to help you understand about child wellbeing? - Education and Care services National Regulations
14. From the list below, how often do you use the following documents to inform your practices/strategies about children's wellbeing, or to help you understand about child wellbeing? - Education And Care Services National Law Act
15. From the list below, how often do you use the following documents to inform your practices/strategies about children's wellbeing, or to help you understand about child wellbeing? - The National Quality Standard / Education and Care services National Regulations / Education And Care Services National Law Act / The National Quality Standard / The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (EYLF) or Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) / ACECQA information sheets
16. Learning Outcome 3 in the approved learning frameworks (i.e. EYLF and/or VEYLDF) is 'Children have a strong sense of wellbeing'. In your work, how do you know if a child has a strong sense of wellbeing? (Please share as much or as little as you wish)
17. What do you do to promote a child having a strong sense of wellbeing? (Please share as much or as little as you wish)
18. What do you do to support a child who has a low / weak sense of wellbeing? (Please share as much or as little as you wish)
19. Below are some words that may relate to children's wellbeing. To what extent do you associate these areas with children's wellbeing? – Risk / Protection / Safety / Health / Hygiene / Family / Development / Comfort / Learning / Outcome / Physical Wellbeing / Mental Wellbeing / Resilience / Connection
20. Learning Outcome 5 in the approved learning frameworks (i.e. EYLF and/or VEYLDF) is 'Children are effective communicators'. In what ways do you think

children are effective communicators about their wellbeing?
(Please list or describe)

21. Thanks for your answers so far! I do appreciate your time. In the following section, I would like to hear your pedagogy and teaching practices to promote children's wellbeing. Please note below what you think are the three most important things you teach children about wellbeing.
22. Teachers may teach children words and information about wellbeing. For example, teaching about mindfulness, naming feelings or managing their emotions. Within the many planning and teaching demands of your work, how important is it to you to teach children words and information so they can communicate about their own wellbeing?
23. Why is it at this level of importance to you?
24. Are there any barriers to you being able to do this more often? And if yes, what are they?
25. Please give an example of how you teach children words and information so they can communicate about their wellbeing.
26. Children's communication about wellbeing may be through their expressive language, such as speaking, writing, and/or creating. Teachers might intentionally support this with art experiences, singing, dancing or conversations that are related to wellbeing. For example, when children are provided drawing or pasting materials to create happy or sad faces, expressing how they feel. Within the many planning and teaching demands of your work, how important is it to you to provide such expressive language experiences so children are able to communicate about wellbeing?
27. Why is it at this level of importance to you?
28. Are there any barriers to you being able to do this more often? And if yes, what are they?
29. Please give an example of how you provide expressive language experiences so children can understand about wellbeing.
30. Children's may learn about wellbeing may be through receptive language, skills such as reading, listening or viewing. Teachers might intentionally support this with books, storytelling, signing/gestures, music or video clips that are related to wellbeing. For example, reading a story about friendship and showing pictures of

different emotions. How important is it to you to provide such receptive language experiences so children are able to understand about wellbeing?

31. Within the many planning and teaching demands of your work, how important is it to you to provide such receptive language experiences so children are able to understand about wellbeing? - *Text*
32. Why is it at this level of importance to you? - *Text*
33. Are there any barriers to you being able to do this more often? And if yes, what are they? - *Text*
34. Please give an example of how you provide receptive language experiences so children can understand about wellbeing. – *Text*
35. Sometimes people change the way they express and receive language about their wellbeing in different contexts (for example at home versus at work). Have you observed children changing the way they communicate about wellbeing in different contexts and/or with different people? (For example words and ideas they use a with their families

APPENDIX B - Human Ethics Approval

Page 1

'This material has been removed by the author of this thesis for privacy reasons'.

APPENDIX B - Human Ethics Approval

Page 2

'This material has been removed by the author of this thesis for privacy reasons'.

APPENDIX C - Plain Language Statement (Online Survey - Study 2)

Note – Identifying material has been removed by the author of this thesis from this Consent Form image.

Introduction

Thank you for your interest in participating in this research project. The following pages will provide you with further information about the project, so that you can decide if you would like to take part in this research.

Please take the time to read this information carefully. You may ask questions about anything you don't understand or want to know more about. Your participation is voluntary. If you don't wish to take part, you don't have to. If you begin participating, you can also stop at any time.

What is this research about?

Child wellbeing is a key learning outcome of early childhood education and care (ECEC) in Australia. We would like to know what early childhood teachers in Victorian funded kindergarten programs think, know and do about child wellbeing.

What will I be asked to do?

Should you participate, you to fill out an anonymous online survey (this will take about 10-15 mins). The survey will ask you questions about your professional early childhood experience (for example what role you have, your qualifications), what you understand about children's wellbeing and ways you promote the wellbeing of children in your work.

What are the possible benefits?

It is anticipated that this study will contribute to research in ECEC and wellbeing science. We hope it will help researchers, professionals and policy makers to understand what teachers and educators know and recognise about child wellbeing and what they do about it in practice.

What are the possible risks?

While we expect there will be no risk of distress or inconvenience from doing the survey, if completing the questions raises issues or concern regarding your own wellbeing or children's wellbeing, you can access a list of websites at the end of the survey.

Do I have to take part?

No. Your participation is completely voluntary and anonymous. There are no consequences for participating or not participating. You can complete all or part of the survey however once you

Project ID Number: 25979 Plain Language Statement V1 25.08.2023

submit your responses we will be unable to remove the data as your responses are anonymous. After completing the survey, you can choose to enter a random draw to win one of four $50 retail vouchers.

Will I hear about the results of this project?
Results may be included in academic publications, conferences and/or conversational articles. When the studies concludes, the findings will be part of the written thesis available through the University library. You can also request a copy of the overall research summary to be emailed to you at the end of the project.

What will happen to information about me?
You will never be personally identified in results published from this study and only demographic information will be kept. No personally identifiable information will be collected, but should you wish to provide contact details for future involvement it will be stored separately from your survey responses. The survey data will be stored securely on a server at the University of Melbourne for the duration of the project, and for a period of five years after the final publication, as per University of Melbourne guidelines.

Where can I get further information?
If you would like more information, please contact the researchers; Lisa Baker

Who can I contact if I have any concerns about the project?
This project has human research ethics approval from The University of Melbourne [Project ID 25979]. If you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of this research project, which you do not wish to discuss with the research team, you should contact the Research Integrity Administrator, Office of Research Ethics and Integrity, University of Melbourne, VIC

APPENDIX D - Participant Consent Form (Online Survey - Study 2)

Note – Identifying material has been removed by the author of this thesis from this Consent Form image.

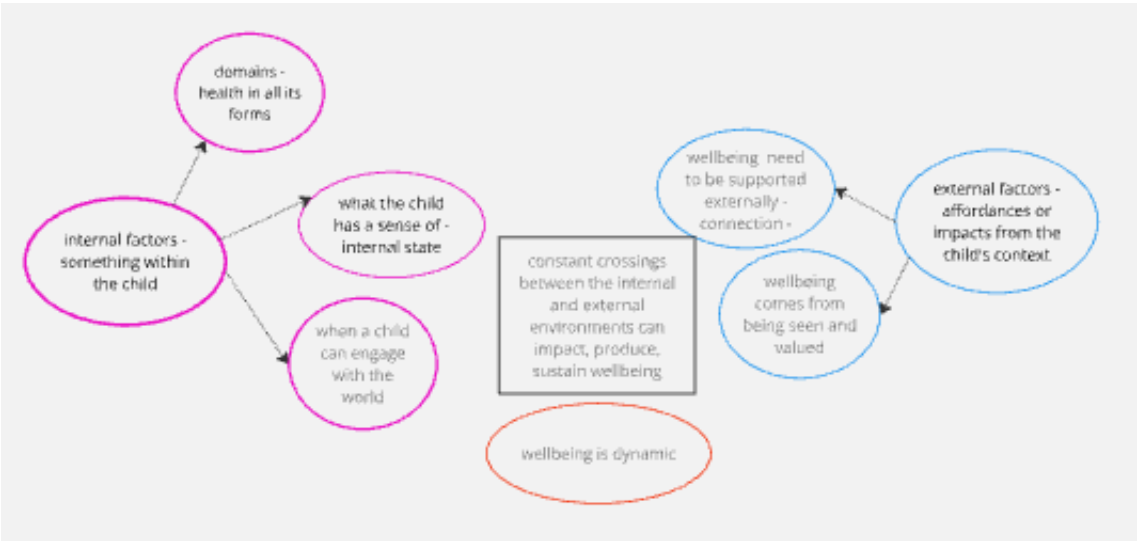
1. I consent to participate in this project, the details of which have been explained to me, and I have been provided with a written plain language statement to keep.
2. I understand that the purpose of this research is to investigate how early childhood professionals view child wellbeing and what pedagogical practices they use to support and/or promote child wellbeing.
3. I understand that my participation in this project is for research purposes only.
4. I acknowledge that the possible effects of participating in this research project have been explained to my satisfaction.
5. In this project I will be required to fill out an anonymous online survey (this will take about 10-15 mins). The survey will ask questions about my professional early childhood experience (for example my current role, years of experience and qualifications), what I know and think about children's wellbeing and to share some ways that I support and promote the wellbeing of children in my work.
6. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from this project anytime without explanation or prejudice and to withdraw any unprocessed data that I have provided.
7. I understand that the data from this research will be stored at the University of Melbourne and will be destroyed 5 years after publication.
8. I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded subject to any legal requirements; my data will be password protected and accessible only by the named researchers.
9. I understand that after I sign and return this consent form, it will be retained by the researcher.

I understand that by proceeding to the online survey, I consent to participate in this research, the details of which have been explained to me in a plain language statement.

Project ID Number: 25979 Plain Language Statement V1 25.08.2023

APPENDIX E - 'Miro' Board Samples Illustrating Components of the Reflexive Thematic Analysis of Survey Data (Study 2)

How do early childhood teachers in kindergarten programs define, describe and conceptualise child wellbeing?
being healthy
mental health
spiritual
social skills
whole child
sensory needs
domains - health in all its forms - holistic?
internal factors - something within the child - what the child brings to ECEC
what the child has a sense of - internal state
identity and sense of self
sense of belonging
stable and balanced
wellbeing comes from being seen and valued
external factors - affordances or impacts from the child's context, external views and perceptions
how the child sees themselves, or functions
a balanced state
how the world sees the child, or affords functioning
crossings between internal and external
provision of support
wellbeing need to be supported externally - connection - cannot be 'done' alone, it is
when a child can actively engage with the environment - adapt, internal and external? the coming together of int to
wellbeing is not static - it is malleable, learnable in ECEC, participatory, dynamic (a quality of wellbeing), not singular, is lifelong
engaged in learning
elements of time


domains - health in all its forms
internal factors - something within the child
what the child has a sense of - internal state
when a child can engage with the world
constant crossings between the internal and external environments can impact, produce, sustain wellbeing
wellbeing is dynamic
wellbeing need to be supported externally - connection -
external factors - affordances or impacts from the child's context
wellbeing comes from being seen and valued

APPENDIX F - Plain Language Statement for Focus Groups (Study 3)

Note – Identifying material has been removed by the author of this thesis from this Consent Form image.

Introduction

Thank you for your interest in participating in this research project. The following pages will provide you with further information about the project, so that you can decide if you would like to take part in this research.

Please take the time to read this information carefully. You may ask questions about anything you don't understand or want to know more about. Your participation is voluntary. If you don't wish to take part, you don't have to. If you begin participating, you can also stop at any time.

What is this research about?

Child wellbeing is a key learning outcome of early childhood education and care (ECEC) in Australia. The concept of wellbeing literacy may be useful in ECEC practice to understand child wellbeing. We would like to know what ECEC professionals think about wellbeing literacy and how their current pedagogical practices (used to support and/or promote the wellbeing of 3-5 year children in early childhood settings) may align with the wellbeing literacy model.

What will I be asked to do?

You are invited to participate in an online focus group (of approximately 60-90 minutes). The aim is to hear perspectives from ECEC teachers about teaching practices and how wellbeing literacy may align. With your permission, the focus group discussion will be video-captured and/or audio recorded to ensure that we make an accurate record of what you and others say. You will be offered a $40 gift voucher to thank you for your time participating in the focus group.

What are the possible benefits?

It is anticipated that this study will contribute to research in ECEC and wellbeing science. We hope it will help researchers, professionals and policy makers to understand how wellbeing literacy connects to, and can inform and expand, what teachers know and do about child wellbeing.

What are the possible risks?

While we expect there will be no risk of distress or concern during the focus group, if conversation raises issues or discomfort about your own wellbeing or children's wellbeing, we will provide a list of services and websites to gain help/information. Participation in this focus

Project ID Number: 25979 Plain Language Statement V3 02.07.2024

group is voluntary, and you can refrain from any questions or discussions you do not want to answer, and/or leave the conversation at any time.

Do I have to take part?

No. Your participation is completely voluntary. There are no consequences for participating or not participating. Should you wish to withdraw at any stage, or to withdraw any unprocessed data you have supplied, you are free to do so without prejudice and any unprocessed data from you will be destroyed in line with the ethics requirements of The University of Melbourne.

Will I hear about the results of this project?

Results may be included in academic publications, conferences and/or conversational articles. When the studies concludes, the findings will be part of the written thesis available through the University library. You can also request a copy of the overall research summary to be emailed to you at the end of the project.

What will happen to information about me?

We intend to protect your anonymity and the confidentiality of your responses to the fullest possible extent, within the limits of the law. In the final study, any references to you or your work will be de-identified. We will remove any references to personal information or contexts that might allow someone to know your identity. However, you should note you and other participants will be able to identify and know each other from your participation in the focus group discussion.

Your name and contact details used to arrange the focus group will be kept in a password-protected computer file, separate from any information or perspectives that you give. The focus group data will be stored securely on a server at the University of Melbourne for the duration of the project, and for a period of five years after the final publication, as per University of Melbourne guidelines.

APPENDIX G - Participant Consent Form for Focus Groups (Study 3)

Note – Identifying material has been removed by the author of this thesis from this Consent Form image.

Name of Participant: _____

1. I consent to participate in this project, the details of which have been explained to me, and I have been provided with a written plain language statement to keep.
2. I understand that the purpose of this research is to gather a range of perspectives from early childhood teachers about teaching practices and how people communicate about wellbeing.
3. I understand that my participation in this project is for research purposes only.
4. I acknowledge that the possible effects of participating in this research project have been explained to my satisfaction.
5. In this project I will be required to participate in an online focus group. The focus group discussion will be video-captured and/or audio recorded. We estimate that the total time commitment for the focus group would be approximately 60-90 minutes of your time.
6. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from this project anytime without explanation or prejudice and to withdraw any unprocessed data that I have provided.
7. I understand that the data from this research will be stored at the University of Melbourne and will be destroyed 5 years after publication.
8. I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded subject to any legal requirements; my data will be password protected and accessible only by the named researchers.
9. I understand that after I sign and return this consent form, it will be retained by the researcher.

Participant Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Project ID Number: 25979 Project Start Date: 23.08.2023 Version: V2.02.07.24

APPENDIX H - Consolidated Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Studies (COREQ): 32-Item Checklist

Consolidated criteria for reporting qualitative studies (COREQ): 32-item checklist

Developed from: Tong A, Sainsbury P, Craig J. Consolidated criteria for reporting qualitative research (COREQ): a 32-item checklist for interviews and focus groups. International Journal for Quality in Health Care. 2007. Volume 19, Number 6: pp. 349 – 357

For 'This is the Crux of What We Do': Early Childhood Education Professionals Perspectives of Wellbeing Literacy

Item No, Guide Questions/Description	Details	Page #
DOMAIN 1: RESEARCH TEAM AND REFLEXIVITY		
Research team – The research team have experience in early childhood education (ECE) pedagogy and practice (LB and BR); wellbeing science (LB, LO); psychology (LO) and qualitative methods (LB, BR, LO).		
Personal Characteristics		
1. Interviewer/ facilitator *Which author/s conducted the interview or focus group?*	LB conducted all focus groups. BR attended all focus groups.	5
2. Credentials *What were the researcher's credentials? E.g., PhD, MD*	LB – ECE professional, PhD candidate BR – ECE professional, PhD Supervisor LO –Wellbeing Scientist, PhD Supervisor	6
3. Occupation *What was their occupation at the time of the study?*	LB – Project Officer & PhD Candidate BR – Honorary Professor LO – Deputy Dean, Professor of Wellbeing Science	-
4. Gender *Was the researcher male or female?*	Focus group facilitator was female (LB); BR (female), LO (male)	-
5. Experience and training *What experience or training did the researcher have?*	LB had experience conducting focus groups and ECE online learning networks. LB, BR and LO had experience in qualitative research methodologies.	-
Relationship with participants		
6. Relationship established *Was a relationship established prior to study commencement?*	BR & LO had no prior relationships with focus group participants. 8 participants had previous professional interactions with LB during her ECE career but not in an ongoing capacity or concerning her PhD candidature or research.	5
7. Participant knowledge of the interviewer *What did the participants know about the researcher? e.g. personal goals, reasons for doing the research?*	Participants knew where the facilitator (LB) worked and what the purpose of the research was. The goals of the research were explained in recruitment materials, plain language statements, and consent form and repeated at the beginning of the focus groups. BR and LO did not have any contact with participants prior to obtaining informed consent or following the completion of the focus groups.	5
8. Interviewer characteristics *What characteristics were reported about the interviewer/facilitator? e.g. Bias, assumptions, reasons and interests in the research topic*	The facilitator's interest in the research and the application of wellbeing literacy to ECEC via her PhD Candidature was stated in recruitment materials and during each focus group, as was her prior ECE experience and focus.	5
DOMAIN 2: STUDY DESIGN		
Theoretical framework		
9. Methodological orientation and Theory *What methodological orientation was stated to underpin the study? e.g. grounded theory, discourse analysis, ethnography, phenomenology, content analysis*	A qualitative interpretivism approach underpinned the study to prioritize participant perspectives.	4
Participant selection		
10. Sampling *How were participants selected? e.g., purposive, convenience, consecutive, snowball*	Purposive and resultant snowball sampling.	4
11. Method of approach	Respondents were recruited through known networks and social media (invitations via email, Facebook and LinkedIn).	4

1

Item No, Guide Questions/Description	Details	Page #
How were participants approached? e.g., face-to-face, telephone, mail, email		
12. Sample size *How many participants were in the study?*	28 ECE professionals participated in 5 focus groups (max participants per focus group = 7; minimum = 4)	4
13. Non-participation Setting *How many people refused to participate or dropped out? Reasons?*	There were no refusals after participants expressed interest and consents were obtained. Three potential participants were unavailable at scheduled times; one pulled out on the day due to illness.	4
14. Setting of data collection *Where was the data collected? e.g., home, clinic, workplace*	Focus groups were conducted online via Zoom. Participants 'zoomed in' from a place of their choosing.	5
15. Presence of nonparticipants *Was anyone else present besides the participants and researchers?*	Two external non-participatory co-moderators (one with ECE experience and one with wellbeing science knowledge) observed Focus Groups #1 and #2 respectively, tasked with note taking, timing and supporting the facilitator (LB) to embed informal member checking during data collection.	5
16. Description of sample *What are the important characteristics of the sample? e.g. demographic data, date*	All participants were ECEC professionals currently working in or with early education settings, with experience and qualifications in ECE pedagogy and practice.	4
Data collection		
17. Interview guide *Were questions, prompts, and guides provided by the authors? Was it pilot tested?*	Initial information about wellbeing literacy was provided by the facilitator at the beginning of each focus group and the capability model emailed the day prior. Questions and prompts were extensively reviewed within the research team prior to the focus groups. Two full pilot tests were undertaken by the facilitator and adaptions made prior to the first focus group.	5
18. Repeat interviews *Were repeat interviews carried out? If yes, how many?*	Five focus groups were held in total. No focus groups were repeated with the same participants.	5
19. Audio/visual recording *Did the research use audio or visual recording to collect the data?*	Audio and visual recording was undertaken with participant consent via the Zoom platform. Audio transcription via zoom was also enabled and these were downloaded and checked against the audio files.	5
20. Field notes *Were field notes made during and/or after the interview or focus group?*	Researchers made field notes during the focus groups (LB & BR) and compared these verbally following each focus group.	5
21. Duration *What was the duration of the interviews or focus group?*	Focus groups had an average duration of 90 minutes.	5
22. Data saturation *Was data saturation discussed?*	Data 'saturation' (and information redundancy) was discussed within the research team following focus group #4 (and a 5th focus group was then arranged) and again following focus group #5. Consistent with a qualitative approach, thematic analysis and pragmatism, situated and interpretive judgments were made by the research team about when to cease focus groups and coding.	6
23. Transcripts returned *Were transcripts returned to participants for comment and/or correction?*	Yes. A summary of high-level themes and sample anonymized extracts from each focus group were emailed to the respective participants for their comments/feedback/corrections after each focus group. Access to verbatim transcripts was offered.	5
DOMAIN 3: ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS		
Data analysis		
24. Number of data coders *How many data coders coded the data?*	Two. Data was initially reviewed LB and BR. Full data coding was done primarily by the first author (LB) using Template Analysis (TeA), with coding templates (tree) shared after each round of coding (LB & BR). The research team discussed the final coded data, final template and resultant themes.	6-7

2

Item No, Guide Questions/Description	Details	Page #
25. Description of the coding tree *Did the authors provide a description of the coding tree?*	The final template (tree) is presented in the paper. A full description of the properties of each code in the final template (tree) was created and provided as Supplemental Material.	8
26. Derivation of themes *Were themes identified in advance or derived from the data?*	Yes. Following TeA, five 'soft' a-priori themes were identified and used to begin coding on focus group #1. These themes were re-defined and re-prioritised during subsequent coding and the development of the template as per TeA.	6-7
27. Software *What software, if applicable, was used to manage the data?*	Data was managed via Zoom (initial audio transcription) and NVivo 14 (for data analysis).	6
28. Participant checking *Did participants provide feedback on the findings?*	Yes. Four participants responded to initial focus group summaries requesting access to the final published findings. No corrections or differing opinions were offered by these participants.	5
Reporting		
29. Quotations presented *Were participant quotations presented to illustrate the themes/findings? Was each quotation identified? e.g., participant number*	Key findings were supported with illustrative quotes in the final paper. Participant (P) and Focus Group (FG) numbers were assigned to each quote.	9-14
30. Data and findings consistent *Was there consistency between the data presented and the findings?*	All findings were derived from the data and all themes were supported by illustrative quotes. It was endeavoured to present the findings in a clear and consistent manner supported by TeA.	9-14
31. Clarity of major themes *Were major themes clearly presented in the findings?*	Major/top level hierarchical themes were derived from the data and presented via the final template. Three integrative themes were also generated and discussed in the findings.	8-14
32. Clarity of minor themes *Is there a description of diverse cases or a discussion of minor themes?*	Minor themes/second level hierarchal themes (some resulting from the 'soft' a-priori themes) were noted in the final template. Additional minor/third level themes were recorded in previous versions of the template (according to TeA) (see Supplemental Material).	8-14

APPENDIX I - Template Analysis Initial Template (V1)

Including A-Priori Themes (Study 3)

PhD Study#3 Focus groups – TeA Initial template V1 (31-10-2024)

(from focus groups #1 & #5)

1. **A PROFESSIONAL TOOL**
    - 1.1. assessment and individual plans
    - 1.2. critical reflection
        - 1.2.1. evaluation
    - 1.3. for communication about learning and teaching
    - 1.4. observations
    - 1.5. planning and planning cycle
    - 1.6. professional development tool
        - 1.6.1. building knowledge and strategies
        - 1.6.2. team tool
    - 1.7. supporting children
    - 1.8. teaching and planning tool

2. **A SHARED LANGUAGE**
    - 2.1. adds language to practice
    - 2.2. shared with co-educators
    - 2.3. shared with families

3. **ALTERNATE OR DEBATING VIEWS ARISING (a-priori)**
    - 3.1. is wellbeing literacy a linear process
    - 3.2. related to child age or ability
    - 3.3. uncertainty about the model

4. **ANOTHER LAYER, DEEPER, FURTHER**
    - 4.1. conceptualisation of wellbeing
    - 4.2. everyday practices
        - 4.2.1. body safety and sensations
        - 4.2.2. informing practice
        - 4.2.3. music practices
    - 4.3. role of educator
        - 4.3.1. educator input, experience, challenges
        - 4.3.2. educator's wellbeing literacy

5. **APPLICABILITY**
    - 5.1. appreciation and resonance
    - 5.2. relevance of the model

6. **CONCEPTUALISATIONS OF WELLBEING (a-priori)**
    - 6.1. being able to communicate wellbeing
    - 6.2. targeting all domains of wellbeing
        - 6.2.1. mental health and mental wellbeing
        - 6.2.2. wellbeing as feelings and emotions
        - 6.2.3. emotional regulation
        - 6.2.4. wellbeing as physical and sensory

7. **EXPANDING OR INFORMATIVE ABOUT CHILD WELLBEING (a-priori)**
    - 7.1. beyond emotions
    - 7.2. elevating importance
    - 7.3. understanding wellbeing

1

8. MAPPING THE MODEL TO PRACTICE (a-priori)

- 8.1. additional elements
  - 8.1.1. indigenous cultural practices
  - 8.1.2. multi-modality
  - 8.1.3. nature, outdoors
  - 8.1.4. routines
- 8.2. composition, expressive language
  - 8.2.1. children with additional needs
- 8.3. comprehension, receptive language
- 8.4. context adaptability
- 8.5. intentionality
  - 8.5.1. for children's mindset
  - 8.5.2. of planning and experiences
  - 8.5.3. of teacher interactions
- 8.6. pedagogical model
- 8.7. words and information

9. REFLECTING OR UNDERPINNING WELLBEING PRACITICES (a-priori)

- 9.1. adds a new lens
  - 9.1.1. literacy
  - 9.1.2. policy (EYLF)
- 9.2. reframing child behaviour
- 9.3. holistic view
- 9.4. providing consistency

10. USE WITH FAMILIES

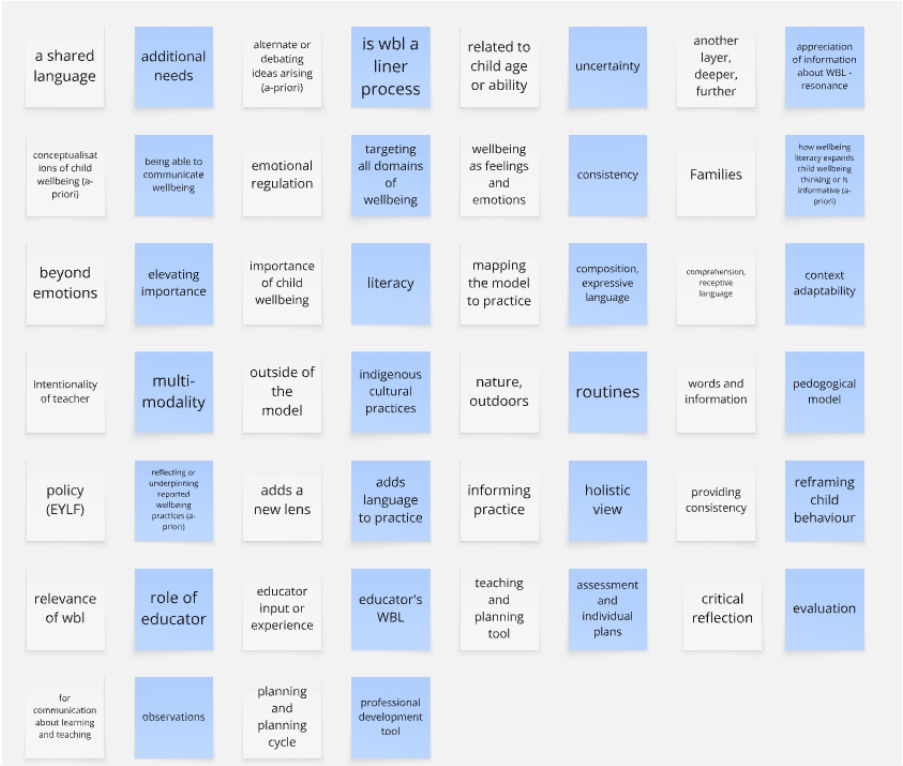
- 10.1.families understanding wellbeing
- 10.2.sharing with families

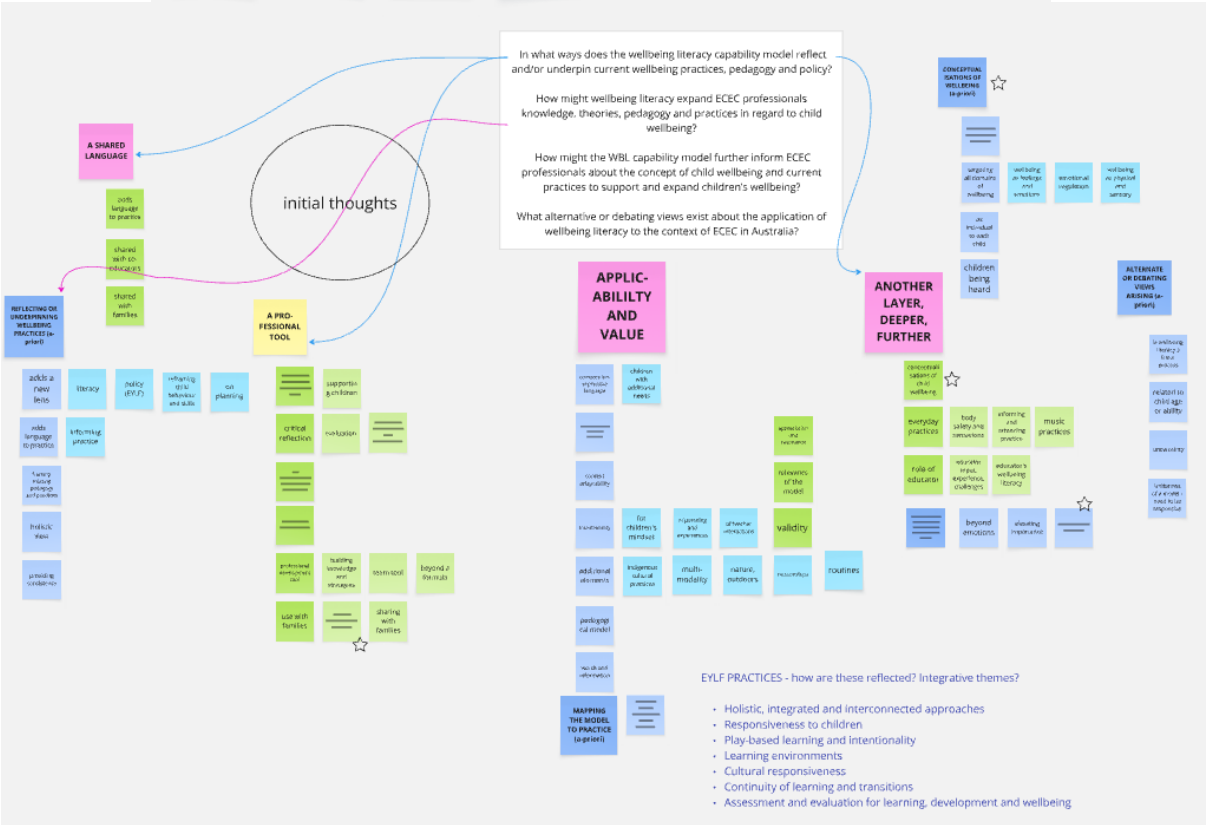
HIGH LEVEL THEMES (in a-priori themes)

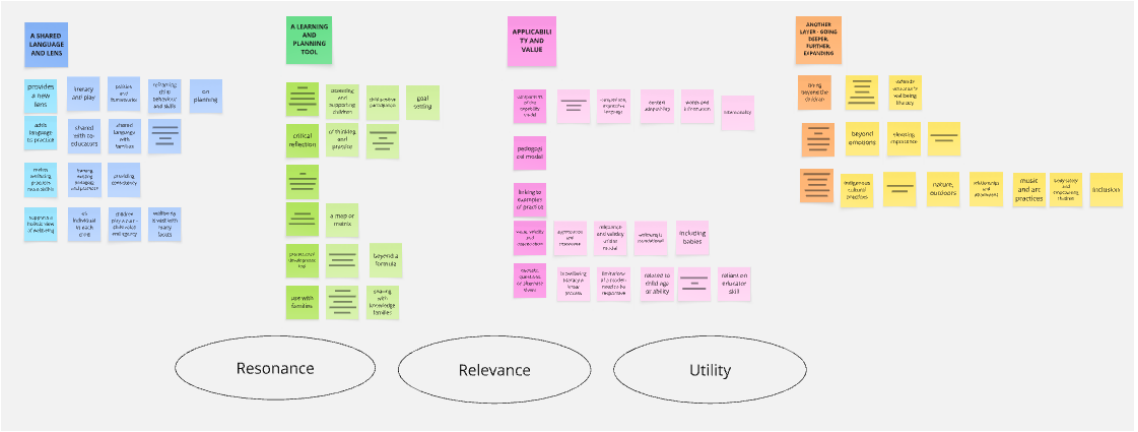
1. *A PROFESSIONAL TOOL*
2. *A SHARED LANGUAGE*
3. *ALTERNATE OR DEBATING VIEWS ARISING* ***(a-priori)***
4. *ANOTHER LAYER, DEEPER, FURTHER*
5. *APPLICABILITY*
6. *CONCEPTUALISATIONS OF WELLBEING* ***(a-priori)***
7. *EXPANDING OR INFORMATIVE ABOUT CHILD WELLBEING* ***(a-priori)***
8. *MAPPING THE MODEL TO PRACTICE* ***(a-priori)***
9. *REFLECTING OR UNDERPINNING WELLBEING PRACITICES* ***(a-priori)***
10. *USE WITH FAMILIES*

2

APPENDIX J - Miro' Board Samples Illustrating Components of the Thematic Analysis of Focus Group Data (Study 3)






A SHARED LANGUAGE AND LENS
A LEARNING AND PLANNING TOOL
APPLICABILITY AND VALUE
Resonance
Relevance
Utility

APPENDIX K - Template Analysis Final Template (V5) Including All Hierarchical Levels (Study 3)

PhD Study#3 Focus groups – TeA Template V5 (02.12.24)
(from ALL focus groups #1 - 5)

1. **A SHARED LANGUAGE AND LENS**
    - 1.1. provides a new lens
        - 1.1.1. on literacy and play
        - 1.1.2. on planning
        - 1.1.3. on policies and frameworks
        - 1.1.4. on reframing child behaviour and skills
    - 1.2. adds language to practice
        - 1.2.1. being able to communicate about wellbeing
        - 1.2.2. shared with co-educators
        - 1.2.3. shared language with families
    - 1.3. making wellbeing practices visible
        - 1.3.1. framing existing pedagogy and practices
        - 1.3.2. providing consistency

2. **A LEARNING AND PLANNING TOOL**
    - 2.1. assessment, observation and individual plans
        - 2.1.1. assessing and supporting children
        - 2.1.2. child positive participation
        - 2.1.3. goal setting
    - 2.2. critical and contextual reflection
        - 2.2.1. for evaluating and prompting practice
        - 2.2.2. of thinking and practice
    - 2.3. for communication about learning and teaching
    - 2.4. supports planning and documentation
        - 2.4.1. a map or matrix
    - 2.5. professional development tool
        - 2.5.1. beyond a formula
        - 2.5.2. building team knowledge and strategies
    - 2.6. use with families
        - 2.6.1. families understanding wellbeing concepts and practices
        - 2.6.2. sharing knowledge and resources with families

3. **ANOTHER LAYER – GOING DEEPER, FURTHER, EXPANDING**
    - 3.1. expanding and informative about child wellbeing
        - 3.1.1. beyond emotions
        - 3.1.2. elevating importance
        - 3.1.3. understanding wellbeing
    - 3.2. informing and extending everyday teaching and approaches
        - 3.2.1. body safety and empowering children
        - 3.2.2. inclusion
        - 3.2.3. indigenous cultural practices
        - 3.2.4. differentiated teaching
        - 3.2.5. music and art practices
        - 3.2.6. nature, outdoors
        - 3.2.7. relationships and attachment

1

3.3. going beyond the children
  3.3.1. supports practice, guides, extends and gives meaning
  3.3.2. extends educator's wellbeing literacy
3.4. supports a holistic view of wellbeing
  3.4.1. as individual to each child
  3.4.2. children play a part – child voice and agency
  3.4.3. wellbeing is vast with many facets

4. APPLICABILITY AND VALUE

4.1. a potential pedagogical model
4.2. caveats, questions or alternate views
  4.2.1. is wellbeing literacy a linear process
  4.2.2. limitations of a model - need to be responsive
  4.2.3. related to child age or ability
  4.2.4. reliant on educator skill
  4.2.5. understanding the components
4.3. components of the capability model
  4.3.1. words and information
  4.3.2. composition, expressive language
  4.3.3. comprehension, receptive language
  4.3.4. context adaptability
  4.3.5. intentionality
4.4. linking to examples of practice
4.5. utility, validity and appreciation
  4.5.1. appreciation and resonance
  4.5.2. relevant for all ages - including babies
  4.5.3. relevance and validity of the capability model
  4.5.4. wellbeing is foundational

2

APPENDIX L - Sample of NVIVO Reflexive log demonstrating evolution of data analysis methods (Study 2)

9/01/2024 12:23 PM

I am wrestling with:

what are the 'weights' of each of my 3 RQ in regard to this RTA, this paper and then my thesis as whole? am i currently placing too much emphasis on RQ1? is RQ2 also RTA???? Or is it purely content analysis? or is it related to RQ1 - teachers are developing wellbeing through the defined themes (eg by providing TIME, REGULATION, RELATIONSHIPS).

- is RTA the right/appropriate analysis approach for RQ2?
should I be considering a different data analysis approach for RQ3 (and maybe RQ2) -

perhaps I should be using directed content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005 - *The goal of a directed approach to content analysis is to validate or extend conceptually a theoretical framework or theory. If data are collected primarily through interviews, an open-ended question might be used, followed by targeted questions about the predetermined categories. Coding can begin with one of two strategies, depending on the research question. If the goal of the research is to identify and categorize all instances of a particular phenomenon, such as emotional reactions, then it might be helpful to read the transcript and highlight all text that on first impression appears to represent an emotiona reaction. The next step in analysis would be to code all highlighted passages using the predetermined codes. Any text that could not be categorized with the initial coding scheme would be given a new code.*

file:///C:/Users/LBBAK/Zotero/storage/ULSPNGU8/Hsieh%20and%20Shannon%20-%202005%20-%20Three%20Approaches%20to%20Qualitative%20Content%20Analysis.pdf

- is this one chapter/paper or actually two? i.e.
    paper #1- RQ1 +a little of/supported by RQ2 (cycled to inform RQ1)
    paper #2 - RQ3 +a little of/supported by RQ2 (cycled to inform RQ3)
- so that I am getting more weight/details for my premise/claim of WBL being present already in ECEC pedagogy and practice (but not in policy) therefore a gap and opportunity exists (without the gap being too large!)

- have i actually conducted two studies in the one survey? should I be seperating the RQs?
is RQ2 actually about **wellbeing language** pedagogy and practice and/or children's wellbeing **language** - not just 'chuldren's wellbeing through pedagogy and practice'?

APPENDIX M - Vignettes Shared with Focus Group Participants (Study 3)

Scenario One – How's your engine? Is there wellbeing literacy?

Words and basic information about wellbeing
Wellbeing comprehension (receptive language skills – reading, listening, viewing)
Wellbeing composition skills (expressive language – writing, speaking, creating)
Context awareness and adaptability
Intentionality for wellbeing

Sue is a kindergarten teacher in an integrated program of 3-5 year olds. There are several children who have difficulty settling into experiences during indoor time, sometimes racing from one area to another and yelling loudly across the room. There is also a child who is withdrawn and rarely gets involved in play. Sue introduces the concept of 'engines' to the children as they listen to a book about race cars, understanding the idea that their bodies and brains are like engines that have many speeds, sometimes needing to go faster and sometimes needing to go slower. She tells them that to learn well and feel good, they need their engines to be 'just right'. She plays fast-paced music and encourages the children to move their bodies quickly pretending to be machines, saying 'turn up your engines!' She encourages the children to feel their hearts beating and breath increasing and asks them 'how's your engine running?' Then she plays soft, slower music inviting the children to lie down and twinkle their toes and feet gently, again prompting them to feel how their 'engines' are running. Throughout the day, during indoor, outdoor, rest and routine times, Sue continues remind the children about their engines and that they can be the boss of their bodies. She asks some children to 'turn up' their engine at pack up time so all the jobs can be done before lunch. When some children are not engaged at mat time, she asks them how they could 'turn down' their engines so they can participate. As a group, the children begin using the language of 'engines', some reminding others when they think their engines aren't fitting in! Sue encourages the children to compare what engines they need when running outside and what is the best engine for bedtime at home.

Scenario One – How's your engine? Is there wellbeing literacy?

Words and basic information about wellbeing
Wellbeing comprehension (receptive language skills – reading, listening, viewing)
Wellbeing composition skills (expressive language – writing, speaking, creating)
Context awareness and adaptability
Intentionality for wellbeing

Sue is a kindergarten teacher in an integrated program of 3-5 year olds. There are several children who have difficulty settling into experiences during indoor time, sometimes racing from one area to another and yelling loudly across the room. There is also a child who is withdrawn and rarely gets involved in play. Sue introduces the concept of 'engines' to the children as they listen to a book about race cars, understanding the idea that their bodies and brains are like engines that have many speeds, sometimes needing to go faster and sometimes needing to go slower. She tells them that to learn well and feel good, they need their engines to be 'just right'. She plays fast-paced music and encourages the children to move their bodies quickly pretending to be machines, saying 'turn up your engines!' She encourages the children to feel their hearts beating and breath increasing and asks them 'how's your engine running?' Then she plays soft, slower music inviting the children to lie down and twinkle their toes and feet gently, again prompting them to feel how their 'engines' are running. Throughout the day, during indoor, outdoor, rest and routine times, Sue continues remind the children about their engines and that they can be the boss of their bodies. She asks some children to 'turn up' their engine at pack up time so all the jobs can be done before lunch. When some children are not engaged at mat time, she asks them how they could 'turn down' their engines so they can participate. As a group, the children begin using the language of 'engines', some reminding others when they think their engines aren't fitting in! Sue encourages the children to compare what engines they need when running outside and what is the best engine for bedtime at home.

Scenario Two – Zones of regulation

Words and basic information about wellbeing
Wellbeing comprehension (receptive language skills – reading, listening, viewing)
Wellbeing composition skills (expressive language – writing, speaking, creating)
Context awareness and adaptability
Intentionality for wellbeing

Chris teaches in a Kindergarten room in a long care centre and uses 'Zones of regulation' to support children's wellbeing and self-regulation. They have posters to teach the colour zones and frequently read 'The Colour Monster' by Anna Llenas at group time. Chris also uses the 'Smiling Mind' App with guided mindful meditations and breathing techniques to help the children move between zones. Recently Chris has changed the easel paint colours to red, blue, green and yellow, adding black pens and encouraging the children to draw themselves and paint how they are feeling. Chris and the co-educators validate the children's feelings and emotions using the language of the zones, saying things like "I can see you might be feeling in the blue zone, you feel sad saying goodbye to mummy? Would you like some music to help you move to the green zone and be ready to play?" Some of the children with English as an additional language are using the cards Chris has made to show how they are feeling. Across the term, Chris is pleased with the progress of the group, and observes them supporting each other to identify feelings though the colours, regulating and co-regulating. Chris has heard from some parents that the children are telling their families when they are in the different zones at home. One child told his older sister she was in the red zone when she came home from school. However, another parent has said that she would prefer Chris spend time teaching the children how to write their names and start to recognise the alphabet rather than spend time just on colours and feelings.

Scenario Two – Zones of regulation

Words and basic information about wellbeing
Wellbeing comprehension (receptive language skills – reading, listening, viewing)
Wellbeing composition skills (expressive language – writing, speaking, creating)
Context awareness and adaptability
Intentionality for wellbeing

Chris teaches in a Kindergarten room in a long care centre and uses 'Zones of regulation' to support children's wellbeing and self-regulation. They have posters to teach the colour zones and frequently read 'The Colour Monster' by Anna Llenas at group time. Chris also uses the 'Smiling Mind' App with guided mindful meditations and breathing techniques to help the children move between zones. Recently Chris has changed the easel paint colours to red, blue, green and yellow, adding black pens and encouraging the children to draw themselves and paint how they are feeling. Chris and the co-educators validate the children's feelings and emotions using the language of the zones, saying things like "I can see you might be feeling in the blue zone, you feel sad saying goodbye to mummy? Would you like some music to help you move to the green zone and be ready to play?" Some of the children with English as an additional language are using the cards Chris has made to show how they are feeling. Across the term, Chris is pleased with the progress of the group, and observes them supporting each other to identify feelings though the colours, regulating and co-regulating. Chris has heard from some parents that the children are telling their families when they are in the different zones at home. One child told his older sister she was in the red zone when she came home from school. However, another parent has said that she would prefer Chris spend time teaching the children how to write their names and start to recognise the alphabet rather than spend time just on colours and feelings.

APPENDIX N - Full description of Focus Group Themes and Sample Participant Quotes (Study 3)

PhD Study#3 Focus groups themes – *resonance, relevance and utility*

Name	Description	REPESENTATIVE QUOTES FROM PARTICIPANTS
1. A SHARED LANGUAGE AND LENS	Knowledge of WBL enables ECEC professionals, teachers and educators ("educators") to introduce and share new language around wellbeing practices, learning outcomes and play-based pedagogy with each other and families. Bringing a new lens and making wellbeing practices visible and valuable.	*this capability model just provides us with the language to be able to break down wellbeing and explain it to the parents, so that they understand it....break it down in a way that is clear and concise and something that is understood by everyone. So yeah, I think it really really creates that shared language.*
1.1 **provides a new lens**	The knowledge and understanding of WBL provides educators with a new lens on their work (pedagogy and practices), including ways to view and articulate literacy practices, play-based pedagogy and children's capabilities, and linking to the EYLF.	*I like the idea of chucking on a new like a pair of glasses, and you're putting it on, and it just builds on what you're looking at, feeling, seeing all those kind of things in the eyes of wellbeing and opening it up.*
1.1.1 on literacy and play	WBL provides an opportunity to think about literacy differently; valuing and seeing how it exists in play.	*I don't know where it comes from, but this real push for academics when it's a very play based environment... So I see this model being fabulous because it's set out so clearly that I could ... say "Look, this is what it is." And I feel, because it's not so much amorphous, it's really laid out clearly, that it might be really beneficial to get those educators more on board for understanding the value in that.* *I think it does encapsulate a lot of what we are already doing, but it gives again it being called literacy and coming under that umbrella, does give a bit more weight and purpose.*
1.1.2 on planning	Providing a new lens on planning and documentation.	*I think it's a good tool. Like a lens. It's a lens you can use to plan for anything in the classroom.*
1.1.3 on policies and frameworks	WBL adds a new lens, consistency and purposeful way of thinking about the EYLF, learning outcomes, wellbeing itself and policies in ECEC.	*we've got communication, we've got identity, we've got connecting to community, we've got confident and involved learners, like all the outcomes could be mapped to this document.*
1.1.4 on reframing child behaviour and skills	Through the lens of WBL educators can view children's behaviour in a new or different way - reframing actions and interactions as children's effort to communicate about or for their wellbeing.	*Also being able to look at different scenarios from different lenses. When children don't have the words to express themselves, you can sort of have a look at the situation and see what they're trying to communicate. What they're communicating in other ways apart from with words.*
1.2 **adds language to practice**	WBL adds knowledge and language to ECEC practices that can be shared with others, including co-educators and families.	*after knowing this capability model, which we were not aware of doing the things like yes, adding words, information, comprehension, I would say they are so interconnected and interlinked. We are doing it, but we*

Name	Description	REPESENTATIVE QUOTES FROM PARTICIPANTS
		didn't have that vocabulary which this model is telling us. You can name it now. *this gives an intellectual communication to something that can sometimes be seen as quite messy and hard to define*
1.2.1 being able to communicate about wellbeing	WBL helps educators communicate about wellbeing, giving a shared and professional language to a concept that is complex.	*I think it's a good framework. I think that helps to organise something that's so complex...being alongside children and feelings - is complex messy work.* *I think if you've got a framework like this to come back to it invites you to diversify your thinking and you practice. Yeah. I mean, god, it would have been great! Its about clarity of communication more than anything, you know.*
1.2.2 shared with co-educators	WBL is a language that can be shared with co-educators to frame and understand practices.	*this model creates a shared language, not only with co-educators that you can collaborate with to, of course, keep that consistency within your environment.*
1.2.3 shared language with families	WBL offers a shared and professional language that parents can understand and to support the work educators do.	*you can be sharing this shared language of like what wellbeing, comprehension skills are, what we wellbeing composition skills are, but you can also share that with the families as well.* *I think actually having it set out that way and having the different components and skills and giving parents the language early on, I think, I'm hoping and anticipating, it might make my job easier because they're going to see and recognise a lot more of the work that we're doing and be able to support that on the back end at home as well.*
1.3 **makes wellbeing practices visible**	WBL brings visibility to the work of ECEC.	*making it (the work we already do) visible by underpinning it*
1.3.1 framing existing pedagogy and practices	The WBL capability model can be a framework to view existing practices and pedagogical approaches.	*In that framework, just saying, yeah, just using that language with the children and being, yeah, being more aware of it. Because it's always been there and I think the good teachers have always done all these sorts of things* *it's definitely all of the wellbeing literacy, it's all there! I could almost go through my day and say this is this is what happened.*
1.3.2 providing consistency	Knowledge of WBL can provide consistency for wellbeing practices, understanding and communication - for children and educators.	*Children learn through consistency, and when everyone is on the same page of understanding of how wellbeing and the skills can be developed within wellbeing, when we have that consistency that you're gonna notice more progress, more growth with our learners and more understanding.*
1. A LEARNING AND	The WBL capability model, its 5 components and the language of WBL can be used as tool for educators to observe	*it's the perfect tool for planning and just pinpointing areas ... obviously, these are all things that are integrated within our program and within our practice and things like that but*

Name	Description	REPESENTATIVE QUOTES FROM PARTICIPANTS
PLANNING TOOL	children; plan for child assessment and support; for critical reflection and as a professional development, learning and documentation tool.	*it's really nice to be able to look at it and think 'oh, I need to focus more on that!' it gives a label to things, and it gives deeper understanding and deeper connection to certain areas of wellbeing that we do know but we may not have before been able to express it as well as we are now, due to this model.*
2.1 child assessment, observation and individual plans	The capability model can be used to support observations and assessments and as a reference point for individual children's wellbeing stage and needs.	*And when we write our observations on children to have this sitting alongside it, and it would help us, cause we're always looking for ways of making our observations more meaningful and our planning more deep and meaningful.*
2.1.1. assessing and supporting children	The components of the model can be used to assess where children are at, what areas they may need support with learning and in becoming wellbeing literate.	*I feel like wellbeing in itself, the outcome, it's so broad. I feel like this helps narrow it down to key points that we can work to support the children on. So, obviously looking at this we could test the children against these areas and be, okay, we can see that this child is meeting in these areas however they need to work on being able to adapt - with their adaptability to change to the context in which they're being, you know, using the wellbeing literacies and things like that.*
2.1.2 child positive participation	An understanding of WBL could support behaviour management plans and children's positive participation.	*you could input from wellbeing literacy as well ... 'so why am I asking Johnny to sit right near me on the mat, and why is he having a fidget toy, so, and then out in the playground, why am I having him whatever it is that I'm doing', so that could be a really good backup and that's really another great thing to communicate with families - this is this is how we're dealing with this behaviour to get him to positively participate.*
2.1.3 goal setting	Can use the 5 components of WBL capability model to set goals for children and highlight areas that need support or are missing.	*So in my mind with that 5 [components], it's more like components of achieving a goal. So if we can set a goal in the middle then that sort of can help us to identify what our current practice, or what we have at the moment, and then try to find the missing piece.*
2.2 critical and contextual reflection	WBL can be used to critically reflect on wellbeing practices, to provide consistency (of language, practices, policies and approaches) and consider context.	*it could be used to critically reflect on scenarios as well to inform best practice from a wellbeing lens. Whether it could be a lens on orientation policy, it could be a lens on supporting emotional dysregulation, it could be a scenario on you know anything that sort of has a heavy wellbeing lens on the situation*
2.2.1 for evaluating and prompting practice	Used as tool to evaluate gaps in practice, opportunities and to prompt interactions, practices, planning and evaluation.	*And it also for me highlighted areas where you could develop a bit more like the middle one [comprehension and composition], I think, where you're doing more movement or that type of thing with it. Yeah, I think it's good to look at it, because there might be little bits that you're missing, and so it can kind of highlight something else you can add to it.*
2.2.2	WBL is a tool that could support educators and teams to critically reflect on their	*Yeah, critical reflection. I think if you've got a framework like this to come back to it invites you to diversify your thinking and you practice. Yeah. I mean, god, it would have*

Name	Description	REPESENTATIVE QUOTES FROM PARTICIPANTS
of thinking and practice	practice, examine thinking and be more intentional.	*been great! Its about clarity of communication more than anything, you know.*
2.3 **for communication about learning and teaching**	WBL can support educators to communicate about their work, teaching and learning. To connect with others – teams, families and the wider context.	*I think it might help us see the importance of what we're doing with young children. It's a good opportunity - every interaction that we have with children is so important - and we can be explicit in our discussions, in our understandings, it helps. It probably would be useful to share with the team, to see the importance of every interaction that we have through all the play that is planned and unplanned throughout the day.*
2.4 **supports planning and documentation**	WBL and the capability model would be a useful as a tool for planning and documentation. To support educators to pinpoint areas, document intentionally, work as a team, evaluate, analyse and revisit practices.	*You can use it to analyse your observations, to support the analysis of the observation, and then also to support the forward planning stage as well and any reanalysis after that.* *I can already see now how this would work right now. We've got planning day tomorrow, so how we would do it - with our planning cycle we go through our we all sit down together as a team.* *Hey, that would be most helpful. Yeah. And look, I can already see now how this would work right now. We've got planning day tomorrow, so how we would do it - with our planning cycle we go through our we all sit down together as a team. We're very fortunate to have a bit of time to do that as a whole team with our co-educators as well and we go through every single observation that's been written. We put them all into a box, and then come every second Thursday we go through them, and we have a bit longer time. And so we do sit with the frameworks, and you know, different PD that we may have just been to, and I could see this sitting alongside us within our planning meeting, reading an observation and looking at okay, so you know, like what you did, similar to what you did there with the colorification of that those scenarios and then looking from there, so what's the next step from that? Actually, okay, this is what we know, we're seeing in this observation, how can we take it further? So I think that cycle is definitely there. It there. There as a framework and it can go up both ends. That's how I'm seeing it. You can use it to analyse your observations, to support the analysis of the observation, and then also to support the forward planning stage as well and any reanalysis after that.*
2.4.1 a map or matrix	The capability model and the 5 components specifically could be used as a map or matrix to bring awareness to practice, policy and discuss as a team. As a guide or check in.	*I think it'd be useful to kind of use those 5 categories as a bit of a cross reference, I suppose and a point of discussion amongst teams to consider all aspects of wellbeing. And how do they kind of map across?* *And in terms of like sharing it with a team and whatnot I know one thing that my team likes to do is kind of challenge ourselves with a new topic or a new thing weekly and really deep dive into that. And you know, this component gives us*

Name	Description	REPESENTATIVE QUOTES FROM PARTICIPANTS
		the ability to break it down into 5 areas and challenge ourselves in that space. It might be we're challenging the children because they're not, you know, understanding component 3 as much as Number 1, or it may be our practice. So I feel like it just really gives the perfect map and the perfect shared language for us to be able to do that.
2.5 **Professional development tool**	WBL could be used as a professional tool to sit alongside other strategies, and for professional development to expand teacher and educator knowledge.	*And so we do sit with the frameworks, and you know, different PD that we may have just been to, and I could see this sitting alongside us within our planning meeting,*
2.5.1 beyond a formula	The capability model is a framework not a formula. It can help educators understand what sits beneath and be more intentional.	*I'm thinking is that it's more of a framework. And sometimes what happens is there's a formula that people are using with good intention but without developing our own knowledge and connection around things like comprehension, composition skills, those discrete aspects of wellbeing. Yeah, that´s what kind of excites me about reading this, it's not a formula.*
2.5.2 building team knowledge and strategies	For teams to consider and talk through all aspects of wellbeing, cross reference planning and interactions. For teams to challenge themselves and go to a deeper level to embed wellbeing practices.	*However I have found any teaching of skills needs to be supported by a team to be embedded and successful. But having it clearly defined as the wellbeing literacy capability model will support teams of teachers and educators to ensure they are teaching children all the skills they need for wellbeing and centering it when it comes to specific efforts to meet children's emotional needs.* *I think that would help as a team that if we went to think of wellbeing in that deeper level, I think that would be an exciting thing to do as a team and be on the same page together. And I suppose we'd be learning a bit more about it ourselves in that regard.*
2.6 **use with families**	WBL and the capability model is a tool that can be used to communicate with and support parents.	*after you build up educator knowledge and skill, then that branches up to all the other areas of integration of this capability model within a service and an early learning context. So then, that goes into communication with families and sharing that information with families.*
2.6.1 families understanding wellbeing concepts and practices	WBL gives a professional language that can help families understand what wellbeing is and how we intentionally plan for it. Supporting their engagement with the program and wellbeing practices.	*this capability model just provides us with the language to be able to break down wellbeing and explain it to the parents, so that they understand it.*
2.6.2 sharing knowledge and resources with families	The model could be shared for parents as a strategy to understand their child and the components of WBL. A resource to support parents and use at home.	*I think it could be used as a good tool for not only families that you might be collaborating with if a child is finding any of these areas difficult or challenging - could be something a parent raised at home about a child having big emotional meltdowns at home when they come home from kinder after the day - and I think this tool can be used really well*

Name	Description	REPESENTATIVE QUOTES FROM PARTICIPANTS
		with just understanding why the child might be feeling that, what tools they could use in another context at home.
2. ANOTHER LAYER - GOING DEEPER, FURTHER, EXPANDING	WBL and the capability model adds another layer (or lens) to ECEC work, taking thinking and everyday practices deeper, further, informing and expanding them.	*I think the wellbeing literacy component, like the whole like capability plan, I think it puts a lens. It's like putting on a pair of glasses. It puts a lens on, with understanding. I feel like it can help with our observations of learners.*
3.1. **expanding and informative about child wellbeing**	The WBL model breaks down the concept of wellbeing and can expand educators' knowledge, practices and perceptions – taking it beyond emotions and elevating the importance of everyday wellbeing practices. (a-priori - taken from research question *How might the wellbeing literacy capability model further inform ECEC professionals about the concept of child wellbeing and current practices to support and expand children's wellbeing?)*	*So this gives us that professional language that we can use to understand wellbeing, but also for the parents to actually recognize the importance of even those tiny little moments of our day - they're actually doing this skill and they're developing this thing that's going to help go to this.* *Definitely expands what I want to do in future. And yeah, just having this knowledge, I think will definitely support me in implementing this a little bit further with children and making me really reflect on my practice, going further with it.*
3.1.1. beyond emotions	Wellbeing is not just about emotions and the WBL capability model can help educators understand, communicate and plan for the broad umbrella and facets of child wellbeing.	*I feel like wellbeing is a broad thing, and this helps pinpoint it and narrow it down, and also make it separate from emotions. I know looking at this before we had this discussion or whatnot I was very much under the mindset that wellbeing and emotions, it's the same thing, they go interconnected. But this model really helps break it apart and see the difference in both of them. Obviously they do interconnect, but there is a very big difference in both of them.*
3.1.2 elevating importance	Knowledge of WBL can elevate the importance of the work educators do for children.	*I think it might help us see the importance of what we're doing with young children… and we can be explicit in our discussions, in our understandings, it helps…to see the importance of every interaction that we have through all the play that is planned and unplanned throughout the day.*
3.1.3 understanding and expanding wellbeing	Wellbeing is a broad and complex concept. The WBL capability model helps educators break it up, understand it and communicate about it. Can help include intangible concepts such as awe and pride.	*I think it's a good framework. I think that helps to organise something that's so complex.*
3.2 **informing and extending everyday teaching and approaches**	Knowledge of WBL and the capability model can inform everyday ECEC teaching, facilitating educators to extend and deepen their thinking and approaches.	*I feel like I'm just really thinking a lot more about my practice and what other things I can be doing in future with the children, that I have to better support them in their wellbeing literacy in kind of all different facets, and not just kind of the general what I typically, would do if that makes sense.* *It's definitely something much, much deeper, isn't it? I have to say, because it really adds another layer to work with all*

Name	Description	REPESENTATIVE QUOTES FROM PARTICIPANTS
		different facets of working with children and understanding where they're coming from.
3.2.1 body safety and empowering children	The capability model can	*I think I've been thinking about the whole time is empowering children. ...It gives us that sustenance to support all those things that we're doing.*
3.2.2 inclusion	WBL can support and help define inclusion practices.	*I can see it being used as a tool for inclusion- most teachers incorporate wellbeing practices every day throughout their practice without it being this specifically defined and are very successful at it. But having it clearly defined as the wellbeing literacy capability model will support teams of teachers and educators to ensure they are teaching children all the skills they need for wellbeing and centering it when it comes to specific efforts to meet children's emotional needs.*
3.2.3 indigenous cultural practices	WBL can support indigenous cultural practices and documentation.	*I'm just seeing it also really as a nice sort of framework to support our indigenous cultural practices as well. I think wellbeing literacy is a huge part of that when we're developing ideas for our RAP and you know the work that we're doing with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.*
3.2.4 differentiated teaching	Knowledge of WBL can support educators to meet children's wellbeing needs in a variety of ways, adjusting modes to adjust suit individual learners and dispositions.	*I think it recognises children's different learning dispositions as well and so you can adapt. You recognised different ways for children to meet their wellbeing needs by you talked about music, dance, different modes of having their wellbeing met. So I think it caters for all children and all contexts, so you can, yeah, kind of make it fit to each child.*
3.2.5 music and art practices	Knowledge of WBL can support educators to think more deeply and music and art practices and prompt children more to promote the development of WBL.	*If I had this model, then I could think about a bit more deeply and be bit more intentional about the wording that I give the children, the prompts that I give to the children, and the asking the questions about their drawings.* *we do the music well, we do the candles well, we do the 3rd teacher, the environment quite well, but it's then where do we take it to the next level, where that, you know, start to look at that context awareness and adaptability, where are we placing ourselves and supporting children in those areas?*
3.2.6 nature, outdoors	Knowledge of WBL can support educators to view outdoor experiences and times in nature more deeply, and more connected with wellbeing.	*once we are in the bush kinder talking about nature and engaging in nature, we just feel that they are a bit different, more calm/ ...these are few things that we are trying to apply in our setting to get our knowledge and the kids knowledge extended on wellbeing.*
3.2.7 relationships and attachment	Relationships, connection and attachment are the place to start with when thinking about WBL. WBL brings validity to these approaches and can deepen them.	*When you take something a simple like a child's attachment object, or you know the philosophy people hold around children's attachments, you can easily begin to have a dialogue about the deepening of what sits underneath that.*

Name	Description	REPESENTATIVE QUOTES FROM PARTICIPANTS
		And make decisions about practice that you hold on to, and you protect and that have validity in it.
2.3. **going beyond the children**	WBL can support and guide educators in their own work and thinking and their own wellbeing literacy – it's not just for the children.	*I think that would be really, really valuable…. I'm looking at this and I'm like, yep, I can see where I can actually not, just for the children, but to support the educators to support the children with this.*
3.3.1 supports practice, guides, extends and gives meaning	WBL can guide educators in their work, supporting meaningful interactions and challenge/extend thinking.	*I always think about how can we support educators to have more meaningful interactions with children? And I think this model could be a really great way of supporting that thinking.*
3.3.2 extends educator's wellbeing literacy	WBL is not just for practice and for the children, it's important and valuable for educators to develop their own WBL.	*I think it's not just about wellbeing literacy for children, it's wellbeing literacy for us. It's us understanding what we're hoping literacy is, and how we can be intentional about that, that's it's that's how it's coming across to me.*
3.4 **supports a holistic view of wellbeing**	WBL provides language, a framework and a lens on practice which supports a holistic approach – viewing wellbeing as a 'whole'.	*Informs and underpins my practice to actually to take it in a very holistic, in a very holistic way.* *it gives that holistic approach… how it's interconnected, interrelated, and consciously and unconsciously we are doing it. We have understood the importance how we have to look at the child and the individual child as a whole, to look at that holistic approach. I can see that in this framework, in this capability model.*
3.4.1 as individual to each child	Every child is different and we need to view their wellbeing as individual to them and adapt practice and implement different approaches.	*it's the connection that you're making with the children to work out where their wellbeing literacy is at basically, because it they all come with so many different things.* *I think each child's wellbeing needs different things. You have to adapt and implement different things*
3.4.2 children play a part – child voice and agency	Children are a part of their own wellbeing. Educators can support children with knowledge and strategies to understand, voice and manage their own wellbeing. Through their professional knowledge of the WBL components, educators can give children agency.	*we've put in all of the supports to give them the language, to give them the skills to be able to use in different contexts and adapt in different contexts so that they can really take ownership and have that agency to guide their own wellbeing.* *well, it's making them aware, what their wellbeing is, like who's in control of it? So that they're starting to be in control of their own wellbeing as well, it's not just an external thing inflicted on them*
3.4.3 wellbeing is vast with many facets	Wellbeing is an umbrella concept and covers a vast area, including mental health, physical, sensory, relational and emotional facets. The capability model offers language, breaking up the areas and understanding how to support the whole.	*So this capability model can really support us in this bigger area, which is wellbeing, which is above emotions, and which talks about not just emotional wellbeing - all the physical, social, and that's quite like a very vast area.*

Name	Description	REPESENTATIVE QUOTES FROM PARTICIPANTS
3. APPLICABILITY AND VALUE	Ways in which WBL and components of the capability model are relatable in early childhood, applicable to practices and bring value to ECEC work. There are caveats to its use and contextualisation however there are avenues for use with children, families, co-educator and teams. (a-priori - taken from previous study - survey results, paper 2)	*I can relate it to our practices and to our learnings that happens in the classroom… it's quite relatable.*
4.1. a potential pedagogical model	The WBL capability model has potential to be adapted and could be valuable and applicable as a wellbeing planning cycle.	*Actually, okay, this is what we know, we're seeing in this observation, how can we take it further? So I think that cycle is definitely there. There as a framework and it can go up both ends. That's how I'm seeing it. You can use it to analyse your observations, to support the analysis of the observation, and then also to support the forward planning stage as well and any reanalysis after that.*
4.2 caveats, questions or alternate views	Data that represents any questions, alternative or debating views or perspectives raised and may place a caveat on any of the findings. Taken from research question *What alternative or debating views exist about the application of wellbeing literacy to the context of ECEC in Australia?*	*I just think making sure that we are also responding to the children and how they're caring for their own wellbeing. We need to make sure that we're also not looking for us to be implementing a model, we see what the children are currently doing, and try and scaffold and extend on that.*
4.2.1 is wellbeing literacy a linear process	Questions raised about the components of the capability model and if they are in order of acquisition and are the skills developed in a linear process.	*I do often find children are at that composition skill level first as you said they may have some words and everything, but they're not able to articulate that yet. So it's just an observation and being aware of where children are on that scale.*
4.2.2 limitations of a model - need to be responsive	Cautions raised about being sure educators are responding to children and not implementing a model without intention, understanding or considering the children.	*sometimes what happens is there's a formula that people are using with good intention but without developing our own knowledge and connection around things like comprehension, composition skills, those discrete aspects of wellbeing.*
4.2.3. related to child age or ability	Questions and comments about the model being relevant to different ages. Is it useful only when children are calm or have access to cognitive responses and/or language?	*most of this seems to me that it's in a very cognitive sense, so that they need to be quite aware and calm … just knowing how children really really struggle with language, because when they're operating in their limbic brain … they don't understand, they don't think, so all this works fabulous in in calm.*
4.2.4 reliant on educator skill	Is the ability to teach children WBL and deliver practices that support WBL dependent upon the WBL and skill so the educator?	

Name	Description	REPESENTATIVE QUOTES FROM PARTICIPANTS
4.2.5 understanding the components	Participants thoughts about understanding the components of the model and its initial complexity.	*The explanations of the terms are quite overwhelming to understand in the beginning, but I think I can relate it to our practices and to our learnings that happens in the classroom.*
4.3 **components of the capability model**	Perspectives of participants that reflect on or relate to the value or applicability of each component of the WBL capability model.	*I think we know all this but maybe we forget? But by reframing it in this wellbeing literacy, we're refocusing on it through a different lens. And I really think that maybe that's what some educators need, because they're exhausted with the framework, they're exhausted with outcomes. But this is this is the crux of what we do.*
4.3.1 words and information	Relating to the applicability and/or value of component one - words and information about or for wellbeing.	*it's the language, the labelling, the tone that were using, that labelling and supporting children to identify that, that has the impact that, I suppose, is supporting their wellbeing literacy development.*
4.3.2 composition, expressive language	Relating to the applicability and/or value of component two - composition of wellbeing related language about or for wellbeing (via children's expressive language skills).	*we talk about how big body movements can help us to regulate and slow body movements can help us to calm and things like that… it's evident within our practices and things. It's just a different way of thinking about it.*
4.3.3 comprehension, receptive language	Relating to the applicability and/or value of component three - comprehension of wellbeing related language about or for wellbeing (via children's receptive language skills).	*I had a child that was struggling to settle into three-year-old kinder… and so I started a visual timetable for him. And I think the predictability of visually seeing what was coming up for him helped him in his wellbeing and confidence to roam around the room and know what was going on. I think I can link that to wellbeing literacy.*
4.3.4 context adaptability	Relating to the applicability and/or value of component four - context awareness and adaptability.	*we've put in all of the supports to give them the language, to give them the skills to be able to use in different contexts and adapt in different contexts so that they can really take ownership and have that agency to guide their own wellbeing.*
4.3.5 intentionality	Relating to the applicability and/or value of component five – the habit of intention for wellbeing.	*I feel like it underpins what we're already doing. It makes us aware that what we're doing has an overall impact or intentionality or meaningfulness.* *it's set out so clearly and also broken down into the specific skills. I think it does encapsulate a lot of what we are already doing, but it gives again it being called literacy and coming under that umbrella, does give a bit more weight and purpose. And as that 5th component is like the intentionality, there's a reason that we're talking about these things and exploring emotions and feelings.*
4.4. **linking to examples of practice**	Capturing example of practice where participants could link the WBL capability model to their current teaching practices.	*So, looking at your framework, that example for us, I would feel we could pull parts of that whole project out over the year but if we had this it would have been so easy to explain to parents and give validity around the importance of wellbeing literacy.*

Name	Description	REPESENTATIVE QUOTES FROM PARTICIPANTS
4.5 **utility, validity and appreciation**	Feedback from participants about how the model is valuable, where it had resonance and how they appreciated the knowledge.	*I think it's great and I can see how it can be really adapted to lots of different things that we do in early childhood.*
4.5.1 appreciation and resonance	Educators expressed a resonance with elements of the WBL capability model and the work and practices of ECEC. They appreciate knowing about WBL and the model.	*I think about using the term 'wellbeing literacy', because 'literacy' is literate. So if you're literate in something, then you're well versed in it. So to be well versed in how to have a great wellbeing, to deal with all these things that come up, I really love that the term wellbeing literacy there.*
4.5.2 relevant for all ages - including babies	The components of the model could be applied to work with babies and children of all ages.	*I think it's useful for children of all ages, like including babies… I'm just thinking of the practices with the babies, we used to keyword sign like "anger", and "I can see your sad" and "angry" so that would hit the Number 1 where you're giving them the language… even the facial expressions I think, would hit Number 1, for example, so you could apply it to any age group.*
4.5.3 relevance and validity of the capability model	WBL literacy and the capability model is relevant in ECEC and has value for educators and their work.	*I see this model being fabulous because it's set out so clearly that I could go to the educators … and say "Look, this is what it is." And I feel, because it's not so much amorphous, it's really laid out clearly, that it might be really beneficial to get those educators more on board for understanding the value in that, if that makes sense.*
4.5.4 wellbeing is foundational	The capability model supports the foundational work that is done in ECEC for children's wellbeing. And wellbeing is foundational to all other learning.	*Because it's set out so clearly and also broken down into the specific skills. I think it does encapsulate a lot of what we are already doing, but it gives again it being called literacy and coming under that umbrella, does give a bit more weight and purpose.*

The above hierarchical themes are also supported by three integrative themes - resonance, relevance and utility. These integrative themes permeate all the higher and lower order themes of the template, reflecting lateral relationships amongst the data. While 'relevance' and 'utility' were explicitly voiced by participants across multiple focus groups and in relation to many thematic clusters and levels, 'resonance' was implicit, such as described by King & Brooks (2017) as an undercurrent running through participants accounts.

- '**Resonance**' relates to the participants views that the concept of wellbeing literacy and the wellbeing literacy capability model resonates with them, connecting to their beliefs and experiences. There was a strong subtext in participant response; not only did they appreciate the knowledge of wellbeing literacy, but it echoes their practices and philosophies of wellbeing, integrating with their values of the foundational importance of child wellbeing.
- '**Relevance**' reflects frequent responses from participants that the wellbeing literacy model is relevant to the work they do every day in supporting children's wellbeing, aligning with their current teaching practices and could immediately be used in their planning, interactions and conversations.
- '**Utility**' represents the strong undercurrent that the knowledge of wellbeing literacy and its component parts would be a valuable addition to pedagogy and practice. Participants expressed the utility and potential impact of the model for their documentation, planning, professional development and communications with families and colleagues.