

**“CARIÑO IS THE PEDAGOGY”
Assessing 4-year-olds whilst making sense of their behaviours
An analysis of policy and practice**

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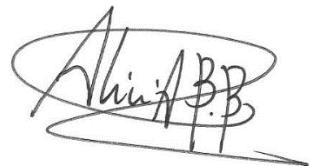
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This thesis results entirely from my own work and has not been offered previously for any other degree or diploma.

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ahmet B. B." The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'A' at the beginning.

Abstract

The current focus on ranking the performance of 4-year-olds in England (Bradbury & Roberts-Holmes, 2017; Bradbury, 2018) threatens to erase the value of relational pedagogy. These assessment methods that measure progression according to set criteria discourage the idea of developing affectionate relationships with children (Moss, 1992; Noddings, 2005 and Cameron & Moss, 2007). I use the word *cariño* in a pedagogical context in England to describe the intensity of the loving bond that develops as practitioners make sense of children's behaviours during observational assessment. In order to understand how *cariño* fits within assessment processes, I explore the impact of current policy and practice. Whilst examining whether some assessment methods help practitioners make sense of children's behaviours, I also examine to what extent Saarni's eight skills of emotional competence are being assessed (Denham et al., 2016). I take an interpretivist stance to construct a definition of a pedagogy which focuses on the expressions of *cariño* that can occur between Early Years practitioners and children (Ortiz-Ocaña, 2013).

I employ qualitative data collection methods to explore how some Early Years practitioners in England include the identification and support of skills of emotional competence as building blocks for the development of other skills; with focus groups, interviews and video-diaries recorded in three phases. I propose the CASEC model of assessment (Cycle of assessment for socio-emotional development based on *cariño*) after reviewing some of the recent literature related to assessment practices in Early Years and their impact on social and emotional development. This model is also shaped following the explanatory cross case study analysis which enabled me to present the findings as storyboards. The collective and individual storyboards highlight that *cariño* as pedagogy might be naturally embraced as Early Years practitioners build affectionate relationships during observational assessment.

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Publications derived from work on the Doctoral Programme

Blanco-Bayo, A. 2020. "It doesn't matter because I love you". A case study examining the interpretation of Behaviour Classification Tables and Positive Behaviour Support models In: Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties. p. 1-14 14 p., 1.

Psychology of Education: Theory, Research and Evidence-Base Practice in Educational Psychology. SAGE Publications. Chapter 23: Early Years Education and Psychology. (Book to be published December 2021).

Abbreviations

EYP/s- Early Years Practitioner/s.

PSED- Personal, Social and Emotional Development.

TACTYC-Training Advancement and Co-operation in Teaching Young Children.
Association for Professional Development in Early Years.

OECD- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

IELS- International Early Learning and Child Wellbeing Study.

AfL- assessment for learning.

EYFS- Early Years Foundation Stage.

EYFSP- Early Years Foundation Stage Profile.

ELGs- Early Learning Goals.

UNCRC- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

FGDs- focus group discussions.

GDPRs- General Data Protection Regulations.

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CHAPTER 1: Introduction

1.1 My journey

Although my PhD journey at Lancaster University began in September 2017, on reflection, I feel I have been searching for answers to how relationships shape us as individuals since I was a young girl. I was curious, more like a dreamer. The deep dreamer I still am today. As an Early Years practitioner, myself, I am curious about people and, once I work out how they feel I am even more curious about why they might feel one way or another. I am a *sentidora* (someone who feels) just as Unamuno was (Spanish philosopher born in the late 1800s and author of *Amor y Pedagogia-Love and Pedagogy* in 1902).

The sense of curiosity that led me to where I am today began 25 years ago when I moved to England to study English. Growing up, I had always believed that if I could speak good English I would get far, and I needed to find out what all the fuss was about. The journey I embarked on then seemed like one of those you might watch in a movie. I had the opportunity to improve my English and learn about a new culture and its people. The opportunities were quite unbelievable considering that I was from a small village on the outskirts of Valencia in Spain. I continued studying and working in a range of environments and learnt many things by watching quietly, or at least until I felt more confident speaking English with native English speakers. As a Spaniard, I went through a very traditional education system created after years of educational rigidity that had filtered down from the overly strict exam-based approach created after a period of dictatorship. “If you speak English, you will go far”, I would often hear from teachers and family members. There I was, trying to speak ‘good English’ in order to go far, whatever that meant. I worked so hard in English, without realising it I gradually left my own language behind. I became fluent in English and achieved many qualifications along the way.

The most unexpected part of the journey began as I searched for a word that could describe the intensity of the loving bonds that can occur between early years

practitioners (EYPs) and children. I returned to my roots in search of a Spanish word to describe a type of relational pedagogy (all practices that stem from relationships) that made observational assessment profoundly meaningful. The choice of word led me to feel curious about literature on relational pedagogy written in Spanish. I followed my heart and returned to some of the philosophers I had studied in high school. I read their work and realised I was able to decipher the many hidden messages I had been unable to understand as a young student in Spain. Miguel de Unamuno awoke something in me that had been asleep for a very long time and my admiration for Don Quijote (Spanish spelling) suddenly made more sense than ever. Unamuno described the relationship between Don Quijote and his squire Sancho Panza as the intense affectionate endeavour (full of spontaneous expressions of *cariño*) that helped them both flourish. *Cariño* is a Spanish word that translates as affection, love, fondness, endearment, attachment or kindness (Bulat Silva, 2020). However, I concluded that it is more than an expression of love and affection. It can be applied to a type of relational pedagogy that, during observational assessment, can help practitioners make sense of children's behaviours. I had unexpectedly found a word in Spanish that suited the nature of relationships in an English context. For the first time in almost 25 years, I did not need to rely on English literature to justify the importance of a term, I did it with a Spanish word.

1.1 Organisation of chapter

Educar exige querer bien a los educandos: esto significa que la afectividad no debe asustar y por tanto no debe haber miedo de expresarla. Ella juega un rol vital ante la necesidad de instaurar relaciones plenas de apoyo a la labor del educador.

To educate, the educator must love the learners: this means that affection should not scare the educator, nor should there be fear to express it. It plays a vital role in the development of relationships that fully support the labour of the educator. (Díaz Marchant, 1999, p.175)

My own reflections as an EYP helped me realise that love and affection had been an essential part of my practice over the years. This quote, my own translation, emphasises the importance of loving the children we work with. When I explored some of the Spanish literature I refer to in this study, I discuss relational pedagogy without being scared to express *cariño* in educational contexts.

The purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of the type of assessment practices and policy currently used with four-year-olds in England. The study took place during a time when EY assessment policy had provoked an uncomfortable atmosphere amongst practitioners due to the demands and expectations of the Reception Baseline Assessment (in section 2.3.1 p.19-23). This short paragraph emphasises the relevance of this study. It is important to highlight at this stage that, unless otherwise stated, all references to context, policy and practices refer to those that take place in England. By exploring how some EYPs assess children, I examined how early years assessment policy is being interpreted and the impact it is having on current practice (Bradbury & Roberts-Holmes, 2017). Moreover, in Chapter 2 section 2.4. I explored how and to what extent Carolyn Saarni's (1999) eight skills of emotional competence (skills and abilities to express emotions beyond emotional expressive behaviour) play a part in current early years assessment practices. As this process of exploration occurs throughout the investigation, I also examined how *cariño* emerged (Ortiz-Ocaña, 2013; Reyes, 2020) from the relationships between the participants and children in my study and how it became an essential part of the assessment practices described by the participants. Other research on assessment practices has been completed by Fromm & Goddard (1956) and Martin, Hanson & Fontaine (2007).

This chapter sets out the context of the study by placing it within the relevant research realm that helped me to identify a gap in research which became my contribution to knowledge. The research questions are also included, followed by a brief rationale introducing the theory that is explored throughout the study. An overview of the theoretical perspectives explored to discuss the findings is also part of this chapter. This overview includes a summary of some of the research that

explores current early years assessment policy and practices , an introduction to Saarni's work and how they might fit within assessment practices, and a description of *cariño* as a relational pedagogy. There is also a short description of the methodology and methods employed and an explanation of how *cariño* became my contribution to knowledge. The final section offers details about the structure of the thesis and presents the chapters in order.

1.2 The Research Questions

As I explored some of the literature about current early years assessment practices, I noticed a gap in research regarding the use of assessment to try to understand children's behaviours in order to support the development of other skills. After building a bank of theory on assessment practices, emotional competence and relational pedagogy, I devised a main research question (MQ) and two sub-questions (SQ):

MQ- What types of assessment policy and practices help identify, value and make sense of four-year-olds' behaviours in order to support the development of other skills?

SQ1- How far do practitioners value and support the development of emotional competence in four-year-olds?

SQ2- To what extent are practitioners assessing Saarni's eight skills of emotional competence?

These questions, as I further discuss in Chapter 3, led me to develop a breakdown of current early years assessment practices that focus on the identification of children's emotional skills and how the development of these can impact the acquisition of other skills.

1.3 Theoretical journey

My theoretical journey began as I examined how the suitability of some of the assessment practices in early childhood education had been questioned by many in recent years (Crooks, Kane & Cohen, 1996; Shepard, Kagan & Wurtz, 1998; LaParo & Pianta, 2000; Meisels & Atkins-Burnett, 2008; Basford & Bath, 2014). Following on from this, I also explored how this inconsistency to rank performance has filtered down to Early Years Education and it seems to have become the norm to use summative assessment methods that provide numerical results (Bradbury & Roberts-Holmes, 2017). It became relevant to examine how, in this neoliberal era where social progress is still defined by socio-economic status, we have developed practices that provide data that reinforces numerical ranking to demonstrate how well a child is doing. In order to situate myself within the global early years assessment sphere, I also decided to examine some of the literature and policy which discuss whether global economic policy has influenced early years assessment policy. Moreover, I reviewed how some of the policies have contributed to the development of assessment practices that categorise children. In addition to this, I also explored how recent research highlights how some of the assessment practices currently used with four-year olds can positively influence or hinder the development of emotional competence and as a result the development of other skills. The review of all the literature, helped me shape the theoretical framework used to define the CASEC model which explains how *cariño* can fit within assessment practices that focus on the development of emotional competence. This review is structured in four sections in Chapter 2. The first three explore assessment policies and practices, emotional competence and *cariño* as a pedagogy. The fourth section describes how assessment, emotional competence and *cariño* form a model of assessment that can positively influence PSED (CASEC).

1.4 Overview of methodology and methods

The methodology and methods were chosen after exploring previous research on assessment practices and emotional competence. Whilst making use of qualitative data collected during interviews, focus groups and video-diaries, the methodology in this study first explored and then explained how, during observational assessment, the participants reached conclusions during and after their interactions with four-year-olds. In this chapter, I explain how I interpreted participants' assessment practices and group them, considering how emotional competence can influence personal, social and emotional development (PSED), and as a result the development of other skills. I used case study research as a unit of analysis to describe how and why assessment practices occurred within each context. The case studies helped me bring together perspectives from practitioners from a range of institutions who described how they interpreted current policy within their individual assessment practices (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013).

After posting the details about the study on social media, ten participants were selected randomly and agreed to participate in the study which was structured in three phases. All participants took part in the first set of interviews or focus groups during Phase 1. Only seven participants recorded all the requested video-diaries and completed Phases 2 and 3. The data were collected over six months, using explanatory analysis in two stages; in intervals first and sequentially afterwards. This process enabled the presentation of the main themes and subthemes on a collective storyboard and each case study on individual storyboards. The storyboards were used to present and discuss the findings in Chapters 4 and 5.

1.5 Purpose of the study

As I interpreted the findings, I concluded that when some EYPs valued and supported the development of emotional competence, they unknowingly assessed using the CASEC model based on *cariño* and Saarni's work and their impact on the development of other skills. My contribution to knowledge was the realisation that

cariño strengthens the purpose and impact of the observational assessments carried out by participants. Moreover, the findings also led me to conclude that in this study, activism is a spontaneous occurrence that presents itself as a form of relational activism. *Cariño* during observational assessment is spontaneous as it is something that emerges from the interactions between the participants and the children. These types of interactions had an impact on how relationships developed (Fromm & Goddard, 1956). It was an unplanned process which happened as a result of the strong affectionate bonds that developed between the participants and the children they demonstrated *cariño* towards. As I explored how *cariño* became the pedagogy present in observational assessment, I realised that what occurred was more than an act of care, as it involved relationships and feelings (Noddings, 2005; Cameron & Moss, 2007) with an intense labour of love. The most intense type of labour apparent amongst the EYPs in this study, was emotional and it emerged from the pressures of the expectations dictated by policy. The loving labour as described by Graham (1983, 1991), Thomas (1993) and Cameron and Moss (2007) turned the application of *cariño* into an intense relational process that required emotional labour. The participants paid close attention to the child during observations, and the child demonstrated affection in return too. This type of emotional labour was received by the child as an emotional reward, almost as unconditional love (Ortiz Ocana, 2013; Restrepo, 1995). Whilst trying to apply the CASEC model, I also concluded that when the participants paid close attention to the child during an observation, the child demonstrated affection in return too. Subsequently, a bond began to develop because both the practitioner and the child gave and received *cariño*.

Amongst the levels of “institutional schizophrenia” present in schools and early years settings today (Ball, 2003), EYPs may apply *cariño* to manage a situation that might also be described by Jane, a participant, as “*just mad*”. The institutional agenda in England, and globally, is strongly focusing on measuring children’s performance numerically and currently uses this data to also measure teachers’ and schools’ performance (Biesta, 2013; Roberts-Holmes, 2015; Roberts-Holmes & Bradbury, 2017). In this study, a small number of EYPs managed to prioritise observational assessment practices, which allowed for *cariño* to strengthen a quiet process of

implicit activism. These examples of practice, therefore, suggest that a quiet wave of love can have an impact on the children who need it most (Freire, 1996). Drawing on the work of Ortiz-Ocaña (2013) I justify how *cariño* is a pedagogy, as it can present itself as behaviour whilst relationships develop during observational assessment.

Chapter 2: Cariño within assessment practices: Identification of the Literature gap and theoretical framework.

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I review the literature that helped me develop a theoretical framework that justifies how assessment practices carried out through Cariño, as a type of relational pedagogy, can have an impact on the development of emotional competence and as a result a range of other skills. The chapter is structured as follows: Section 2.1 *contains the introduction*; Section 2.2 *Theory on policy and practice is an overview of the differences between summative and formative assessment, current concerns regarding some early years assessment policies and practices, and the role cariño plays within assessment*; Section 2.3 *Summative and formative assessment* includes a definition of assessment in general as a practice used to measure learning. It then goes on to define summative and formative assessment, considering Scriven's (1967) principles for formative assessment which prioritise what happens during the interactions between practitioners and children and how practitioners might interpret those interactions. This section also discusses how researchers in the field of early childhood education such as Martin (2019), Black (2010), Hall and Burke (2003; 2004) and Bertram and Pascal (2002), value the type of interactions that occur during observational assessment; Section 2.4 *Emotional competence within the assessment cycle* draws on Saarni's work to bring together the theoretical framework which developed as I explored the value of *cariño* as the relational pedagogy based on strong loving bonds (Fielding & Moss, 2011; Vecchi, 2010; Degotardi & Pearson, 2009). It also discusses how Denham et al. (2016) highlight the importance of assessing emotional competence during the early years; Section 2.5 *Cariño is the pedagogy* contains Crownover and Jones's (2018) description of relational pedagogy to contextualise how *cariño* can positively influence the construction of relationships during assessment practices. Moreover, this section includes the definition of *cariño* that was shaped whilst exploring the Spanish roots of the word and possible translations into English. The literature about *cariño* written in Spanish offers a perspective of the intensity of the loving bonds

(described as behaviours during interactions) that occur when it presents itself during assessment practices (Restrepo, 1995; Ortiz Ocaña, 2013; Reyes, 2020).

Furthermore, I identify a gap in literature whilst I discuss in this section how *cariño* can be the pedagogy that enables EYPs to spontaneously develop relationships with children and, as a result, support them whilst an intense and expressive loving bond of affection occurs. I also include details about the emotional labour practitioners go through whilst trying to adhere to current policy expectations and how they use *cariño* to turn some of this emotional labour into emotional rewards, which is an aspect that has not been previously explored in literature. Within the discussion about the two types of emotional labour, I highlight in this section, how assessment practices with *cariño* can be considered acts of implicit and quiet activism that focus on benefiting children. This is another aspect I considered which had not been previously explored in the literature I came across, whilst considering *cariño* in the process. In section 2.6. *The Cycle of Assessment for Socio-emotional Development based on Cariño* (CASEC), I explain how the CASEC model describes a cycle of assessment that occurs through *cariño* and promotes the development of emotional competence, leading to the development of the socio-emotional skills which impact the development of other skills. I also discuss how the CASEC model (*figure 2.3*) can help practitioners stand up to the levels of “institutional schizophrenia” (Ball, 2003) created by the current early years assessment agenda. The review of the literature enabled me to identify a gap in research to start with. I also realised that the experiences I examined in each case study helped me shape up and strengthen the CASEC model as a cycle of assessment that can be beneficial for children.

2.2 Theory on policy and practice

This section explores some of the differences between summative and formative assessment, current concerns regarding some early years assessment policies and practices and the role care and love play within assessment.

Brodie (2013) describes the role of assessment in early years as a process of observational reflection carried out by practitioners which should consider the way

children learn as well as what they learn. Taking this into account, it is debatable whether only one type of assessment is what is needed to identify, value and make sense of four-year-olds' behaviours. Bertram and Pascal (2002), Basford and Bath (2014), Bradbury (2014) and Bradbury (2019) and Robert-Holmes et al. (2019) have explored how some standardised methods of assessment can lack the analytical depth that observational methods can offer. As I explore some of the examples of assessment practices discussed by Martin (2019), Wortham and Hardin (2019), Dubiel (2016) and Brodie (2013), it is apparent that when children are assessed using formative methods, practitioners can develop a more detailed picture of who the child is and how they are developing. This research corroborates the need to move away from summative assessment methods that turn assessment practices into mechanical processes which can be standardised using numerical figures to categorise achievement and, as a result, make overall judgements of practice, children and practitioners. This fixation with needing to rank performance is also explored by Batra (2013). He studies how the use of standardised methods of assessment in Early Years Education, which focus on measuring children's, practitioners' and schools' performance, emphasises the social unfairness and disrespect towards children and EYPs. Moreover, the report by Goldstein et al. (2018) explains in detail how the summative method (Reception Baseline Assessment) designed to rank children when they first join a reception class at four-years of age, has mainly accountability purposes. This report states that an assessment method that purely focuses on ranking children's performance lacks ethical validity. As Batra (2013) also suggests, assessment methods that fail to focus on supporting children's learning are socially unjust as they unfairly dictate what children need to learn and, often, at what point when they should learn it.

Organisations such as *More Than a Score*, *Let Kids be Kids* and *Reclaiming Schools* have actively campaigned against the use of standardised testing in primary schools in recent years. The aims of these campaigns are in line with outcomes of recent research by Bradbury and Roberts-Holmes (2016), Robert-Holmes et al. (2019), Weale (2019), Ward (2019), Training Advancement and Co-operation in Teaching Young Children TACTYC Association for Professional Development in Early Years

(2019), Roberts-Holmes et al. (2019), Pascal et al. (2019) and Bradbury (2019) which corroborate that summative assessment that uses standardised methods can hinder the overall holistic development of children. The validity of these types of assessments is supported by the accountability agenda set by global policy (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2017; 2018; International Early Learning and Child Wellbeing Study, (IELS); DfE, 2018) which aims to compare and contrast children's performance, and contradicts the need for more contextualised formative methods of assessment that value the individual abilities of children (Biesta, 2008). Moreover, these types of assessments fail to focus on the importance of using affection to stimulate the development of emotions in young children (Dunn & Stinson, 2012).

The concerns raised by reports such as *Bold Beginnings* (OFSTED, 2017) and the launch of a new Reception Baseline assessment put policy guidelines for practice at odds with the hopes of the practitioners. Practitioners are finding it difficult to reconcile with their own principles, and the care and the needs of children that should come first, are being dismissed by a system that focuses on categorising them (Fielding & Moss, 2011). The concerns about categorising children's progress expressed by practitioners have been reported in the media and studied by many scholars (Bradbury et al., 2018; Goldstein et al., 2018; Bradbury & Roberts-Holmes, 2017; Stobart, 2008). These recent studies reflect the urgency to develop a model that embraces relational pedagogy during the assessment process.

Some summative assessment methods in the form of standardised tests can be used to identify developmental delays or specific special needs (Stobart, 2014). This type of assessment tends to follow a period of formative assessment. In these cases, the results of summative assessment procedures help practitioners develop concrete intervention strategies to support individual children. This therefore suggests that there might be summative assessment procedures that can be placed under the assessment for learning (AfL) umbrella. The concerns arise when this becomes common practice and strict expectations are set before practitioners have had time to get to know each child through formative assessment practices. Moreover, there is

no research that recommends the use of standardised assessment methods to identify, value and make sense of four-year-olds' behaviours in order to support the development of other skills.

Basford and Bath (2014) discuss how assessment practices in primary and secondary schools have been divided into three categories over time: assessment 'of' learning, assessment 'as' learning and AfL. Throughout this study, I refer to the two types of assessment practices which are most commonly used by EYPs: formative assessment and summative assessment. The study of assessment by Black and William (1998) pointed out that teachers had obtained detailed information about individual children by using formative methods of assessment. This study was crucial in the development of the Assessment Reform Group in 2006 and the subsequent *Missing pupils progress initiative report* (Ofsted, 2011). These series of recommendations were made after exploring a range of assessment practices in schools and, emphasise the importance of trying to understand how assessment can be used to help children. Research has not yet shown that assessment practices which focus on ranking children against a measurable list of outcomes consider the emotional competence of children in the process. However, more collaborative assessment practices which allow children to be active participants, do take into account other aspects of learning and, as a result, help practitioners create a detailed picture of children (Basford & Bath, 2014).

In recent years, assessment in early childhood has appeared in policy nationally and globally. In order to have an overview of how assessment can be interpreted globally, the OECD (2017) proposed the *International Early Learning and Child Well-being Study*. This project aimed to assess five-year-olds in three countries to identify the key factors that influence early learning. This main aim was broken down into several strategic objectives which highlight emotional development as one of the developmental aspects to consider. Objective four is of special relevance as it advises to:

Inform early childhood education centres and schools about skill levels of children at this age as well as contextual factors related to them that they could use to make more informed decisions about curriculums and pedagogical methods.

This objective is set to develop an overview of how skill levels might be assessed, and it is relevant as I try to contextualise assessment practices. It is also relevant as it suggests that pedagogical approaches and curriculum content might be decided according to children's skill levels in particular contexts. According to this, assessment does have a place in early childhood education if it is used with this type of aim in mind to help practitioners choose a pedagogy to support children's overall development whilst focusing on relevant content. However, there is little research, if any, that mentions how relational pedagogy can have an impact on how assessment is carried out. The four key indicators taken from the OECD (2017) *International Early Learning and Child Well-being Study* are: skills levels, contextual factors, curriculums and pedagogical methods listed in table 2.1 are linked to some key elements regarding assessment identified in recent early years policy reports.

OECD (2017) International Early Learning and Child Well-being Study	DfE (2017) Statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage EYFS Setting the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five	DfE (2018) International early learning and child well-being study (IELS) in England Introduction to the research	DfE (2020) Early years Foundation Stage Profile EYFSP 2021 handbook EYFS Reforms early adopter version June 2021	DfE (2020) Development Matters Non-statutory curriculum guidance for the EYFS
Skill levels (type of skills already developed according to	Early learning goals (ELGs) summarise the knowledge, skills and understanding	Social and emotional skills Self-regulation	Accurate summative assessment of what children know and can do in line with	Consider children's rates of development.

developmental stages)	that children should have gained at the end of Reception (p.7)	Emerging literacy Emerging numeracy (p. 5)	the expectations set by the ELGs (p.8)	Skills grouped in age bands: Birth to three-years three- & four-year-olds in Reception
Contextual factors (home and community environment)	Cater for children's interests	Home learning environment Individual characteristics (p.5)	Relationships with parents to help practitioners understand children's responses to the environment (p.8)	Notice children's responses to the environment and focus on individual interests.
Curriculum (how content is decided)	Seven interconnected areas of learning and development.	No curriculum standardised assessment methods. Set of direct tasks to assess children's abilities at age 5.	17 (new) ELGs under the seven areas of learning and development	Ambitious curriculum - depth in learning and driven by interests.
Pedagogical methods (how practice is approached)	Planned, purposeful play and a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activity. Warm and positive interactions.			Effective pedagogy as a mixture of approaches: modelling, observing, guiding and directing.

Table 2.1 National Policy comparison

Whilst this table highlights the importance of engaging in a policy discourse which situates current policy within the strategic plan created with the intention of providing data for the OECD study, it also indicates which aspects within current Early Years policy should be questioned. Drawing on the policies listed in table 2.1 it is clear that

the current Early Years assessment policy expectation is part of the accountability agenda as it sets standards linked to numerical figures (1=emerging, 2=expected, 3=exceeding and A=not assessed) (Faulkner & Coates, 2013).

Although previous Acts mentioned the importance of monitoring progress, the Children Act 1989 and *The Education of Children under Five - Aspects of Primary Education* (Department for Education & Science (DfES), 1989), included some specific references which are related to Article 29 in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which states, "States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to: The development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential" (p. 9). Considering that the Children Act in 1989 was published at the same time as the UNCRC, it is worth discussing in what sense assessment appears in some of the subsequent Acts. The Children Act 1989 describes assessment as the process that helps identify needs and determine ways to offer children support. Assessment is also explored in *Counting to Five: Education of Children Under Five* (ACLA NHS, 1996) as a process that monitors children's progress to promote equal opportunities and respond effectively to all children's needs. This message is also echoed in *The Desirable Learning Outcomes* (1996). The controversy appears when the baseline assessment was introduced in 1998 as a more standardised process to monitor children's performance and, as a result, each individual school's performance nationally. However, soon after *The Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage Framework* (QCA, 2000) and *Code of Practice* (DfES, 2001d) and many subsequent policy documents (DfES, 2002; DfE, 2008; 2012; 2017; 2019; 2020), observational assessment practices were recognised as fundamental tools to monitor the progress and development of children in their early years. However, the *Code of Practice* (DfES, 2001d) also suggested that formative assessment processes might offer details that help evaluate the effectiveness of a particular setting. Whilst assessment might be useful to identify if any adaptations need to be made to the environment to offer children a range of opportunities suited to their developmental needs, this idea of evaluating the effectiveness of the setting became an exercise where

practitioners' performance and the quality of teaching and learning is being judged too (Batra, 2013).

2.3 Summative and formative assessment

In this section, I discuss summative and formative assessment in Early Years and sequence the changes to the Reception Baseline Assessment since it was first introduced in 1997 to date. Moreover, I provide a context to the theory behind the assessment practices and I also critique them as I develop the theoretical framework used to create the CASEC model and discuss the findings.

I describe assessment as the practices used to measure children's learning. In order to understand how assessment occurs and the impact it might have on children, this chapter discusses two of the most common: summative assessment and formative assessment. Scriven's (1967) definition of both summative and formative evaluations, is still relevant today. Scriven devised some basic principles for formative assessment which focused on what happened during the interactions between teachers and children and how the teacher interpreted those interactions. He considered these interactions of great value, and they are also valued in observational assessment practices currently used in early years settings globally (Martin, 2019; Black, 2010; Hall & Burke 2003;2004; Bertram & Pascal, 2002). He also explored how summative practices might give an overview of how the curriculum was being delivered and whether it was appropriate.

The political agenda that focused on taking control over the curriculum in schools in the 1980s required teachers and school governing bodies to overemphasise the results drawn from summative assessment practices. These figures offered numerical statistics of how well (or not) children were doing within a set of standardised criteria. In contrast, the Task Group on Assessment and Testing (TGAT, 1987) produced a report that highlighted the importance of promoting the use of formative practices to understand children's learning needs, and, as a result, find appropriate strategies to support future learning. However, subsequent

assessment policies and curriculum changes have continued to suggest that children's progress should be measured numerically from standardised methods of assessment that offer a summative result (Bradbury, 2019; Williamson, 2017; Roberts-Holmes, 2015; Basford & Bath, 2014; Batra, 2013; Biesta, 2008).

Summative assessment tends to use standardised assessment practices to situate progress at different stages. O'Connor (2002) also describes it as assessment of learning, whereas formative assessment refers to practices that explore how children learn in order to support future learning. Black and William (1998), Black et al. (2003), Goodman (2012) and Blandford and Knowles (2011) suggest this type of assessment can be referred to as AfL. Assessment has been mentioned in early years policy in recent years with many aspects highlighted. Table 2.2 indicates some debatable points.

Early Years Policy Document	Formative Assessment	Summative Assessment
DfE (2017) Statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage Setting the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five	Ongoing assessment	
DfE (2019) Early years foundation stage assessment and reporting arrangements (ARA)*	Cumulative observational evidence	Data that reflects levels of development against grading criteria
DfE (2020) Early Years Foundation Stage Profile EYFSP 2021 handbook EYFS Reforms early adopter version June 2021	Holistic judgement of what the child can demonstrate in relation to the ELG.	Practitioners' observations of what the child knows and can do. Reflections of what the child knows, understands and can demonstrate.
DfE (2020) <i>Development Matters</i> Non-statutory curriculum guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage		Assessment of what children know and are able to do against a set list of skills.

		Observation checkpoints to notice if a child is at risk of falling behind.
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Table 2.2 Types of assessment within policy *Put on hold due to children being absent from school during the COVID-19 pandemic in the Summer Term of 2020.

In this study, summative and formative assessment were explored as two separate forms of assessment currently present in Early Years practices. However, as Lewkowicz and Leung (2021) suggest, these two types of practices can happen together if a summative result can add value to the formative practices that focus on understanding and supporting children's progress. This complementary process can add complexity to the assessment process if it emphasises the categorisation of children according to levels of achievement, and should therefore be considered carefully, in the early years in particular.

2.3.1 Summative assessment practices with four-year-olds

Summative assessment throughout this study is understood as the measuring of what has been learned at a specific point of time (Martin, 2019) rather than how the learning might occur. Summative assessment in Early Years Education is mainly used to measure performance according to set criteria dictated by policy. The first type of summative assessment that takes place in Early Years settings is the two-year old progress check which is carried out at 24 months. This assessment is a summary of a child's development in the three Prime Areas of personal, social and emotional development (PSED), physical development (PD) and communication and language development (CLD), as specified in the Early Years Foundation Stage EYFS Framework (EYFS) (DfE, 2017). Children who attend an Early Years setting might be assessed according to the developmental milestones listed in *Development Matters* (Early Education, 2012; DfE 2021) within the age band of 18 to 24 months. Although not clearly stated whether all children should be assessed on their second birthday, many health visitors carry out the two-year old progress check. Parents might choose to share details from this progress check with the Early Years setting

which practitioners can find useful when trying to understand a child's individual developmental stages. An example of such a progress check document can be found in Appendix 1. The Reception Baseline Assessment is the second type of summative assessment which has recently become a statutory procedure (DfE, 2017; 2021). These policy documents state that to monitor progress and rank levels of performance in primary schools, children should be assessed using standardised testing throughout the Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. This study only explores summative assessment practices that may occur in the Reception year.

I draw on the timeline below devised by Robert-Holmes et al. (2019) which sequences changes to the Reception Baseline Assessment from its first introduction in 1997. This timeline suggests that the changes to assessment policies were influenced by the neoliberal agenda set in the 1980s by the Global Education Reform Movement. These changes emerged from political discussions which prioritised assessment practices, not to assess children to support them, but rather to assess them to produce data to compare the quality of education systems globally (Fuller & Stevenson, 2019).



Figure 2.1 Timeline of early years assessment policy changes (Robert-Holmes et al., 2019, p,10)

The Reception Baseline Assessment was first introduced in 1997 and then withdrawn when the Foundation Stage Profile FSP was introduced in 2002-8. The FSP which later became the EYFSP allowed for both formative and summative assessment methods to be used to gather evidence of children's progress. However, this type of assessment also became a mechanical process to justify children's learning which was not always used to support future learning (Biesta, 2008; Batra, 2013; Goldstein et al., 2018). The Reception Baseline Assessment was reintroduced in 2015 as the government planned to put it into practice in September 2016 (DfE,

2014b). However, it was withdrawn by the DfE in April 2016 after various Early Years organisations campaigned against it and some of the government's own reports showed incompatibilities (Roberts-Holmes & Bradbury, 2017). The report by Ofsted (2017) *Bold Beginnings* which intended to demonstrate that there was a need to closely monitor the progress of all four-year-olds, mainly focused on providing a statistical analysis of assessment results for mathematics and literacy. Although it included the area of PSED as a Prime Area (DfE, 2017), there were neither references to the emotional needs of children nor mention of how the development of emotional competence might be supported. As a result of this report, and at a part with a series of suggested changes to the EYFS Framework, a new Reception Baseline Assessment was piloted in 9600 reception classes in 2019. This assessment aimed to establish an initial level of attainment in line with the expectations of the EYFS Framework (DfE, 2017; 2020) whilst it set a starting point to monitor individual progress from Reception to the end of Key Stage 2. Moreover, the structure of it clearly specified that it was a model of summative cognitive assessment that gave a total over 100% with an expectation of a score of 50% for Literacy and 50% for numeracy (DfE, 2019). It included a set of 45 tasks that would be administered six weeks into the Autumn term in September 2019.

As well as the Reception Baseline Assessment trialled by some schools in 2019 and compulsory at present, there are tools often available via local authorities such as spreadsheets and other digital platforms (2Simple, Tapestry and Famly) that are currently used by many EYPs to assess children's progress within a set of standardised criteria based on the seven areas of learning and development stated in the EYFS Framework (DfE, 2017; 2020). These tools list the developmental milestones and skills included in Development Matters (Early Education, 2012; DfE 2021) as targets children might work towards as ELGs. The first and second versions of Development Matters were created as non-statutory overviews of some of the skills children might develop within a series of age bands from birth to five years of age. As non-statutory documents, they both include an overview of some of the skills, rather than targets, practitioners might observe as children go through the different developmental stages. Following the pilot of the most recent document, and

although many professionals in the Early Years field made recommendations against it during the consultation period, it was approved and scheduled to be introduced in September 2020, although it was then postponed to September 2021 due to COVID 19. Although children returned to school in September 2020 and there was a new Reception intake in all primary schools across England, the assessment arrangements regarding the EYFSP which had been published in 2019 were also put on hold (DfE, 2019). The Reception Baseline Assessment was finally introduced in September 2021 and carried out by teachers in all Reception classes in England, and the EYFSP will also be used in all schools from September 2022. These two changes highlight how the primary school accountability agenda is still being prioritised within current policy in England. At the same time, a more recent version of Development Matters was published by the DfE in 2021 as a non-statutory document. This version was critiqued by a group of researchers and practitioners who subsequently worked on a non-statutory document, which aimed at supporting professionals working with children from birth to 5 years of age. Birth to 5 Matters (Early Education, 2021) was published as a result of this work and presented as a set of guidelines for the Early Years sector.

Bowman et al. (2001) highlighted that the use of tests to track progress and promote and/or retain children had become standard practice across some Early Years settings and was beginning to be included in policy globally. This obsession with standardising progress has become a global concern for researchers. Biesta (2008) and Batra (2013) examined the negative impact the assessment processes that focus on ranking academic performance has on the emotional well-being of children. These studies reinforce the need to develop a different assessment model, and the one which I describe as the CASEC model later in this chapter, that stems from love as the force that enables human connections and interactions (Jarvis, 2016) is, in my opinion, more appropriate. Kress et al. (2004) discussed how, although teachers acknowledge their role as carers, the current curriculum expectations and assessment requirements have pressured them into becoming “transmitters of knowledge” rather than “sharers of knowledge”. These pressures indicate the necessity to develop an assessment model that values practices based on

developing strong loving bonds in order to make sense of children's behaviours (Archer, 2017).

2.3.2 Formative assessment practices with four-year-olds that value care

Formative assessment throughout this study is defined as the interpretation of how children learn concepts and develop skills over time. Brodie (2013) refers to formative assessment as a process that helps EYPs understand children in order to support them. This idea of understanding children suggests that formative assessment should include reflective strategies that can be adapted according to the individual needs of children (Hall & Burke, 2004; Wiliam, 2011 Martin, 2019; Hooker, 2019). Black et al. (2004) also suggest that formative assessment practices should help practitioners identify children's needs and provide support that caters for those needs. As highlighted in research (Black & Wiliam, 1998a; Black & Wiliam, 1998b; Hill et al., 2010; Carr et al., 2015) when children's individual needs are identified, appropriate interventions can be put in place and children can develop a range of skills. Moreover, this process must also focus on supporting the development of social and emotional skills that will help children form positive relationships. As these relationships with practitioners and other children develop, children can acquire a range of emotional competences (Ortiz Ocaña, 2013). As formative assessment is a synonym of AfL, the information gathered over time can be used to help children develop in all areas. Martin (2019), Wortham and Hardin (2019) and Dubiel (2016) describe assessment practices that focus on observing children in order to make sense of how they learn. Amongst the examples they describe, I draw attention to observational assessment, which focuses on how children learn first. What children learn matters once practitioners find a way to make sense of their behaviours. This is also a significant aspect highlighted by the Characteristics of Effective Learning listed in the EYFS (DfE, 2017) and the two Development Matters documents (Early Education, 2012; DfE, 2020). These characteristics suggest that practitioners should be able to describe how children explore their environment, concentrate on tasks, face difficulties, celebrate achievements, think for themselves and develop the ability to connect experiences.

These characteristics cannot be numerically measured and since Early Years policy states that they should be at the centre of the assessment process, only formative methods of assessment should be used to develop a detailed picture of each child (Hooker, 2019).

Crooks (2002), Black et al. (2003; 2004), Black (2010), Goodman (2012), Dubiel (2016), Martin (2019), draw on some of the assessment practices across Early Childhood settings in Canada, the US, England, New Zealand, Italy and Finland to highlight how observations can be used to support the development of skills holistically. Although some of the assessment practices they refer to have formative foundations, they do focus on using observations to understand how children learn in specific circumstances. They also examine the need for methods which consider each child's individual circumstances. Throughout this study, the debate regarding the appropriateness of some assessment practices highlights the need to contextualise assessment whilst considering children's individual emotional needs. These types of practices might be applicable in settings where practitioners do gather cumulative observational evidence, sometimes based on a more prescribed criteria dictated by the curriculum and other times, more spontaneously.

Some recent policy documents refer to "ongoing assessment" (DfE, 2017), "cumulative observational evidence" (DfE, 2019), and "holistic judgement of what the child can demonstrate" (DfE, 2020) to describe assessment practices; these emphasise that formative assessment can accompany children on their developmental journey (Jarvis, 2016). These documents also define the criteria for the Reception Baseline Assessment which is about standardising development rather than valuing it holistically.

2.4 Emotional competence within the assessment cycle

Throughout this section I explore emotional competence-and focus on understanding and describing what is beneath the external emotional expression which might not represent the internal emotion (Saarni, 1999). Saarni examined how children acquire

adaptive emotional functioning skills to cope in a range of environments. She identified eight skills of emotional competence considering the influential factors children are exposed to as they relate with others. She suggested that these skills are learned and, can present themselves differently depending on the type of social exposure (Chapter 3 in Beck, 2013). I drew on Saarni's work as she provides a detailed overview of how the eight skills of emotional competence can develop over time and how they might vary in different contexts. Saarni (1999) summarises the eight skills of emotional competence as the abilities and capabilities individuals develop, rather than acquire, through life. Her perspective neither defines specific stages nor sets the skills as attainment targets. Instead, it explains how the skills of emotional competence ought to be focused on emotional expression, emotion understanding, empathy and emotion regulation. According to this, I used her perspective to develop a theoretical framework which includes *cariño*. *Cariño* is a Spanish word that translates as affection, love, fondness, endearment, attachment or kindness (Bulat Silva, 2020). Moreover, it is apparent in behaviours driven by the strength of the connection that can develop between two or more people. I apply this within an assessment model which has some of its foundations in the value of relational pedagogy based on love and care (Fielding & Moss, 2011; Vecchi, 2010; Degotardi & Pearson, 2009).

Denham et al. (2016) highlight the importance of assessing emotional competence during the early years. Despite the interest in developing assessment methods to identify where children are on the emotional competence scale (Buscemi et al., 1996; Denham et al., 1996; Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta & Cox, 2000), these recommendations only focus on assessing emotional competence before other skills are assessed. Denham et al. (2016) illustrate how assessing emotional competence can help develop a set of standards according to levels of emotional expressiveness, emotion regulation and emotion knowledge (see Diagram 2.2). The type of assessment and with it the type of curriculum and instructions can be decided depending on the standards of emotional competence. Changes in skills of emotional competence might be seen as a result of the choice of curriculum and instruction, which can also impact the development of a range of other skills.

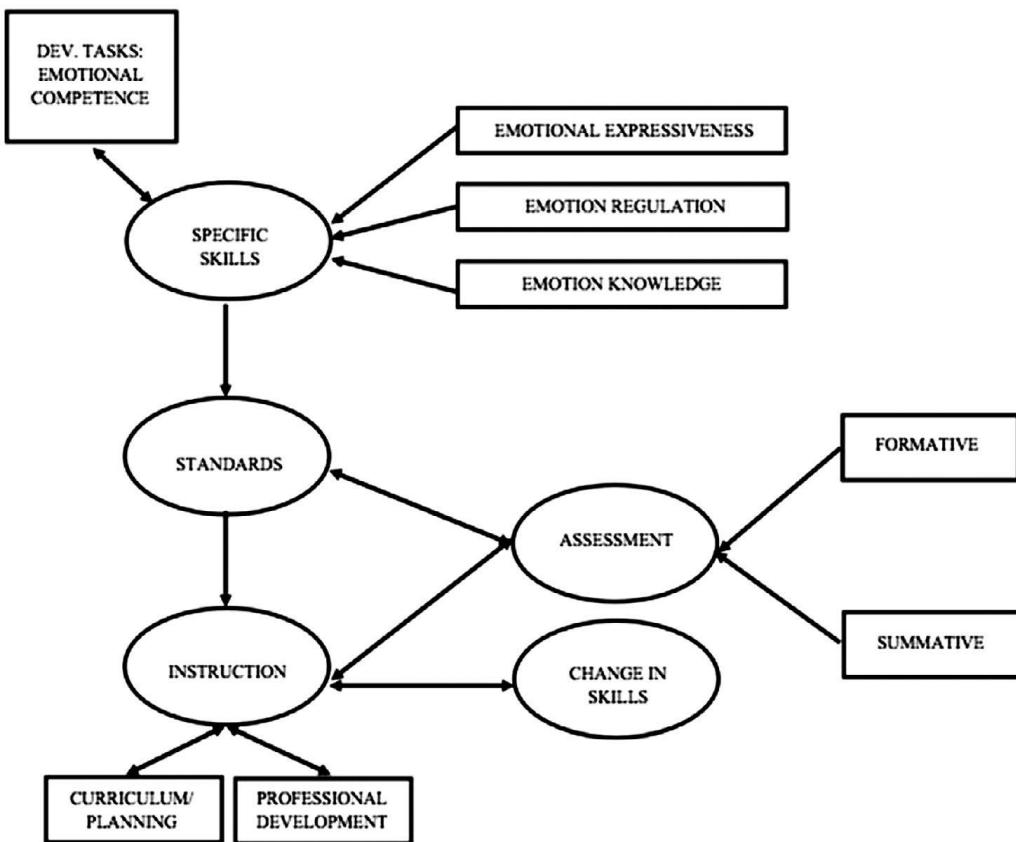


Figure 2.2 Process of assessment of emotional competence (Denham et al., 2016, p.302)

2.4.1 Saarni's eight skills and relationships within a new assessment model

Saarni's work forms the overarching principle of the CASEC model that focuses on supporting the development of emotional competence with *cariño* as the pedagogy. This model prioritises observational assessment practices that focus on developing relationships with children in order to strengthen their social and emotional skills. This model does not aim to assess how children develop a range of skills but it is built on the premises that as children develop skills of emotional competence, they can develop socially and emotionally. This idea of helping children build strong foundations using relational pedagogies is what Freire (1997) described as a pedagogy of the heart (cited in Darder, 2002). For Freire, all educational practices based on the development of loving bonds can only have positive repercussions on

individuals, which I understand as the social and emotional skills that form the foundations of other learning.

Table 2.3 below illustrates the relationship between Saarni's skills of emotional competence, the ELGs descriptors in the EFYS Framework (DfE, 2017) participants followed when this study took place and the Descriptors for Self-Regulation and Building Relationships contained in the EYFSP Early Adopter, which recently became a compulsory document for all schools in England (DfE, 2020). The table explores whether the ELGs can be linked to Saarni's skills of emotional competence. I also used it to examine whether participants were able to make links between Saarni's skills of emotional competence and the EYFS ELGs they are expected to use to assess children.

Skills of Emotional Competence (Saarni, 1999, p. 5)	Early Years Foundation Stage Profile 2018 Handbook. Descriptors ELGs 6, 7 & 8 (DfE, 2017, p. 30-31)	Early years Foundation Stage Profile 2021 handbook EYFS reforms early adopter June 2021 Descriptors Self-regulation Building Relationships (DfE, 2020, p. 11)
1. Awareness of one's own emotions.	They say when they do or don't need help.	Show an understanding of their own feelings and those of others, and regulate their behaviour accordingly.
2. Understanding others' emotions.	They take account of one another's ideas about how to organise their activity. They work as part of a group or class and understand and follow the rules.	
3. Using the vocabulary of emotion.	Children talk about how they and others show feelings, talk about their own and others' behaviour, and its consequences, and know that some behaviour is unacceptable.	

4. Empathy and sympathy in others' emotional experiences	They show sensitivity to others' needs and feelings and form positive relationships with adults and other children.	Show sensitivities to others' needs.
5. Differentiating between internal and external emotions	They are confident speaking in a familiar group, will talk about their ideas, and will choose the resources they need for their chosen activities.	Work and play cooperatively and take turns with others.
6. Coping with aversive or distressing emotions by using self-regulatory strategies	They adjust their behaviour to different situations and take changes of routine in their stride.	Have a positive sense of self and show resilience and perseverance in the face of challenge.
7. Emotional communication within relationships.	Children play co-operatively, taking turns with others.	Form positive attachments and friendships.
8. Capacity for emotional self-efficacy.	Children are confident about trying new activities and say why they like some activities more than others.	

Table 2.3 Saarni's skills of emotional competence - links to ELGs in EYFS

2.5 Theoretical Framework: *Cariño* is the pedagogy

In this section, I explore how *cariño*, as a type of relational pedagogy, fits within an assessment model that uses observation to identify and make sense of children's behaviours. This model also considers how *cariño* becomes part of the quiet and implicit form of activism practitioners use to interpret what children need, and respond to those needs.

Crownover and Jones's (2018) description of relational pedagogy as "the systematic construction of appropriate relationships embedded within the schooling process" (p.18) is helpful in this study, to contextualise how *cariño* positively influences the construction of relationships during assessment practices. Systematic construction refers to a process that occurs when children become part of a system. In this study, the four-year-olds are part of a community within the classroom environment and the school, in which systems have been developed to assess children, and then translated into practices where *cariño* is the pedagogy that gives the assessment

value. The value is mainly measured during observational assessment practices, as EYPs identify and make sense of children's behaviours and, as a result, find strategies to support the development of emotional competence.

In order to understand the rationale behind my choice of word to describe a type of relational pedagogy, I briefly discuss how *cariño* might be interpreted in English and how I developed the most appropriate definition to describe the pedagogy used by EYPs in this study. As previously mentioned, *cariño* is a Spanish word that, as suggested by Bulat Silva (2020), might be translated into English as affection, love, fondness, endearment, attachment or kindness. Since each of these nouns might present themselves as different behaviours, depending on the person who expresses them, *cariño* might appear as a mixture of all of these. However, none of these English terms exactly describe the depth of meaning of this Spanish word as often words appear in different languages as we need them to describe the experiences we go through. Although at times *cariño* might be interpreted as an emotion (Restrepo, 1995; Ortiz Ocaña, 2013; Reyes, 2020), in this study, it is described as a behaviour driven by the strength of the connection that can develop between two or more people. Following from this, I developed a definition of *cariño* as a type of pedagogy that enables EYPs to develop nurturing relationships with children in order to support them, through which an intense and expressive loving bond of affection occurs. In a letter to his sister Amelia, José Martí indicates how *cariño* might be used: "*El cariño es la más correcta y elocuente de todas las gramáticas.*" (Cariño is the most correct and eloquent of all grammars) (cited in Miranda, 2003; p.59). My own definition is that *cariño* is a system of rules that forms a communicative tool of emotional connections.

In order to justify why I chose to describe *cariño* as a pedagogy, it is important to discuss care and love, which are terms commonly used in relational pedagogy research (Cameron & Moss, 2007; Page, 2014) written mainly in English. Tronto (1993) describes care as, "species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our 'world' so that we can live in it as well as possible" (p.103). In terms of the assessment process, I interpret this statement as the use of

a pedagogical approach that enables practitioners to help children build relationships and, as a result, develop the emotional skills to maintain them. When this process of building relationships is linked to the development of emotional competence, a range of skills might also be further developed. Noddings (1984) delves deeply into the concept of care and describes the importance of the non-selective connection that might occur between the carer and the cared-for. This idea of a relationship between the two suggests that both the practitioner and the child have opportunities to demonstrate how they feel towards each other (Noddings, 2005; Ortiz Ocaña, 2013; Reyes 2020). What I understand from this exchange of feelings is that, a strong loving bond can develop between the practitioner and the child. Page (2014; 2017; 2018) describes this process as “professional love”. Although I did consider using this term to describe the relational pedagogy explored in this study, as I examined some of the research written in Spanish, I realised it did not need to be described as professional love, due to its spontaneous and intense nature. If, as explained by Sevenhuijsen (1999), care is at the centre of our lives I needed to find a word that described its essentiality within the relationships in the classroom. The word “professional” almost ‘gives’ permission to use the adjective ‘love’ in the context of an Early Years setting, and I wondered whether love in its purest form needed to be described with any adjective at all (Unamuno, 1902). My understanding of *cariño* and the concept of professional love are undoubtedly related. However, I considered that the spontaneous and profound demonstration of affection that can shape the loving bond between practitioners and children added a deeper sense, which I was unable to describe with an English word. This deeper, although spontaneous sense of the loving bond is what I describe as *cariño*.

Cameron and Moss (2007) examined how care is practised in different cultures and how it might be interpreted differently depending on the cultural context. The strength attached to the relationships that develop when an EYP cares for a child might also be understood differently. The Spanish word for care, *cuidar* emphasises that the carer has a sense of concern and responsibility towards the holistic well-being of the child (Van Ewijk et al. 2002). Cameron and Moss (2007) also explain that the meaning of care in English culture might be more limited to the action of looking after

without too much of a focus on the strength of the bond between the carer and the cared-for. As I explored how *cariño* was used in educational contexts in Spanish speaking cultures (Ortiz Ocaña, 2013; Reyes 2020; Bulat Silva, 2020), I saw it was possible to use *cariño* to mean care or professional love, to describe the emotional connection between EYPs and children in an English context. *Cariño* carries such a strong emotional meaning that denotes the strength of the loving bond that allows for spontaneous expressions of affection to happen. Whilst trying to find a word to define the type of pedagogy that appeared through some observational practices, I questioned whether the definition of professional love had been influenced by the English cultural context. Kaul de Marlangeon (2017) and Briz Gómez's (2012) description of English culture as *cultura de distanciamiento* (a culture of distance where certain social protocols might suggest a limited expression of affection) is relevant when trying to justify the need for an adjective to contextualise the value of love in Early Years settings. Reflecting on the contextualisation of unconditional loving relationships (Winnicot, 1968) led me to conclude that *cariño*, a pedagogy based on strong bonds of affection (Ortiz Ocaña, 2013), could accurately describe the affectionate relationships that develop between some EYPs and children. Furthermore, when the role of the practitioner goes beyond taking care, affection becomes *ternura* (a deep expression of affection) (Restrepo, 1995) This term is fundamental in explaining the significance of the expression of affection in the early years context.

2.5.1 Assessing with *cariño*, activism and emotional labour

In order to describe how *cariño* can fit within the assessment process in this theoretical framework, I examined the impact of the interactions that occur during observational assessment, between the carer (the participant) and the cared for (the child) in studies by Moss (1992), Abbot and Gillen (1997) and Kaga, Bennett and Moss (2010). These types of interactions are spontaneous as they are unplanned and occur in the moment. Their impact can present as a form of activism (Horton & Krafts, 2009) which might only be apparent between the practitioner and the child in a particular situation. However small the impact, quiet activism presents itself

implicitly as a rebellion against the summative assessment agenda when practitioners let *cariño* guide the interactions. These responses take place in response to children's needs (Martin, Hanson & Fontaine, 2007) and can transform relationships which, as a result, can influence social change (Albin-Clark, 2020; Archer, 2012). Early Years practitioners might be still described as oppressed, according to Freire's (1996) interpretation of what might look like compliant practices that adhere to policy expectations. However, in this study, I explored how the development of relationships between practitioners and children is a sign of implicit activism (Fromm & Goddard, 1956) as it impacts the holistic development of children. The unplanned interactions are social acts (Albin-Clark, 2020) which occur when relational pedagogies are applied and, as a result, influence the development of a strong loving-affectionate bond that offers the foundations of emotional competence (Saarni, 1999; Ciarrochi, Forgas & Mayer, 2006; Beck, 2013).

Beyond the understanding of acts of care in the English cultural context I used terminology defined by Graham (1983) to interpret observational assessment with *cariño* as an intense labour of love. Labour in this context needs to be carefully explained as it does not have a negative connotation. I interpret it as the work that EYPs carry out as part of their duties in a school or Early Years setting. Therefore, it can include emotional pressure but also emotional satisfaction.

Cariño, as a pedagogy during the assessment process, emerges from the psychological aspect within the action of caring that Thomas (1993) describes as an emotional process that involves feelings of love and affection and where the person who does the caring gives emotional support; Thomas explains this as the expression of feelings during an exchange, which I refer to as the interactions that occur during observational assessment practices. Therefore, the labour of love that *cariño* represents as a pedagogy, becomes a process of emotional labour where the practitioner receives the emotional reward when love is exchanged.

This type of emotional labour can act as a shield when the less rewarding type of emotional labour appears due to the pressures that cascade down from early years

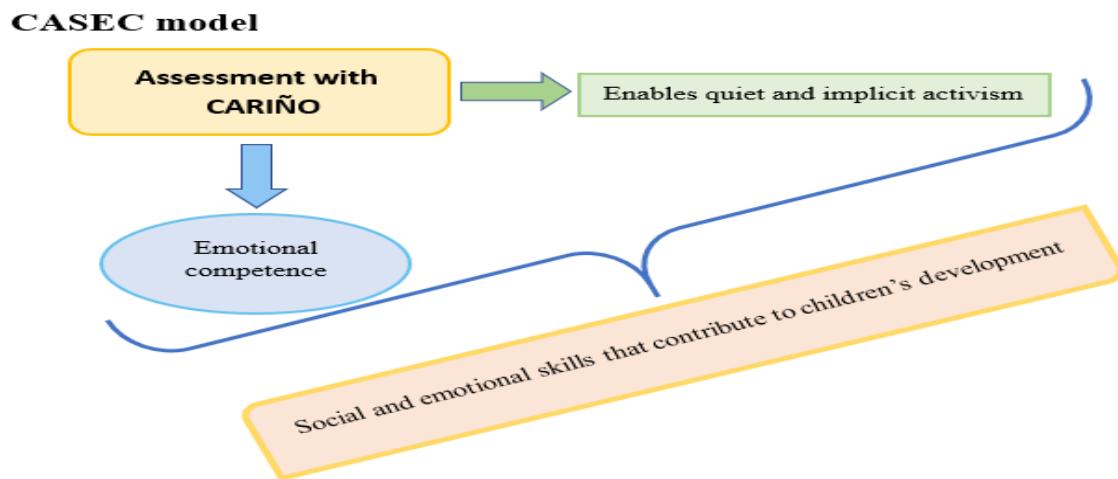
assessment policy to organisational goals and expectations, all dictated by the current political agenda. This type of emotional labour described by Brown et al. (2018), Grandey, Diefendorff and Rupp (2013) and Lee and Brotheridge (2012), refers to the holding of some emotions as practitioners feel obliged to adhere to policy expectations. I interpreted these emotional pressures caused by the English version of Freire's (1993) banking model description of the teacher as the depositor of knowledge that follows established systems and therefore lives oppressed by the political agenda. The difference in the examples of practice described in this study is that *cariño* is the pedagogy used to manage the emotional pressures caused by the political agenda. As Garner, Moses and Waajid (2013) and Hamre et al. (2013) suggest, the interactions that take place during observational assessment practices with *cariño*, contribute to children's social and emotional development (Garner et al., 2013; Hamre & Picanta, 2005), as loving bonds of affection spontaneously develop.

Furthermore, emotional competence can be promoted during these interactions (Denham et al., 2012), when *cariño* is present. This emotional exchange might also be interpreted as unconditional love, due to its spontaneous nature (Winnicott, 1968).

2.6 The CASEC model of assessment based on *cariño*.

The CASEC model stemmed, both, during the review of the literature and also whilst I analysed the data in three phases. My intention was to explain how *cariño* could be used as a pedagogy during assessment practices where emotional exchanges occur spontaneously. These emotional exchanges promote the development of the skills of emotional competence and also become quiet acts of activism in practice and not arguments about the suitability of current policy. As it presents itself quietly, it is implicit in the way practitioners manage to identify, value and make sense of children's behaviours. The gap in literature regarding the use of *cariño* in assessment practices and the examination of the participants' experiences helped me design the CASEC model. This model explains how *cariño* is what makes assessment meaningful to children, who are ultimately the true beneficiaries of any assessment process.

Figure 2.3 illustrates the CASEC model, assessment that occurs through *cariño* and promotes the development of emotional competence which impacts the development of socio-emotional skills, and as a result a range of other skills.



2.3 CASEC model

Whilst I critiqued some of the existing literature, I brought together the theoretical framework that helped me shape the CASEC model based on the assessment inadequacies currently included in early years policy. Moreover, I justified its relevance as I identified that the current performativity agenda is creating a sense of "institutional schizophrenia" (Ball, 2003) caused by the contradictory messages received by EYPs who work directly with four-year-olds. On one hand, current early years policy sets expectations which practitioners feel they need to adhere to (Biesta, 2008 and Batra, 2013). On the other hand, they can see that assessment can take place as interactions happen spontaneously during play (Martin, 2019; Dubie, 2016; Brodie, 2013) and during both formative and summative assessment practices. However, the application of the CASEC model, which is evident in the examples of practice described in the case studies in Chapters 4 and 5, places observation as the type of formative assessment that values interactions the most. During observations, practitioners can support the development of skills of emotional competence (Saarni, 1999). Whilst children develop these skills, they also develop

socially and emotionally. This impacts the development of other skills, although there might not be a planned agenda for this to occur.

2.7 Summary

Having discussed the policy expectations, I identified that assessment practices and policy implications continue to be a topic of debate amongst researchers and many EYPs. Although the recently published early years statutory and non-policy (DfE, 2021; DfE, 2021; Early Education, 2021) and assessment guidelines do mention formative assessment, they do not focus on its purpose nor the type of relational pedagogy that might be applied during assessment practices in enough depth. There is however, emphasis on what children are expected to achieve and how to produce evidence of progress against set criteria. Current policy therefore demands a high level of emotional commitment from EYPs (Yin, 2015) and contributes to the intensity of the aforementioned “institutional schizophrenia” (Ball, 2003) present in schools across England. However, and although the pressures of assessment are discussed in this chapter, there is more emphasis on the benefits of practices focused on *cariño* that consider the development of emotional competence.

The review of the research about assessment practices and policy influences, helped me highlight the lack of research on how relational pedagogies can have an impact on what happens during assessment processes. The exploration of relational pedagogy focused on four aspects which composed the theoretical framework: 1. *The impact of loving bonds of affection*, 2. *Whether the development of emotional competence is considered during assessment processes*, 3. *The value of various types of assessment practices and*, 4. *The policy implications*. This detailed review of literature enabled me to start analysing the assessment practices the participants described. The CASEC model was subsequently created as I identified that the pedagogy applied during the assessment practices described could only be based on *cariño*. The creation of this model also helped me corroborate the gap in research and as a result identify my contribution to knowledge-*cariño* is the pedagogy that can help practitioners use observational assessment which considers the development of

emotional competence and in the process, has an impact on how children develop social and emotional skills as well as other skills. Moreover, another aspect I had not come across in the literature I reviewed was how the emotional labour that takes place during assessment practices can present itself as a form of implicit quiet activism which has a direct impact on children.

Chapter 3: METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

3.1 Introduction

Within this chapter, emotional competence and assessment practices are positioned within an interpretivist methodological approach. My role as an observer-interpreter-constructivist who feels (a *sentidora*) developed as I applied reflexivity within my research approach and considered the participants' reflections of practice (Mukherji & Albon, 2018). As a *sentidora*, I was an insider and also an outsider in this study, as described by Trowler (cited in McArthur & Ashwin, 2020). My previous experiences as an Early Years practitioner in contexts with similarities to those described by the participants allowed me to step into the participants' descriptions of practice. Some of my past experiences had things in common with the experiences the participants described in so much detail. However, I was an outsider as I had not experienced how current policy can impact assessment practices and had therefore been able to carry out assessment practices without some of the current policy constraints.

I employ my framework, developed from Saarni's skills of emotional competence, and *cariño* as a type of relational pedagogy. I begin with an outline of the explanatory research design, the reasons why I chose case study, and how it was applied to this investigation. I follow this with an overview of the research, as well as a section presenting the ethical considerations. I also discuss how Saarni prioritised the importance of contextualising emotional competence and describe how participants contextualised assessment practices. I include a rationale for each of the data collection methods employed and justify the use of explanatory analysis to analyse the data in two stages, in intervals first and sequentially afterwards.

3.2 Methodological approach

For the purpose of this investigation, I drew on an ontological reflexive perspective (Dunn & Mearman, 2006; Siraj-blatchford & Siraj-blatchford, 1997) which, I define as the idea of interpreting the subjective aspects of human experiences which are noticeable in the individual responses during interactions (Breuer, 2003; 2021;

Lumsden, 2019). This study examines details about the experiences participants (EYPs working with four-year-olds) shared about their assessment practices. I also aimed to explore where, within those assessment practices, participants made sense of children's behaviours and as a result supported the development of skills of emotional competence.

Those in favour of a positivist approach claim that it can offer a more controlled environment in which to develop a theory based on a hypothesis. However, throughout this study, as I am concerned about the individual experiences of the participants, I worked through an interpretative and constructivist paradigm (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988). Although I did not approach this study through a feminist research lens, throughout my journey as a reflexive researcher I describe myself as a *sentidora* (someone who feels), an aspect which could very well fit in under the feminist research umbrella (Hesse-Biber, 2012). I chose to value the subjective and valued how I felt about the participants' experiences and decided to specifically examine (Brown & Perkins, 2019; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018) how participants interpreted the four-year-olds' behaviours in their assessment practices during less controlled situations (Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Kirk & Miller, 1986). I realised that, as considered by McArthur (2012), as a researcher I had become part of what I had set out to research and as a result I had to acknowledge how I felt (as a *sentidora*) as I interpreted the data in different stages. Exploring what occurred during some of these assessment practices helped me realise that my interpretation of the relationships between the participants and the children was at the centre of my contribution to knowledge.

I used the data to interpret what the current assessment in Early Years Education looks like and found opportunities to construct my own understanding of the strength of the relationships between the participants and the children. This process of interpretation and construction is what I define as an epistemological interpretivist and constructivist perspective of what occurs during some assessment practices with four-year-olds (Mukherji & Albon, 2018). With this in mind, I used a qualitative approach to interpret the data that helped me contextualise and construct a strong argument (Hudson and Ozanne's, 1988), and examined how some practitioners

interpret the guidelines for assessment methods in settings across England. The online debate in practitioner-led forums such as *Keeping Early Years Unique (KEYU)* and *More than a Score* indicates that this continues to be the case. These constructivist interpretations of assessment practices are similar to those suggested by Berger and Luckman (1967), which help individuals situate their experiences within a socially constructed circle.

As can be seen in section 1.4, the main research question intended to examine how assessment methods can help practitioners understand four-year-olds' behaviours in order to select practices that support the development of other skills; and MQ-What types of assessment policy and practices help identify, value and make sense of 4-year-old's behaviours in order to support the development of other skills? The two subsidiary questions helped me study concrete aspects related to the development of emotional competence: SQ1- How far do practitioners value and support the development of emotional competence in 4-year-old children? SQ2- To what extent are practitioners assessing Saarni's 8 skills of emotional competence? I then related *cariño* within the assessment process to the development of emotional competence. By using Saarni's (1999) definition of emotional competence, I identified it as a set of emotional skills other skills can emerge from.

The discussions with the participants allowed me to get closer to their world. The relationships I developed with each one prompted unplanned conversations which created opportunities for reflection and helped me situate myself within the study (Melson, Woodall, & Zell, 2017). The participants described their own subjective experiences which were characterised by the relational approach based on *cariño*. The range of emotions expressed during the interviews, focus groups and video-diaries were part of the subjective experiences that made each case study individual (Burrel & Morgan, 1979; Kirk & Miller, 1986). As a reflexive researcher, I slowly developed a sense of self as I collected data through the relationships that spontaneously occurred between myself and each of the participants (Warin, 2011; May & Perry, 2017; Lumsden, 2019; Brown & Perkins, 2019). This reflexive process helped me use the data to explore the theory and come up with the CASEC model.

My interpretation of the emotional aspect of the data could be described as “strong objectivity” as it highlights the researcher bias as an unconscious influence caused by the relationships between myself and the participants (Harding ,1995). This type of bias emphasises that this study was a methodologically emotional journey of reflexivity (Brown & Perkins, 2019; Brownlie, 2014). When I describe myself as a *sentidora*, I suggest that the emotional journey and researcher bias can strengthen the analysis of the data.

3.3 Issue identified

The issue identified was the lack of research that connects emotional competence and assessment practices used with four-year-olds in relation to PSED, which might help children develop a range of skills. As a reflexive researcher and *sentidora*, I considered I needed to engage with the participants in “mutual simultaneous shaping” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

To answer the research questions, I chose explanatory research design to draw on the casual conclusions that emerged from a series of case studies. I used these to investigate the complexities of real-life experiences (Sturman, 1999; Flyvbjerg, 2001),, which took place in a series of contexts where four-year-olds were assessed. Each of the case studies described how and why (Yin, 2009) assessment practices took place and whether emotional competence had a place within those practices.

3.4 Research Design

Explanatory research often uses quantitative data to explain how something might have occurred and tends to start with a hypothesis based on known theory drawn from previous experiments (Van Maanen et al., 2007; Cornelissen, 2017). Stebbins (2001) describes exploratory research as an approach that involves the study, examination and analysis of something during a process of experimentation. For the purpose of this study, it is described as the process of analysis of the data to explain how *cariño* can impact some of the assessment practices currently used with four-

year-olds. This type of explanatory research followed a period of exploration of practice that helped me develop the CASEC model which shaped a new theory during the research process. My perspective on explanatory research emerged whilst I analysed the data in a sequence at the end of each of the three phases, and then as a whole. Whilst interpreting participants' experiences sequentially and then fully, I explored to what extent participants identified, valued and made sense of four-year-olds' behaviours. During this process, I brought together all the theory I had previously explored and formed the CASEC model. The element of exploration within this explanatory research helped me set the foundations of the new theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). What made this study explanatory was the use of theory to explain how new theory was shaped, not just as a result of the analysis, but during it (Abbott, 2004; Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). It was the explanation of how *cariño* can play a fundamental role in the assessment process with four-year-olds, that gave the study an explanatory stance.

There were occurrences which indicated that this study could have had an ethnographic perspective due to the descriptive nature of some of the data. However, employing three types of qualitative methods to collect data that explored the impact of various assessment practices over a period of six months, sided towards the explanatory nature of case studies (Hamilton et al., 2013). Action research was considered as another potential research design since participants were encouraged to make connections between their practice and Saarni's skills of emotional competence. However, the reflective part of the study focused more on the assessment practices that were already happening. Therefore, "getting close to reality" (Flyvbjerg, 2001:132) was key to examining how various types of assessment policies and practices helped identify, value and make sense of four-year-olds' behaviours whilst also focusing on the development of other skills. Case studies allowed for qualitative data to be collected in three phases which situated practice and the interpretation of policy within a cycle that helped me analyse to what extent participants assessed skills of emotional competence whilst assessing other skills.

3.4.1 Why case studies?

Saarni's definition of emotional competence emerged from the analysis of case studies. Whilst analysing and in some cases comparing the emotional response of different individuals in different contexts, she was able to identify that; "we learn to live with its influence in daily life" (Saarni, 1999, p.xi). Although her work does not refer to case studies as explanatory and collaborative, she makes many references to the importance of interpreting interactions and emotional responses within different contexts. She believed that emotional competence is demonstrated through everyday experiences and influences the way we respond to specific situations. It is through prioritising the contextualisation of emotional competence that Saarni was able to identify how individuals develop as unique emotional beings. This idea of abstracting meaning from individual emotional responses is linked to Yin's (2009) description of case study research as a process that uses experiences to explain the whys and hows of current practices. Thomas (2016), Ulriksen and Dadalauri (2016), Yin (2009) and Flyvberg (2006) argue that case study research can rely on the single moment of an individual's experiences. That is partly its purpose here too, but by exploring the assessment practices within different contexts, the study also brings together multiple realities (Pring, 2015).

3.4.2 What is the case study of?

Case study research design is a type of design frame which concentrates in detail on one aspect: a person, a situation, a place or even a period of time (Thomas, 2016). As described by Denscombe (2017), case study primarily focuses on the reflections and interactions of one or more individuals during natural processes. In addition to this, Hamilton and Corbett-Whittier (2013) emphasise that case studies concentrate on identifying the complexity of a situation and collect data on one occasion or more, depending on the direction the study takes and the variation of perspectives that arise from the interactions. Unlike other research designs, case study research allows those involved to set the boundaries that define the characteristics of the study and are specific to the context and the circumstances of the individual or group

(Thomas, 2016). Case studies attempt to explore the participants' lived experiences whilst considering thoughts and feelings about particular situations within concrete contexts (Flyvbjerg, 2001). Geertz (1974) describes this process as

an experience-near concept, [...] one which an individual - a patient, a subject, in our case an informant - might himself naturally and effortlessly use to define what he or his fellows see, feel, think, imagine, and so on, and which he would readily understand when similarly applied by others. (p.28)

This natural and effortless response helps narrow the focus whilst combining data collected using more than one type of data (Robson & McCartan, 2016).

There are nine case studies in total in this study which are stories of assessment practices in a range of Early Years settings. The assessment practices described by each participant then formed the individual units of analysis within each of the case studies. There were, however, two participants who worked in the same setting who provided data that fitted under one case study and subsequently one unit of analysis. Each unit of analysis included data I used to explain whether, and if so how, different assessment practices helped (or not) participants make sense of four-year-olds' behaviours and support the development of Saarni's skills of emotional competence, which might also influence the development of other skills (Yin, 2009). Moreover, each case study was also collaborative and brought together perspectives from participants from various institutions, who interpreted assessment policy and practice according to their individual contexts (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013).

The explanatory and collaborative nature of these case studies used multiple parallel cases from nine different Early Years settings in order to offer greater generalizability (Cohen et al., 2018). Within a theoretical framework based on the CASEC model (Socio-emotional development occurs when assessment practices consider Emotional Competence Skills whilst using Cariño as the pedagogy), this study strived to explain whether current assessment policy and practices helped practitioners (or not) support the development of emotional competence and as a result other skills that will impact development holistically.

3.4.3 Applying case studies

Participants reflected on their use of assessment policies and practices during focus group discussions (FGDs), interviews and video-diaries. The individual reflections provided the detailed data which helped build each case study. The data collected was analysed in three phases with each phase informing subsequent phases. The interpretation of data from each phase helped draw up a contextualised picture of each participant. A series of generalised themes emerged from the analysis of individual experiences which helped answer the research questions. As part of this process, I acknowledged that my experiences as an EYP influenced the cycle of data collection and analysis.

3.5 Overview of study

The research was conducted via video-conference in order to allow participants from various parts of England to easily get involved in focus groups discussions and/or interviews. I intended to explore whether the assessment policies and practices used in these settings randomly selected, helped practitioners identify, value and make sense of four-year-olds' behaviours and to what extent emotional competence was taken into account in the process. This initial exploration led me to develop a breakdown of types of assessment practices which focused on the identification of children's developmental needs and their impact on future learning. I adopted case study design after examining how Saarni had used case studies to study how the perception of self in a social context influences the development of the skills for emotional management, which help us respond to social situations.

3.5.1 Sample

In order to situate the study, the sampling process used defined criteria to select participants. The selection criteria suggested that all participants should work with four-year-olds and should have experience using assessment strategies and interpreting current assessment policies. The group consisted of ten participants

from a range of settings. There were seven teachers from state schools: six females and one male. As well as a male teacher from an independent school, and two EYPs from a nursery. After sharing a brief outline of the aims of the study on social media in November 2019, participants volunteered based on the criteria – working with four-year-olds in an Early Years setting (school or otherwise). Considering the expectations set for this thesis, I had initially planned to have a maximum of twelve participants in order to have a varied range of the data. Although this might seem like a small number, the aim was for a careful selection to add validity to the study as well as a further comparative element which could make a triangulation process possible.

Throughout November 2019, ten EYPs responded on social media, five via private Facebook Messenger and five via private message on Twitter. In December 2019, the ten practitioners who had responded, were asked to provide an e-mail address where they were sent an information sheet with an outline of what the study would entail. This included details of the three phases of data collection, explained how the focus groups and interviews would take place and when participants would be expected to record video-diaries. Each participant was also given a consent form which they had to sign agreeing to take part in the study. Consent was given by all participants soon after and dates for focus groups and interviews were set for January (Phase 1), March (Phase 2), and May 2020 (Phase 3).

The focus groups and interviews were initially set to take place on three separate occasions over a period of six months. Both lasted, on average, between 45 minutes and one hour and 30 minutes and were scheduled after carefully considering the personal circumstances of each participant. I had an initial plan for each focus group and interview with a series of open-ended questions and some details about my interpretation of Saarni's work on emotional competence. I allocated time for reflection during each data collection phase. During Phase 1, we referred to the EYFS document and some sections of the Pilot EYFS document to discuss where emotional competence fitted within formative and summative assessment processes. All participants were asked to describe the type of assessment methods most

commonly used in their settings and how these might be used to identify and support the development of emotional competence (Appendix 2). As part of this phase, participants also recorded some video-diaries with examples of practice describing whether the skills of emotional competence had been considered whilst carrying out any assessments.

During Phase 2, participants were asked to describe how they might assess children with specific needs, and why they might choose one particular type of assessment strategy. These discussions included time for reflection whilst examining the expectations set out by current policy documents. Next, participants were asked to record video-diaries of assessment practices whilst reflecting on whether the skills of emotional competence were considered before, during or after any assessment practices took place (Appendix 3). Only some of these video-diaries informed the discussions during Phase 3, with some not taking place as originally planned due to the outbreak of COVID-19 and subsequent closure of all schools. Some of the participants did record video-diaries reflecting on previous experiences and these provided data that helped answer the Research Questions. The study of social interactions between practitioners and children was crucial and helped contextualise some assessment practices. Whilst some practitioners continued to interact with their pupils via online platforms set up by the schools, I was unable to use these interactions to construct an interpretation of the type of assessment that might have taken place.

The focus groups, interviews and video-diaries were methods of data collection which could help participants reflect and as a result interpret their own assessment practices (Blumer, 1969). This study was planned on the basis that all participants would have opportunities to interpret children's behaviours and reflect on assessment practices. When the number of interactions between participants and children was reduced due to the enforcement of rules on social distancing brought in by the government to stop the spread of COVID-19 (DfE & Public Health England (PHE), 2020), the initial interpretation of what happened during assessment

practices changed. Subsequently, Phase 3 was adapted in response to the introduction of COVID-19 legislation.

Participants had detailed guidelines listing the specific policy documents and literature they needed to reflect up on during Phases 1, 2 and 3 of the data collection. In an attempt not to interfere with the day-to-day life of each setting, participants were only asked to reflect on those practices that were linked to assessment. These guidelines were also followed by those who did manage to record some video-diaries after Phase 2. Although these reflections were based on less recent experiences, they did provide relevant details about children's behaviours that informed the types of questions asked during Phase 3 (Appendix 4). During the final focus groups or one-to-one interviews, participants were asked to refer to the examples discussed in their video-diaries or some other past experiences. They were asked to reflect on whether the assessments carried out had helped them identify, value and make sense of four-year-olds' behaviours in order to support the development of other skills. Furthermore, they were asked to list the skills children should develop in order to acquire a range of capabilities and to explain where emotional competence fitted within this list. Finally, all participants were asked to reflect on practices that focused on assessing emotional competence.

3.5.2 Ethical Considerations

Prior to and during the study, the ethical standards were set to ensure that the participants' working patterns and personal circumstances were respected. An open and honest relationship between myself (as the researcher) and the participants establishing my positionality within the study, developed as the study went on. As the relationships developed, I became the link that spontaneously connected participants and used our scheduled discussions to reflect on their own practices and each other's. I found that my experience as an EYP enabled me to word the questions in a way that was easily understood by the participants.

During the design and execution of focus groups and video-diaries, I considered all General Data Protection Regulations (GDPRs). I also anticipated that some participants might be experiencing a period of unsettlement due to the pressures possibly caused by the piloting of the new Reception Baseline assessment starting in September 2019. Therefore, it was necessary to be “term sensitive” so that participants did not feel there was any inclination towards a particular assessment method (Clough & Nutbrown, 2002). I also monitored all vulnerability and special circumstances and offered assistance during regular brief conversations with individual participants (Hammersley & Traianou, 2007). Those participants who chose to take part signed the digital consent form which was automatically forwarded to an e-mail inbox and securely stored. In order to respect participants’ privacy and protect their identity (Cohen et al., 2007), each e-mail address was allocated a code. Names and locations of specific settings were neither disclosed nor included in the analysis.

Time allocated to data collection and analysis for each phase was monitored to ensure that the findings from Phase 1 informed the data collection for Phase 2 and also Phase 3 (Bryman, 2007a). In order to ensure the smooth transition through the phases, a schedule was put together allowing for changes to be accommodated during the whole data collection process.

It was made explicit on the information sheet and consent form that each participant would remain anonymous in the data collection process and any subsequent publications. The settings (schools and nursery) would be referred to as settings AS, BS, CS, DS, ES, FS, GS, HN1 & HN2 and INS (S-school, N-nursery, NS-nursery school). Participants would be given pseudonyms as follows: AS-Amanda, BS-Jane, CS-Sahida, DS-Maria, E1-Sally, FS-Alia, GS-John, HN1-Julie, HN2-Eleanor and INS-Joshua in order to disguise their identity. The consent forms were signed electronically, encrypted and saved onto an encrypted pen-drive and no hard copies were printed.

3.6 Researcher's role

My role as a case study researcher can be described as an observer-interpreter-constructivist. My aim was to collect and synthesize data through a range of channels in order to abstract themes that can be used to construct a response to the Research Question/s. Observing and interpreting participants' interactions with each other and with myself as the researcher offered a holistic perspective that contributes to the construction of new knowledge (Cohen et al., 2018).

The trial role of observer, interpreter and constructivist may seem like three roles that can interfere with each other. However, Verschuren's (2003) definition of case study design as a hybrid considers the researcher to be a reflexive interpreter of the processes that occur during the collection and analysis of various sources of data, as Thomas (2016) also suggests. I considered that using various qualitative methods to create a process of triangulation made me a hybrid researcher. Within this study, this trial role is seen in the analysis and interpretation of assessment practices as processes where emotional competence might appear (or not) and the subsequent construction of theory that will help articulate answers. Saarni's contextualisation of emotional competence also requires this trial role in order to observe and interpret behaviours within a range of environments and, as a result, construct the theoretical framework that supports the eight skills of emotional competence (Saarni, 1999).

The interactions between the researcher and the participants can also contribute to the development of "a hybrid collective" (Cave et al., 2012) which suggests that total objectivity can never be achieved. Ultimately, it will be myself as the researcher who will analyse and interpret the data and, as a result construct new theory. Although the combination of perspectives offered by "a hybrid collective" helped me discuss the themes that emerged from the data, I reached the conclusion alone. My trial roles throughout this study, although not totally objective, were necessary in order to combine the analysis of assessment practices, the development of emotional competence and identify where *cariño* fitted within these processes.

Earlier on in the project, I established I would need time for reflection prior to each phase in order to take on the trial roles whilst collecting the data. I listed some key points of reflection which helped me differentiate each of the three roles during the FGDs and interviews and also when I watched the video-diaries and took notes to inform the case study design. The points of reflection occurred in the following order: 1) I had a brief conversation with participants prior to each phase in my role as an observer. Afterwards, I took notes of anything worth considering when wording my questions during the focus groups and interviews. 2) In my role as an observer-interpreter, I asked myself a series of questions: a) Am I being as objective as I can be or is anything hindering my objectivity? b) How might my own beliefs be influencing my interpretation of the interactions between the participants that I am observing. 3) I had to make sure my role as a constructivist did not interfere with the other two roles during any of the three phases of data collection. I listened to each participant and took notes of some key words to look for when the analysis of data began, with the intention of using theory and participants' experiences to construct new knowledge. This stage of the reflection was not easy, and I used reminders on post-it-notes to stop myself from reaching conclusions too soon. As suggested by Yin (2009), I considered it essential to draw a diagram (included in Chapters 4 and 5) that sequenced the data from the different phases. This diagram allowed me to track through the different stages of each case study and analyse elements whilst being an observer-interpreter and avoid any other type of involvement. This process of reflexivity helped me address some possible bias during the selection and interpretation of data (Verschuren, 2003).

Overcoming some of the hurdles as a case study researcher in order to draw patterns from my interpretation of participants' experiences (Smith, 1991; Thomas, 2016), also meant being aware of their individual circumstances to work within certain rules of validity and reliability. As an observer-interpreter, the external validity of the case studies was clarified by offering details of the various contexts (settings where participants work) as well as the aspects of theory that would help me draw a detailed theoretical framework to support the analysis of data. The triangulation of data from the three phases enabled a process of concurrent and convergent validity

which helped in my trial roles to bring themes together to reach conclusions and draw recommendations for future research. A process of internal validity was also possible whilst sequencing the data and highlighting patterns that offered detailed information that could help answer the Research Question/s.

3.7 Participants' understanding of the study

Participants viewed their participation in this study as an opportunity to reflect on their own practices. It was noticeable during the initial discussions prior to the scheduled interviews and focus groups, that participants were keen to engage in conversation with other practitioners. Before they agreed to take part in the study, some participants asked if there would be opportunities to ask questions about each other's practices.

3.7.1 Assessment practices

Participants were familiar with summative and formative assessment practices. They were able to categorise the strategies commonly used in their settings in accordance with the guidelines included in the EYFS Framework (DfE, 2017) as the most recent early years policy document. All participants defined summative and formative assessment, gave examples of various assessment tools, and reflected on their purpose. Following a series of questions to help contextualise the three Prime Areas and the ELGs within them, as described in the DfE (2017), participants explored the area of PSED in particular. At this stage, participants were also asked to consider the current policy consultations regarding the piloting of an amended EYFS Framework (DfE, 2018) and the introduction of the new Reception Baseline Assessment (DfE, 2020) for four-year olds in September 2020.

For the purpose of this study, the only expectation was for each participant to be able to discuss examples of assessment practices in line with the government policy requirements. Seven of the ten participants were teachers in reception classes with a range of experience using assessment strategies who had come across digital tools

to document children's progress in more recent years. They all shared the same understanding regarding government policy expectations and had developed opinions about these based on their everyday assessment practices. Although they used assessment tools to provide results required by their local authorities, some participants had developed their own assessment strategies with more of a focus on nurturing children's individual skills. Identifying, valuing and making sense of children's unique behaviours and, as a result, supporting their individual needs was a very crucial part of what occurred as the CASEC model was shaped by applying the theoretical framework. Although participants were only aware of some of the theory related to assessment and emotional competence and the discussions were focused on that, their casual references to children's uniqueness allowed for the theory behind *cariño* to be incorporated within the data collection phases. Finally, two of the EYPs working in a nursery setting and one male teacher working in a school nursery did not have to provide assessment data to the local authority, so they seemed to have more freedom to assess and monitor children's progress whilst still being guided by the DfE (2017).

Participants often described children's behaviour in detail when they gave accounts of how assessment had been carried out with individual children. This focus on behaviour highlighted the relevance of skills of emotional competence in all assessment processes and became a central part of all discussions. The semi-structured nature of the questions originally prepared to prompt and initiate the discussions for each of the three phases, allowed participants to explore new avenues as they discussed each other's assessment practices. Saarni's (1999) work also prioritises the contextualisation of children's needs in order to support the development of skills of emotional competence. Therefore, it became paramount to let the discussion flow so that participants could focus on the importance of contextualising practices in order to understand how and why certain assessment practices were used.

3.7.2 Participants within the CASEC model

Allowing for an open dialogue between participants was crucial, even when there were differences in the way they approached assessment. Whilst collecting data, it was my intention to situate each of these contextualised assessment practices within the CASEC model. In order to do that, I had to ensure the interactions between participants (and also between participants and myself as the researcher) had a focus without losing a certain level of spontaneity. I devised a spider chart with a central aspect as the initial topic of discussion and based on the different parts of the CASEC model. During Phase 1, the initial focus was types of assessment practices and PSE as a highlighted area of learning and development in current early years policy. The discussion during Phase 1 and the video-diaries that followed, highlighted a new central aspect of discussion for Phase 2. Phase 2 focused on examining whether Saarni's eight skills of emotional competence fitted within the assessment processes participants used and the current established and piloted early years policy. Phase 3 focused on exploring whether participants considered the impact of emotional competence on the development of the skills children are likely to need to progress as social beings. I also discussed with all participants whether the caring and nurturing disposition of the practitioner played a part in any of the assessment practices they were familiar with and, if so, how.

The collection of data was broken down into three phases precisely to ensure enough time was spent discussing each part of the CASEC model.

3.8 Methods

3.8.1 Research Design - phases of data collection

Within this section I have two foci. First, I explain the three chronological phases of the study that explore assessment practices over a period of five months starting in January 2020. Second, I include a detailed description of the nature of the study.

The participants involved were all EYPs working with four-year-olds in Early Years settings and schools and were familiar with the EYFS Framework (DfE, 2017).

As previously mentioned, in November 2019 I shared a poster on social media (Facebook, Instagram and Twitter), with a brief overview of the study, requesting participation from EYPs working in reception classes. Eighteen EYPs responded, and I contacted all of them to discuss the requirements of the study. Following the initial discussions, in December 2019, I sent the ten EYPs who had shown an interest, an information sheet and a consent form that included details about the number of phases and what each phase would involve. It also listed approximate dates for each phase and an overview of how the video-diaries would need to be recorded between Phases 1 and 2 and Phases 2 and 3. Ten gave consent to participate in the study and dates for the three phases were agreed with all participants. The consent forms were signed electronically, encrypted and saved onto an encrypted pen-drive; no hard copies were printed. Throughout the three phases of the study, as indicated below, I use pseudonyms to refer to participants; as Amanda (AS), Jane (BS), Sahida (CS), Maria (DS), Sally (ES), Alia (FS), John (GS), Julie (HN1), Eleanor (HN2) and Joshua (INS).

Participants	Phase 1			Phase 2			Phase 3	
	S-School N-Nursery	Focus Groups	Interviews	Video- diaries	Focus Groups	Interviews	Video- diaries	Focus Groups
Amanda	FG1✓			4	FG4✓		6	FG5 ✓
Jane	FG1✓			2		✓	6	
Sahida	FG2✓			1	FG4✓		6	
Maria	FG2✓			3		✓	6	
Sally	FG2✓			2		✓	4	
Alia			✓					
John			✓			✓	4	FG5 ✓
Julie	FG3✓							
Eleanor	FG3✓							
Joshua			✓	2		✓	6	

Table 3.1 Data collection 3-Phase Table

Phase 1- January to March 2020

-Online interviews and/or focus groups.

To begin Phase 1, all participants were given a choice of three dates to take part in FGDs. Amanda and Jane took part in the first focus group, Sahida, Maria and Sally in the second and Julie and Eleanor in the third. I adapted to participants' personal circumstances and carried out one-to-one interviews with participants Alia, John and Joshua (as per Phase 1 in the data collection table). Sally only participated in the first half of the FGD and agreed to answer the rest of the questions during a one-to-one interview at a more suitable time. During this stage of Phase 1, participants were asked a series of questions (Appendix 1) about types of assessment practices commonly used in their settings. The questions were devised in order to understand how familiar they were with the types of summative and formative assessment practices suggested in early years policy documentation (DfE, 2019; DfE, 2020).

-Video-diaries.

After the interviews and FGDs, participants were e-mailed instructions explaining what to include in the video-diaries. In addition to those instructions, a grid was also provided (Appendix 2) comparing the eight skills of emotional competence with the three ELGs for PSED in the current EYFS Framework (DfE, 2017) as well as the EYFS Profile (DfE, 2019). I asked participants, when recording the video-diaries, to comment on whether they had considered these skills of emotional competence before, during and after any assessment was carried out. At this stage, I explained that I was very interested in hearing about this, but that it was not an expectation to consider these skills them if they did not think they fitted within their practice. Amanda sent four video-diaries, Jane two, Sahida one, Maria three, Sally two and Joshua two but Alia, John, Julie and Elanor were unable to record any video-diaries between Phases 1 and 2, as indicated in the data collection table (Table 3).

Phase 2- March to May 2020

-Partial data analysis of video-diaries.

An initial analysis of the video-diaries was carried out before the interviews and focus groups for Phase 2 took place. This brief analysis provided details about a range of assessment practices and whether they considered the skills of emotional competence or not, depending on the circumstances. These details helped me design the open-ended questions that were used during the online interviews and focus groups.

-Online interviews and focus groups.

Amanda and Sahida took part in a focus group whereas Jane, Maria, Sally, John and Joshua chose to be interviewed during this phase. Alia, Julie and Eleanor had to withdraw from the study at this stage as a result of the pressures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in their personal and professional lives. The declaration of lockdown in England due to the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 caused a period

of uncertainty. The collection of data was paused for a period of three weeks as all those working in the education sector needed time to get accustomed to working from home. I contacted the participants again in April to discuss whether their personal circumstances would still allow them to continue participating in the study. The seven participants agreed to continue, and a new schedule was designed in order to complete Phase 2 and fully engage in Phase 3. First, I asked participants to explain if they had vulnerable children in their class and what made them vulnerable. After that, they were asked to describe an example of how they might assess a vulnerable child and an average child. For this, they were advised to consider the expectations set out by the ELGs in the EYFS Framework (DfE, 2017). Next, they were asked to use the grid provided during Phase 1 (Appendix 2) to try to analyse whether they had considered Saarni's skills of emotional competence during the assessments. Before moving to the next stage of Phase 2, participants were also asked to reflect on whether they felt they had taken into account Saarni's skills of emotional competence when they planned the activities that followed the assessments they had described.

-Video-diaries.

I e-mailed Amanda, Jane, Sahida, Maria, Sally, John and Joshua the next set of instructions requesting three video-diaries (Appendix 3) about two children (six recordings in total) they had assessed over a period of 2-3 weeks. To prompt the participants' thinking, a series of key points to consider in each video-diary were suggested. For each child, video-diary 1 was a description of what made each child unique, what areas the participant had chosen to assess first and what assessment tools had been used to record evidence, and the reasons for their choice. Video-diary 2 was an account of how the assessment had taken place, commenting on the child's responses and reactions and anything they considered as peculiar. The participant was also asked to explain if the information gathered during the assessment had helped her/him help the child in any way and, if so, how. In video-diary 3, participants explained whether they had considered Saarni's skills of emotional competence during the assessments and if they had discovered anything

new about each child as a result. Amanda, Jane, Sahida, Maria and Joshua sent three recordings for each child (six in total) and Sally and John sent two each before Phase 3 began.

Phase 3- May 2020

-Partial data analysis of video-diaries.

A brief analysis of the video-diaries recorded in Phase 2 was carried out before the final interviews and FGDs. This analysis helped me understand what areas participants had assessed each child on and where in the assessment process Saarni's skills of emotional competence fitted.

-Online interviews and focus groups.

Amanda and John took part in a FGD and I carried out interviews with Jane, Sahida, Maria, Sally and Joshua. During both focus groups, participants discussed the differences the assessment practices they had described in the video-diaries had made to children's emotional competence and whether this had an impact on how these children had developed other skills (Appendix 4). Participants also gave details of whether trying to make sense of children's behaviour had helped them support children with the development of other skills.

3.9 Online data collection methods

I considered that using online methods would help me interpret some assessment practices in Early Years. I adopted an epistemological interpretivist and constructivist perspective (Berger & Luckman, 1967) for several reasons. The first was to try to understand why participants chose to assess children one way or another and how they used the information gathered during these assessments. The second was to explore whether skills of emotional competence were considered in any assessments. The third was to try to identify whether the participants used assessment to help children develop any of the skills they would need to progress in

society. The fourth was to define how the CASEC Model (Social-emotional development occurs when Emotional Competence Skills are considered when assessment is approached with Cariño) can be carried out when the skills of emotional competence are taken into account.

Online interviews and focus groups made it easier for participants who worked in different parts of England to take part. I used Zoom during Phase 1, recorded each focus group and interview, transferred each recording onto an encrypted pen drive and deleted all recordings from Zoom's storage space. Following an investigation regarding Zoom's privacy policy, I discovered that Teams was a safer platform with clearer privacy policies in line with GDPR regulations. Therefore, I used Microsoft Teams for all subsequent interviews and focus groups during Phases 2 and 3.

During the interviews and focus groups, I explored participants' natural contexts and during the discussions, I asked them to explain how their environments were set up during various assessment practices. During these conversations, participants had opportunities to talk about what made their settings unique. With this, I intended to value their individual voices (Brantlinger et al., 2005; Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Merriam, 2009). By making sure I valued participants' views I intended to increase the social validity and reliability of the study (Leko & Trainor, 2014). These methods helped the investigation become open-ended and offered routes for further exploration (Patton, 2013) during each of the phases of data collection.

The video-diaries were used as bridges between Phases 1 and 2 and Phases 2 and 3 and provided the details that initiated discussions during the interviews and focus groups in Phase 2 and Phase 3. The idea was to continue to add validity to the experiences the participants shared (Cohen et al., 2018).

3.9.1 Interviews

My plan was to use interviews as “an interpersonal encounter, not merely a data-collection exercise” (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 506). I did this by becoming a co-constructer of knowledge in my role as the ‘traveller’ who got to have an *inter-view* of the participants’ reflections (Kvale, 1996) whilst valuing their individual views.

The data gathered through interviews allowed me to interpret the participants’ understanding of assessment policies and practices (Cohen et al., 2018). It also provided insight into the various contexts where the participants’ assessment practices helped identify (and value or not) skills of emotional competence. The amount of data collected during each interview varied and depended on the number of participants, the type of interactions and whether the participants had met before or not. The type of interviews varied according to the participants’ schedules and choice of when the interviews were to take place. The opportunity to choose when to be interviewed without knowing whether it would be a one-to-one interview, or a focus group, added a level of spontaneity which made the discussion more of ‘a casual interpersonal encounter between two or more EYPs. Although helping the conversation flow between different people during each phase could have been a concern, the participants responded empathetically and appeared to be at ease with each other during all the interactions.

Although some very relevant data was gathered during the one-to-one interviews with some participants, the data was enriched by the variety of interactions between participants during the focus groups. Since the focus groups were made up of different participants each time, some of them only got to meet once. However, it was interesting to listen to reflections during Phase 2 that referred to the interactions during Phase 1. These reflections would be used to identify the type of knowledge that was constructed during each phase.

3.9.2 Focus Groups

Focus groups were the first form of dialogue suggested to all participants, primarily due to their participatory sense that relates to Saarni's idea of comparing and contrasting interpretations of emotional competence in case study research. The idea was to offer participants opportunities to reflect on each other's experiences and explore how assessment policy and practices might be contextualised and interpreted (Nind & Vinha, 2014). Consequently, focus group as an "anticipatory method" is used throughout this study to allow participants to express and construct opinions which participants can transform into attitudes in practice (Barbour & Morgan, 2017).

Macnaghten (2017, cited in Barbour & Morgan, 2017) suggest that focus groups,

emphasise the capacity of the methodology for exploring how people think about topics that are familiar, that have some grounding in every day experience, and in relation to which people develop views and opinions on a topic that is chosen by the researcher. (p.343)

When considering the sample of participants, focus groups as an "anticipatory method" seemed to fit in with Saarni's idea of collective reflection within contextualised scenarios. I had an initial plan with some open-ended questions for each phase, making references to specific policy documents and a theoretical framework. However, choosing the anticipatory approach meant I had to develop a contextual understanding of the participants' experiences in order to interpret their practices. The intention was to examine the "emotion-based" interactions between participants "to indicate unique, alternative feelings about a particular matter" (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 509). Since I was searching for unique information about how participants viewed and used assessment policies and practices, semi-structured one-to-one interviews and focus groups were more appropriate for this study. Choosing a more standardised type of interview would have suggested that each participant had to understand the questions in the same way (Wellington, 2015). The

contextualisation of each participant's experiences was key to gather a rich range of data. This contextualisation meant that firmly structured interviews would not have allowed for that.

The three different phases of data collection provided opportunities for participants to interact and exchange views at different stages of the data collection. The explanatory process meant that the data from Phase 1 could be used to impact the dynamics and structure of Phase 2 and the same with Phase 3. Phase 1 began with three one-hour focus groups (three participants in one group, two participants in two other groups) and two one-to-one interviews about the types of assessment practices used by each participant and how these fitted in with government policy expectations. Phase 2 followed with three one-hour and 30 minutes focus groups (two participants in two groups and three participants in one group) and two one-to-one interviews where the identification of skills of emotional competence prior to, during and after any assessment processes in the participants' contexts were discussed. Phase 3 followed with three one-hour one-to-one interviews where some specific scenarios about individual assessment practices were reflected upon and discussed.

The interviews and focus groups took place via video-conference using Microsoft Teams and, in order to be ethically compliant and respect the participants' privacy, were recorded and stored in an encrypted external hard drive. Using a video-conference application meant that participants from different locations across England could take part in the study without needing to commit to any set dates and times to participate in FGDs or interviews and concrete travelling arrangements (Cohen et al., 2018). A pilot video-conference interview was carried out with some fictional participants in order to plan the content, structure, pace and sequencing of the interactions during the one-to-one interviews or focus groups. The pilot interview also helped me familiarise myself with the equipment and make attempts at transcribing the recordings. It was a good exercise in preparation for the video-recording during the three scheduled phases.

3.9.3 Video-diaries

The availability of smart phones has made the use of video-recording applications accessible to a large number of individuals world-wide. As my aim was to take a closer look at some the participants' experiences in practice, I chose video-diaries as a complementary method to capture data that might otherwise be missed (Knoblauch & Schnettler, 2012). Participants were required to keep video-diaries with examples of assessment practices which were discussed during the subsequent focus groups and/or interviews. Video-diaries have been used as research methods to gather details about the engagement between the participants, others and the environment that might be missed (Brown & Perkins, 2019; Nash & Moore, 2018) when only direct answers to questions during interviews are answered or when it is difficult to engage in face-to-face discussions due to distance. This use of video-diaries to inform points of discussion during focus groups had not been explored in early childhood education research. This method was initially suggested to give participants the opportunity to record recent experiences in the moment or thereafter. The rationale for this was based on an interpretivist approach which enabled me to construct an understanding of assessment practices (Mukherji & Albon, 2018; Bates, 2013; Harvey, 2011) as experiences are interpreted (Berger & Luckman, 1967). With my interpretivist 'hat' on, as suggested by Mukherji & Albon, (2018), It was my intention to gain an insight into the participants' assessment practices and construct and understanding of how they explained these practices. Video-diaries as a standalone method have been used in explanatory analysis to complement other forms of quantitative data collection. However, there are not examples of research that has used video-diaries in conjunction with other narrative data from FGDs. Therefore, it was anticipated that the analysis of the recordings might offer an unpredicted perspective to the discussion that would need to be analysed independently in order to corroborate or contrast any of the themes that emerged.

Participants were invited to record three video-diaries over a period of five-six weeks between Phases 1 and 2 and 2 and 3 and could use any type of video-recording application. This part of the data collection process was additional, and participants

were given clear instructions at the end of the interviews/focus groups. At the end of Phase 1, the instructions were for participants to record themselves describing recent assessment practices and commenting on whether they had considered Saarni's eight skills of emotional competence prior to, during and/or after the assessment had been carried out. During a brief analysis of the data gathered through the first set of video-diaries, some of the key themes identified were used to prepare questions for the interviews/focus groups (Zundel et al., 2018) in Phase 2. After these had taken place, participants were asked to record three more video-diaries with examples of assessment practices that had helped practitioners identify, value and make sense of any of the eight skills of emotional competence in more than one specific child. Each participant was asked to send the video-diaries via a Transferwise link.

There were 68 minutes of recordings from Amanda, which were very useful. I carefully examined some of the body language and facial expressions and identified them as non-verbal performances. Manusov and Trees (2002) suggest these add emotional meaning to participants' words. The video-diaries recorded for the purpose of this study were used as reflexive and inquisitive channels of exploration (Ledema, 2006). These strategies contributed to the construction of a contextualised understanding of whether any of the assessment processes participants used can support the development of other skills, if Saarni's eight skills of emotional competence are identified and valued prior to, during or after the assessment cycle takes place. It was interesting to examine some of the complexities of analysing video-diaries, transcribing and working out what each participant meant whilst assessing their emotions regarding certain assessment practices.

3.10 Selection of participants

After sharing a poster on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram asking practitioners who worked with four-year-olds to participate in a study about assessment practices in early years, some practitioners from a range of early years settings contacted me. Only ten participants agreed to participate after being informed about the

requirement to participate in the three phases of data collection over five months. Eight of the participants worked in schools and were qualified Early Years teachers, six women, and two men. The six women worked as Reception teachers in state schools. One of the men worked as a Reception teacher in an independent school and the other worked in a Nursery-Reception unit children (three- to five-years old). The other two participants were trained as Level 3 EYPs and worked with four-year-olds in a private Nursery.

3.10.1 EYPs in context

The participants were EYPs who showed an interest after receiving information about the requirements of the study. Although they all worked with four-year-olds, only those working in reception classes were familiar with the expectations of the EYFSF as they were required to complete the EYFSP and submit assessment records to local authorities. These same participants had assessment procedures in place to gather evidence that showed children's progress in relation to the ELGs. The participants who worked in a nursery school used the EYFSF as a guide to assess children's progress. Moreover, they all taught classes of 26 to 31 children apart from one who only had 16 in his class. However, they approached assessment without the pressures of the early years assessment policy used in Reception classes. The four-year-olds attending the nursery did not fall in the category of school-age children who turn four after 1st September.

The types of assessment strategies used by each participant often varied depending on the needs of the children. Although I did not explore whether the children's socio-economic backgrounds had an impact on their developmental needs, it was useful to acknowledge the varied range of their locations (Figure 3.1).

3.1 Participants' locations



3.1 Participants' locations

Amanda was a Reception teacher and Early Years lead, with five years teaching experience, who worked in a one-form entry Church of England school in Northumberland. She worked with children with various needs and from mixed backgrounds although predominantly white British. Jane was a Reception teacher and head of early years and Key Stage 1, with thirty-six years teaching experience, who worked in a one-form entry school on a large council estate in West Yorkshire. She worked with children from a range of ethnic backgrounds but predominantly white British. Sahida was an Early Years teacher and Early Years Lead in a unit in a school in York, and oversaw the planning and assessment of Nursery and Reception children from a predominantly white British background. Maria was an Early Years teacher and Head of Nursery and Reception, with twenty years teaching experience,

who worked in a Catholic Primary in Hampshire with mainly white British children but some from Eastern European backgrounds. Sally was a Reception teacher from a three-form entry school in Kent who worked with children from various ethnic backgrounds. Alia was a Reception teacher, Deputy Head and Early Years and Key Stage 1 Lead in a one-form entry academy in Lancashire. She worked with predominantly white British and some Eastern European children. John was a Reception teacher, Nursery and Reception Lead and Deputy Head in a small independent school in Southampton. He worked with children from various international backgrounds. Joshua was a Nursery and reception support teacher in a unit in a school in Bradford. He worked in an ethnic minority community and taught some children who spoke more than one language. Julie and Eleanor were Level 3 qualified EYPs in a Nursery School in North London. They worked with children from birth to four years of age from various ethnic backgrounds.

3.11 Data Analysis

As a reflexive researcher, as suggested by Brown & Perkins (2019) and Lumsden, (2019) I was able to contextualise and interpret participants' reactions whilst examining how these related to my experiences as a practitioner. I carried out a process of triangulation by analysing the data collected at different stages in a sequential order (Cohen et al., 2015). In sequential analysis quantitative data often informs the analysis of qualitative data. However, in this study, the sequential order allowed for three separate sets of qualitative data to complement each other and as a result strengthen the discussion of the findings. The data analysis was undertaken segmentally at the end of each phase. I then carried out a triangulation process when the three chronological phases of data collection had been completed. I used the data to discover patterns with commonalities or differences in the nine individual case studies, examining assessment practices during casual or more planned events (Cohen et al., 2018).

The sequential order of analysis allowed for the three sets of data collected through interviews/focus groups and two sets from video-diaries to complement subsequent phases (Phase1 → Phase 2 → Phase 3). The responses to each of the questions during interviews/focus groups were examined considering each individual context and circumstances. In order to avoid ideological interpretations of the participants' experiences (Denzin, 1990; Denzin, 2004), I explored themes as they emerged through the discussions with the participants. The explanatory process of analysis using the case studies to explain assessment practices, brought data together to offer a detailed picture of assessment and policy interpretation in practice within the CASEC model.

3.11.1 Explanatory analysis of case study design

I used sequential explanatory analysis to analyse the data to interpret and construct an understanding of current assessment practices that can situate each participant's experiences within an existing socially constructed circle (Berger & Luckman, 1967). The explanatory analysis arose as an extension of exploratory analysis. Although I considered it important to explore practices (Martinez et al., 2017), exploratory analysis would have made little emphasis on using the sequence of data to find themes that could construct new knowledge. Therefore, in order to analyse the discourse between assessment practices and Saarni's eight skills of emotional competence, I developed a type of explanatory analysis that followed the sequence in which the data had been collected.

The study was set as a case-by-case study to create unique pictures of each participant. To make the analysis clear, I used pseudonyms to create a unique ID for each participant and each recorded set of data and, transcribed document were labelled with: the ID, gender of the participant, geographical location and the date/s of interview, focus group and video-diary recording. The data from focus groups, interviews and video-diaries was transcribed into Microsoft Word using Descript (digital transcribing software) and analysed as visual texts (Flick, 2009) with spoken words, using N-Vivo- QSR International (Version 12) in intervals first and then again

in a sequence. This type of analysis helped highlight commonalities and differences between assessment practices (Lee et al., 2015) which were coded according to types of assessment practices and considerations of the eight skills of emotional competence. The explanatory analysis drew on the three main themes initially identified following the analysis of the data in segments. The triangulation arose from common threads: how assessment practices take place - adherence to current policy or not; observations as assessment practices; and supporting the development of emotional competence (Hamilton et al., 2013). These common threads were identified during the segmented analysis of each phase and, revisited through an overall analysis at the end of all the phases. The narratives recorded in the video-diaries were reflections of the day-to-day practice in different settings and needed to be analysed in two phases (Scolari, 1998). First, I used NVivo to identify codes and develop the groupings and themes that were used to prompt discussion during the focus groups and interviews. This part of the analysis occurred before the second and third focus groups. The second part of the analysis happened at the same time as the responses to questions during the focus groups and interviews. Once the data was coded, linked and grouped into sets, I analysed each set to highlight specific attributes about each of the assessment practices. This type of analysis aimed to reinforce the intended process of triangulation. I then used the transcriptions from the interviews, focus groups and video-diaries to put together each storyboard using the main codes based on the commonalities described earlier. Each individual case study described examples of practitioners' individual assessment practices. As I analysed their reflections on how assessment practices had (or not) helped them identify, value and make sense of four-year-olds' behaviours, the expressions of *cariño* appeared as a common thread throughout all case studies. The most relevant elements from each case study were analysed separately for each phase twice. The first analysis offered details of common threads and also some differences. The second analysis mainly confirmed some of the findings from the first analysis although it was useful to highlight that some of the differences needed to be explored further. The analysis of the data from the three phases together helped with the interpretative part of the explanatory analysis as it added a comparative aspect to

the discussion. This three-part analysis, helped identify the three themes which grouped the evidence from the nine case studies in order to answer the Research Question/s.

I put together a collective storyboard to present an overview of the key aspects from each case study that enabled me to answer the Research Question/s, and a collective storyboard to illustrate the commonalities and differences across the case studies. The collective storyboard brought together the experiences that stood out and helped me make informed judgements about what might have been the cause of those experiences (Thomas, 2016). It became the canvas (so to speak) where, I sequenced and interpreted the theme and subthemes as they emerged. I then I created each individual storyboard, and at this point it became apparent that the process of enquiry I followed had enabled me to develop a relationship with each of the participants (Attia & Edge, 2017), described by Thomas (2016) as a process of interconnection and interrelation. The details I include in each story, also highlight that interactions could be used to understand children's inquisitive and creative nature. It is also apparent throughout my story-telling how my own sense of inquisition emerged from the interactions between myself and the participants during the interviews and FGDs (Etherington, 2004; Lumsden, 2019). Intersubjectivity, which Trevarthen (2012) refers to as the need to be inquisitive and creative whilst building strong relationships, fits in well with this idea of valuing what interactions can provoke. Although he describes intersubjectivity within a process of cognitive development in young children, the relationships I developed with the participants helped me understand the inquisitive nature of the interactions during the data collection process too (Brownlie, 2014). There are two types of interactions to consider here - those between children, which participants included in their stories, and those between the participants and myself. I examine these two types of interactions as I present and discuss some of the findings in subsequent chapters.

Chapter 4: A collection of stories of cariño

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present and discuss some of the findings. I provide an overview in the form of a collective storyboard which illustrates some key points from each case study grouped under the four N-Vivo nodes. I also include storyboards for seven of the ten case studies to contextualise the key aspects selected to answer the Research Question/s [*MQ-What types of assessment policy and practices help identify, value and make sense of 4-year-old's behaviours in order to support the development of other skills? SQ1- How far do practitioners value and support the development of emotional competence in 4-year-old children? SQ2- To what extent are practitioners assessing Saarni's 8 skills of emotional competence?]*]. The single collective storyboard and the seven individual storyboards illustrate the relevant details about the case studies, for which I gathered data throughout the three phases and analysed fully in the three-part analysis. The sequential order in which the details are presented within each of the storyboards, shows how the examination of some assessment practices led to the main theme and subthemes.

These stories are exemplars of *cariño* (tender affection expressed as intense-deep love and care) (Ortiz-Ocaña, 2013) enacted by each of the participants and show how it is related to emotional competence. Participants said they prioritised building strong, loving bonds that helped children develop a layer of emotional stability that acts as the foundation from which emotional competence is developed. I identified how specific details from each story highlighted that children developed a range of skills when they received support to develop their emotional competence. In some of the stories, I delved into the significance of *ternura* (Restrepo, 1995) within *cariño* as the pedagogical process that enables participants to emotionally connect with children.

Table 4.1 is a summary of the details from each case study which link to Saarni's (1999) skills of emotional competence: S1-Awareness of one's own emotions, S2-discerning and understanding others' emotions, S3-using the vocabulary of emotion and expression, S4-the capacity of empathic involvement, S5-differentiating internal experience from external expression, S6-adaptive coping with aversive emotions, S7-awareness of emotional communication within relationships, S8-the capacity for emotional self-efficacy]. These details are then explained in the form of storyboards to illustrate how the skills of emotional competence fit into the relational approach to assessment highlighted by all participants. Moreover, I discussed how I identified different skills of emotional competence throughout each case study. In each storyboard, I made connections with the value of the relationships between the children and the participants which, throughout the analysis, emerged as the common pedagogical approach.

Case study 1	Case study 2	Case study 3	Case study 4	Case study 5
Amanda's story- multiple emotions	Jane's story- empathy	Sahida's story- Personal, Social and Emotional development	Maria's story- understanding how vulnerable children express emotions	Sally's story- emotional state
Case study 6	Case study 7	Case study 8 (partial case-study)	Case study 9 (partial case-study)	
John's story- relationships	Joshua's story- the child's behaviour in social encounters	Alia's story- the Prime Areas	Julie's story- next steps	Elanor's story- next steps

Table 4.1 Summary of each case study

4.2 Collective storyboard

As a reflexive and interpretivist researcher, I used the collective storyboard as a stage where the characters were the participants from each case study. Each of the characters told their story and described their role within it. I selected some of these descriptions in order to construct my interpretation of each story. I identified descriptions of a type of pedagogy based on the relational bonds participants had built with children which had stemmed from the unconditional love that had occurred and presented itself spontaneously through *cariño*. The importance of these bonds was discussed by all participants in different ways at various phases of the data collection. For example, during Phase 1 (video-diary 1), Amanda described how she felt she had to prioritise relationships with individual children:

“He had no breakfast before he came to school and his mum had been screaming at him for thirty minutes that morning. He wasn’t ready to learn...he just needed that extra time with me in the morning...and that’s what I focused on first.”

The seven participants who completed the three phases of the study, also expressed how the prescribed assessment agenda often made it very difficult for them to prioritise the PSE well-being of children. Although most discussed how they tried to fit in assessment tasks whilst attending to children’s emotional needs, Alia described how she had a very structured assessment routine. She explained how they assessed children almost daily and formed intervention groups for mathematics and literacy to support them to reach the ELGs from the EYFS (DfE, 2017). Alia described her routines with children as structured processes where collecting evidence to demonstrate progress in literacy and mathematics was a priority. Although she gave examples of how she observed children develop PSE skills over a period of time; her emphasis was always on early intervention “*to help, those children who needed to... catch up*” (Phase 1 interview).

Observational practices were common amongst all participants who described how they assessed how children adapted and coped in social situations during the school day. It is interesting to note that none of the participants planned to assess skills of emotional competence. They described how they supported children as they naturally observed behaviours within the social school environment. Moreover, all participants gave examples of how they organised the day after observing children's behaviours. Amanda, for example, mentioned it during the focus group in Phase 2:

"I see what he's like when he comes in, talk to the parents in the morning. If he's had a bad night or an argument before school, and this is helpful. We can talk about how we feel and start the day."

During the interviews throughout the three phases, Joshua reiterated that even with all the school policies, the role of the key person was crucial. His examples of practice offered a perspective which highly valued the relationships between children and all practitioners in the Nursery-Reception unit. Although some of the school policies he mentioned referred to the structured progress records they kept three times a year, Joshua emphasised that these "*kind of check list assessments*" (Phase 1 interview), could be adapted if the key worker for each child considered it necessary. Joshua's reflection suggests that the relationship the key person/s developed with children helped practitioners in his team choose when and how to approach assessment. He reiterated (in Phases 1, 2, and 3) that the decision on how to assess children was based on observations during social encounters. Joshua's reflections suggest that he approached assessment through a relational pedagogy which enabled him to help children develop the PSE foundations to engage in learning (Denham et al., 2016).

Some contrasting views were also highlighted throughout the video-diaries in Phase 2. John talked about a child who, as he explained; "*performed well in most areas... but...needed support to articulate emotions when she could not get her own way...so we had to prioritise that with her*" (Video-diary 1, Phase 2). John described how the child's family life was slightly different as she lived with her mother who was

in two relationships with two different women. He observed that the child was used to taking the lead in the relationships she had developed with “*the women in her life*” and had difficulty understanding that in relationships it was important to play different roles.

Although John considered it important to offer the child support with her emotional skills, it was interesting to hear how he used different words: describing her ‘behaviour’ in social situations but her ‘performance’ in areas of learning such as literacy and mathematics. (Video-diary 1, Phase 2). He talked in detail about the time he spent daily, over a period of several weeks, ensuring the child was exposed to a range of social scenarios where she had to acknowledge and regulate different emotions. John emphasised that allocating time to building a strong relationship with the child enabled him to understand her well and develop strategies to help her manage her own emotions.

During the interviews and focus groups in Phase 3, all participants talked about how they used observations to try to make sense of children’s behaviours. Jane gave examples about children she had observed demonstrating empathetic behaviours in their relationships with others:

“It sounds like a maternal thing, where the empathy comes from...if the children have younger siblings or have someone to look after at home. Like a little boy who has an autistic brother...his behaviour in school is naturally kind but at home, where he does not get full attention...he struggles to be empathetic.”

Jane’s reflection suggests that empathy is part of the maternal instinct of looking after those you love. Although she associates the loving instinct with that of a mother who naturally cares without expecting anything in return and gives an example of how the child shows empathy towards others. Seven of the participants described some of those relationships as the basis of their practice. Jane described hers (in one of her video-diary entries from Phase 2) saying, “*there is something special between us really...and that’s how I know I’m going to be able to help that child.*”

Sally reiterated the importance of developing a pedagogy of care when she explained, “*I need to get to know each child... I'm not just teaching, it's so much more*”. Joshua also reflected on how “*caring relationships*” (Phase 3 interview) between the key person and individual children can positively influence children’s behaviour. What emerges here is that when children feel loved and looked after, they can develop a sense of empathy.

However, some participants reflected on children who were only able to empathise with others so long as their behaviours were similar. Amanda, for example, described how some children tried to include a child with a speech delay in their game but were unable to engage in play with him when they realised he could only communicate in one-word sentences. This example suggests that children might only be able to demonstrate empathetic behaviours with those they have more things in common with (Saarni, 1999); and that empathy, as a skill of emotional competence, might only develop as children find themselves in situations where a loving response can offer emotional comfort.

The single collective storyboard below illustrates how the findings (after the three-part analysis), were grouped under the first set of N-Vivo nodes, abstracted from the main research question. It also includes details of the most common threads between some of the case studies and some of the characteristics that made each case study individual. In this collective storyboard, I set the foundation for the subsequent individual storyboards. I also include how some of the first findings became useful to answer, in part, the research question/s prior to the identification of the three main themes.

This collective storyboard includes the sequence of the key words that enabled me to identify the main theme, subthemes and the links with the skills of emotional competence, as mentioned in the methodology chapter. I selected these key words (assessment practices, assessment policy, behaviours and development) during a three-part analysis of the data. During the first part, I used the key words to create the four main nodes on N-Vivo, which I identified as the four most frequently used

terms across all three phases. After this, I listed the characteristics that made each case study unique and could be discussed as differences between them.

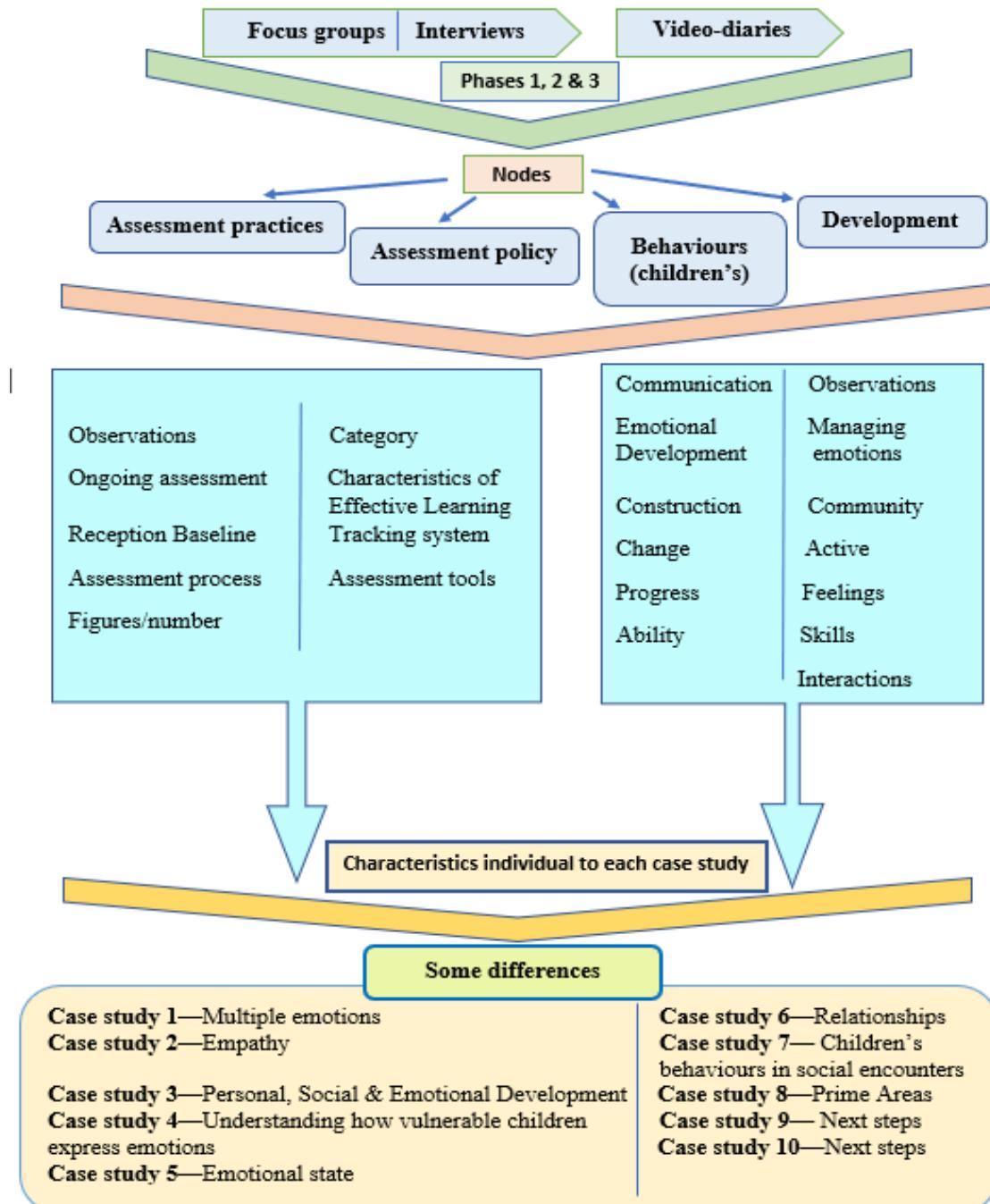


Figure 4.1 Collective storyboard

4.3 Amanda's story- multiple emotions

Amanda originally trained as a primary teacher and although she had no previous experience teaching four-year-olds, she had (in her own words) “*fallen in love*” with early years when she started teaching reception children in 2017. The opportunities to learn about people’s emotional-expressive behaviour during everyday conversations with other members of her team seemed to have influenced the shaping of her own pedagogical approach in the Reception class.

The storyboard below illustrates how Amanda described children’s multiple emotions during assessment processes. During the FGDs and interview, Amanda emphasised the importance of understanding children as they express a range of emotions, and described their emotional responses in different situations. She explained how her choice of assessment strategy varied as she acknowledged a range of multiple emotions whilst she also tried to make sense of children’s behaviours during different activities over a period of time.

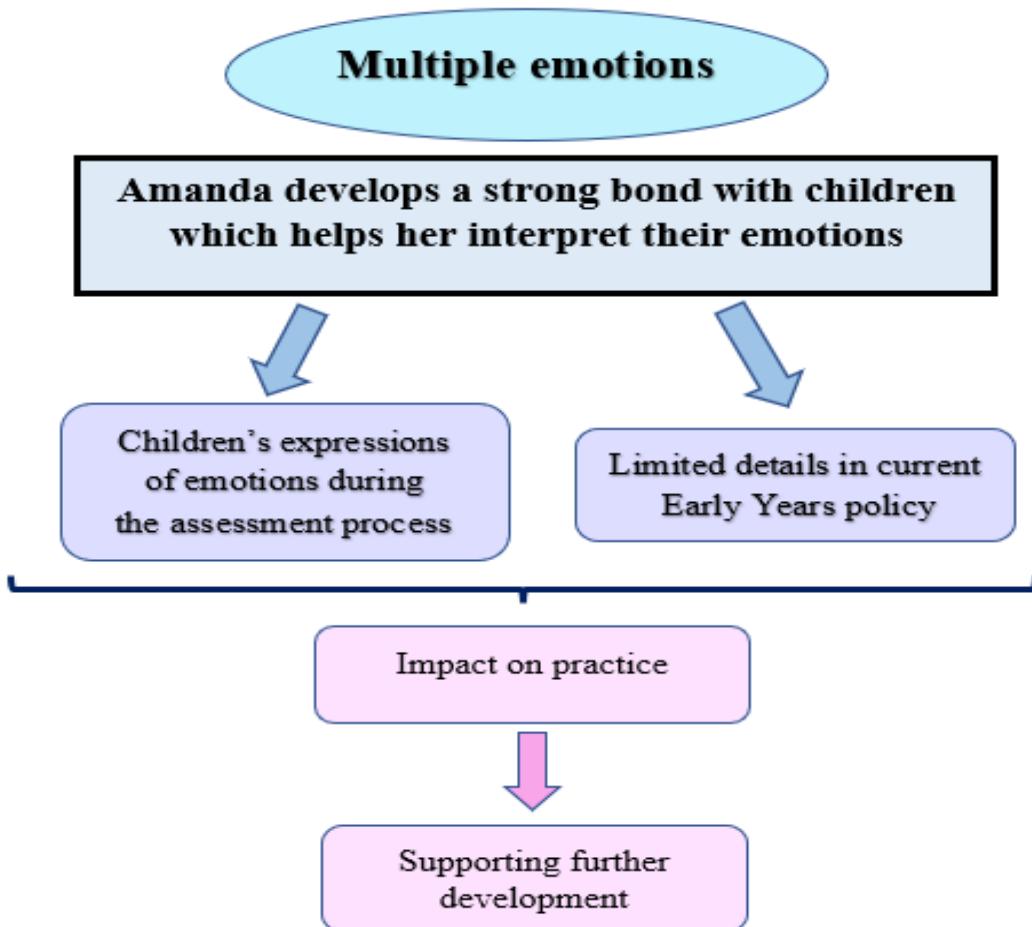


Figure 4.2 Amanda's storyboard

During the FGD in Phase 1, Amanda described that she decided to watch how a group of four children interacted with each other and approached complex situations as they arose. In this situation, the children attempted to solve problems if/when these happened during the interactions. As Amanda expected, some found it difficult to compromise. At a time when she would have normally intervened, she decided it was time to observe if these children could understand how other children felt, and respond empathetically. Amanda explained what she had observed:

“another few children [...] wanted to join in... and this caused a rift within the group and it meant the children having to find compromises. Normally, I would

intervene, but I decided to sit back to see what would happen if they were able to come together and find a compromise. It was interesting to see that they started to take on the new ideas from other children who had joined in... they were able to adapt their play and allow the other children to start joining in and be part of that group. It was really good to see they had developed the emotional skills to overcome this barrier."

This statement is an example of how Amanda took a chance and applied a pedagogy based on the relationship of trust and unconditional love she had developed with these children, which can be described as *cariño*. Reflecting back on Amanda's descriptions of this particular situation and the body language she used to emphasise the importance of the bond she had with these children; I interpret from Amanda's explanation, that it was the *ternura* she felt for these children strengthened *cariño* as the pedagogy that enabled the children to solve the problem they had encountered.

Amanda often described details about children's behaviours which she considered very important although they had no place within the assessment criteria suggested in policy. She described, "*children's amazements over the little things*" as the most fascinating aspect of her teaching. This idea of valuing children's emotional responses during the interactions that take place in the classroom is what Saarni (1999) describes as understanding another's emotional experience. Amanda's understanding was shaped whilst she considered how she approached children during her time with them in a classroom environment. She described some examples of practice as "valuable interactions" (Phase 2 Video-Diary 2) that helped her understand the children. Her life experiences had got her to value the exchange of emotional responses that took place during spontaneous interactions with people around her. Amanda's video-diaries also included descriptions of how her understanding of children's behaviour guided her choice of strategies to support further development. Her examples of practice highlighted the cruciality of giving children opportunities to spontaneously express multiple emotions whilst making choices in their daily routines. Amanda also explained that these opportunities came

through everyone “*spending time together*” and through this she found out how children responded during their interactions with others. Amanda’s descriptions of children’s behaviours suggested that she considered it important to try to discern and understand their emotions whilst also thinking of ways to support them to develop the ability to discern and understand other’s emotions (Skill 2, Saarni, 1999). Amanda’s story highlights some aspects from several of Saarni’s list of skills (Table 2.3), but emphasises how children’s individual experiences can have an impact on how they express their emotions. She also comments on how important it is for her to consider this skill when she is supporting the development of emotional competence and other skills to evolve socially and emotionally.

4.4 Jane’s story- empathy

Jane had worked in the early years sector for twenty-one years. After many years working with other EYPs, she decided to go back to teaching reception children in 2018. Her experience working with other EYPs, may have strengthened her ability to empathise with others.

The storyboard below illustrates Jane’s explanation that empathy was at the centre of her practice. During the focus groups discussion and interviews, Jane described some of the interactions between children and how she took these into account when planning future learning opportunities. Although she recognised that the EYFSF suggests children should be offered support to build positive relationships with others, in many of her examples of practice, she described the assessment requirements as “*just box ticking exercises*” (focus group with Amanda during Phase 1) that did not focus on supporting the development of the capacity for empathetic involvement (skill 4) (Saarni 1999).

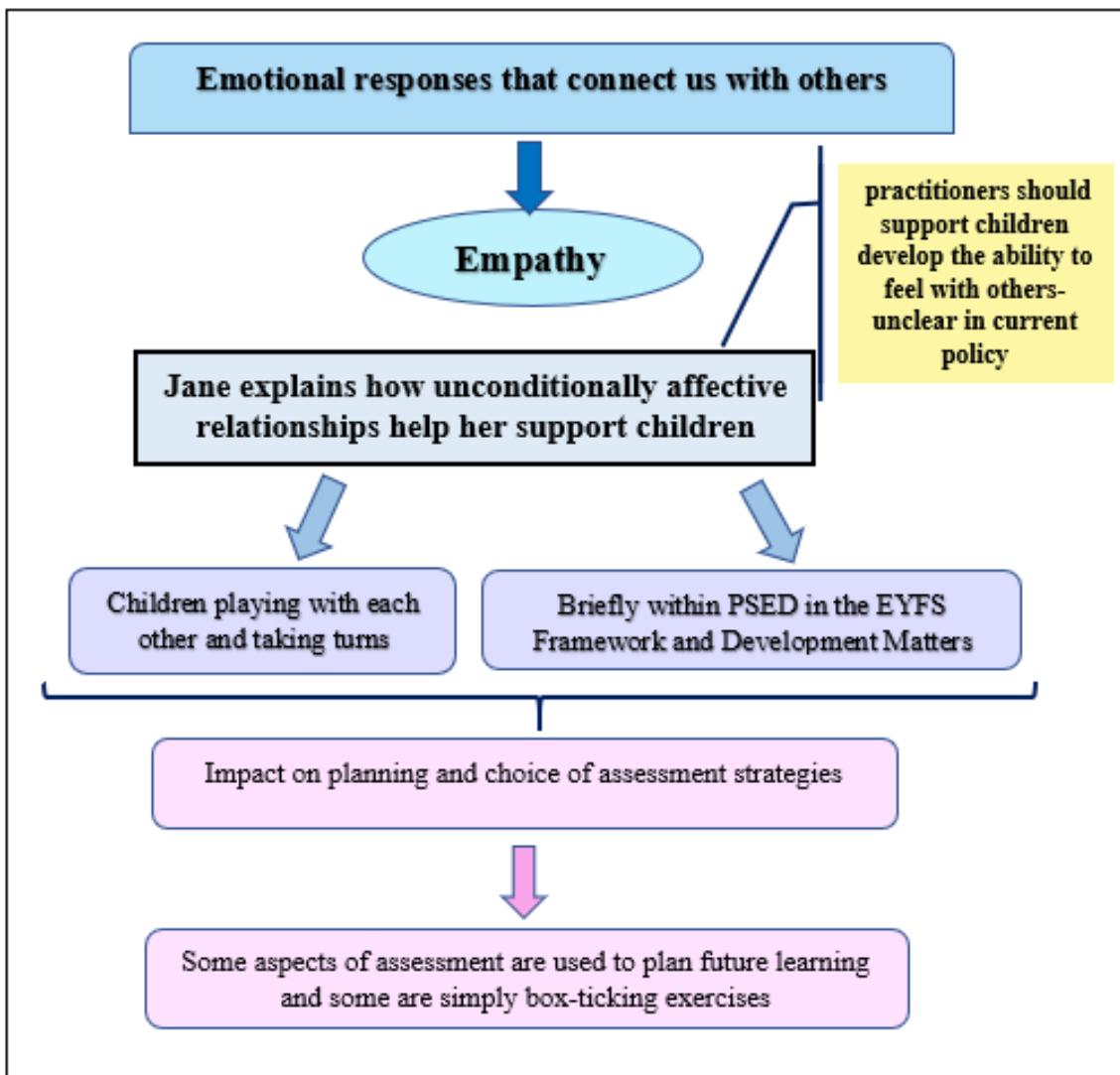


Figure 4.3 Jane's storyboard

Jane's descriptions of her practice with children (and often with EYPs she met over the years) highlighted that "*feeling with others*" (Saarni, 1999; p. 162) was a key aspect. Jane often talked about helping children to adapt and finding ways to offer reassurance during child-initiated play. Saarni's (1999) skill 4 - empathetic involvement was important for her as a practitioner and this was apparent when she described some of her observations of play. Her capacity for empathetic involvement was a key aspect in her practice. In one of her video-diaries from Phase 2, she explained how she paid attention to children's reactions during play. She illustrated

how they adapted to life in school under COVID-19 restrictions and were able to respond empathetically and solve situations independently;

“Recently, two little boys wanted to play football, but they were in separate bubbles. So they played across the line. They don’t pick the ball up ‘cause they know they’re not allowed to, but they were laughing and joking and they just adapted perfectly. And it was really great to see them happy playing, working it out themselves.”

The ingenuity of the two boys helped Jane reflect on how children might be able to, in her words, “feel with and for others”, which is an example of how her observations were based on the trusting relationship she has with children. Jane considered any opportunity that helped her support the development of empathy as a priority within her practice. This approach to practice is also in line with Freire’s understanding of love as a pedagogy (Romão, 2019) but in a more intense manner that enabled Jane to share emotions with these children. It is also understood as *cariño*, due to the intensity of the relationships between Jane and the children.

4.5 Sahida’s story- Personal, Social and Emotional development

Sahida had worked as a teacher for six years, and for the past three as a Reception teacher in an Early Years unit with 42 reception and 12 nursery children. She described this as an opportunity to get to know how children develop their PSE skills from three to five years of age. Sahida talked about observing children over a period of time (for some children for just over two years) as a chance to get to know how they learnt to acknowledge and explain their emotions. Sahida talked about the type of support she offered children to help them understand the significance of a particular event. She considered it important to allocate time to encourage children to talk about their feelings and also ask questions about others’. This type of practice suggests that Sahida supported the development of children’s awareness of their own emotions (skill 1), as she ensured children had opportunities to talk about their own and other children’s emotions.

The storyboard below illustrates how Sahida used assessment tools that helped her value how children expressed and explained how they felt in different situations. She pointed out that she noticed over time that children showed more confidence to express emotions when they were able to name them. Her story highlighted the importance of finding opportunities to observe and (if/when necessary) support interactions. She described an observation about a child who often avoided social encounters with other children and explained how she would enable discussion amongst the children (Phase 2 video-diary). However, she noticed that this child, although happy to be part of the group, avoided interactions. Whilst she was trying to make sense of his behaviour, she mentioned how important it became to give him time to feel loved:

“He struggled with sitting and, was being taken out of the group which often happens but actually we tried to frame it as a really positive thing because it’s a nice way to spend time with him. And I think that you could see pride at having that time to chat to an adult...that was his safe space.”

I argue that Sahida is describing more than a nurturing relationship, of what can happen when *ternura* is expressed through *cariño* and becomes more powerful than care as the action of looking after (Reyes, 2020). This strong and deep sense of *cariño* came across in other video-diaries too when Sahida talked about using observations to identify the level of care children needed. For Sahida, assessment was only useful if it helped her gather detailed information she could use to offer the appropriate emotional support children needed in order to learn. She included examples of the type of emotional support some children needed and how that became a priority within her practice; *“I try to understand how they feel and then work out what they need help with”* (Phase 1 FGD) which suggests that Sahida was also assessing their emotional competence (Denham et al., 2016) in order to decide how to support them and whether any other areas could be assessed at the same time.

According to Sahida, the EYFSF (DfE, 2017; DfE, 2020) does not indicate whether there should be more specific protocols to support the use of the emotion-vocabulary that can help children use language to name and express emotions and develop stronger emotional foundations.

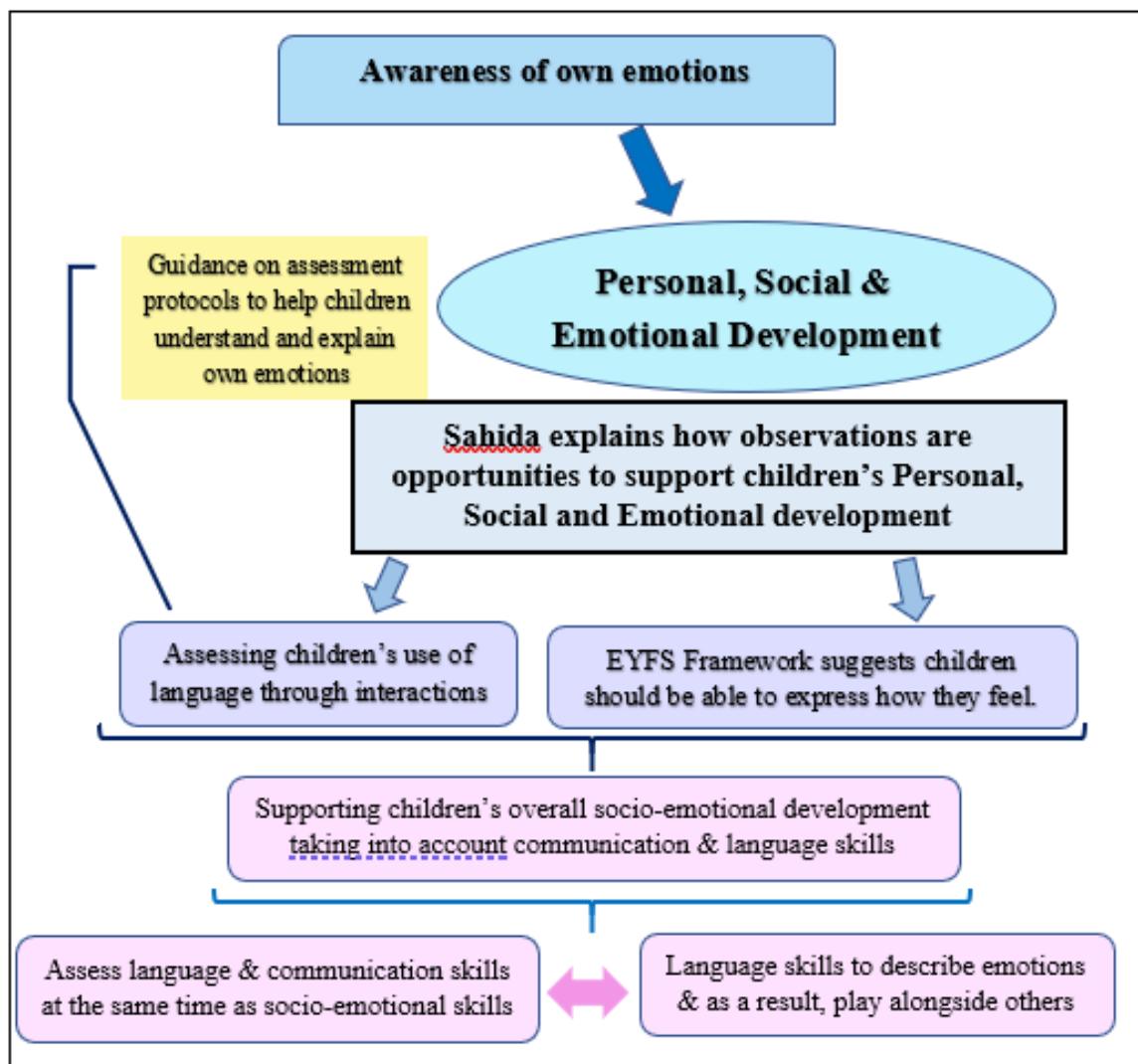


Figure 4.4 Sahida's storyboard

Ongoing observing of children allowed Sahida to create a detailed profile of each child. She often emphasised that children who needed more emotional support also struggled to communicate. Although lack of vocabulary and grammatical structures were some of the issues picked up during some summative assessment tasks,

Sahida suggested the problem was more to do with lack of confidence to interact with others. The boy she described in video-diary 1 from Phase 2, scored low on language and communication skills in the first summative assessment, so she decided to support his PSED first and use stories to help him develop a sense of curiosity about words. In her last video-diary in Phase 2, she described how he became interested in books because he associated them with spending time with a person who would read them to him. I suggest that the adult demonstrated **cariño** towards him (Ortiz-Ocaña, 2013). She also talked about how the bond between them had been strengthened as she had developed a very positive relationship with the child's mother.

Although these types of relationships might indicate that professional love (Page, 2017) is evident in Sahida's practice, I perceived the bond between Sahida and this child as *cariño* - a much deeper level of unconditional love that occurred when the child's emotional needs were addressed.

4.6 Maria's story - understanding how vulnerable children express emotions

Maria had worked in Early Years for twenty years in three different schools and had experienced many changes in policy over this period. She had worked in her current school for ten years, in Reception. Having dealt with so many changes in policy, Maria had developed an approach that focused very much on children's individual needs.

The storyboard below illustrates how Maria described her practice. She gave examples of how she used various assessment approaches to understand children's behaviours and support them holistically. However, she placed particular emphasis on the strategies she developed to connect with vulnerable children. Maria told stories about creating strong bonds with children and guiding them in their development of many skills whilst teaching them to understand what it felt like to be cared for. Her story was one where care meant more than the act of looking after children. At the centre of her practice was developing a strong bond with children,

which I interpreted as *cariño*. Maria discussed the importance of making sure children felt safe and secure and how it was paramount to develop a strong bond with children to support them in every step of their development. Although it can be said that this type of bond might be defined as professional love (Page, 2017), in Maria's story, it is described as a feeling which brings the meaning of 'love' and 'care' together and presents itself as *cariño*. Maria's video-diaries from Phases 1 and 2, included details about how much she valued her relationships with children. Although she described how she carried out assessment to keep in line with policy recommendations, she emphasised that she chose particular assessment approaches after making sense of children's behaviours often on a daily basis. Maria's responses were based on how she interpreted children's behaviours. Throughout her observations she spontaneously assessed some of the skills of emotional competence with particular emphasis on becoming aware of the nature and structure of relationships (skill 7, Saarni, 1999).

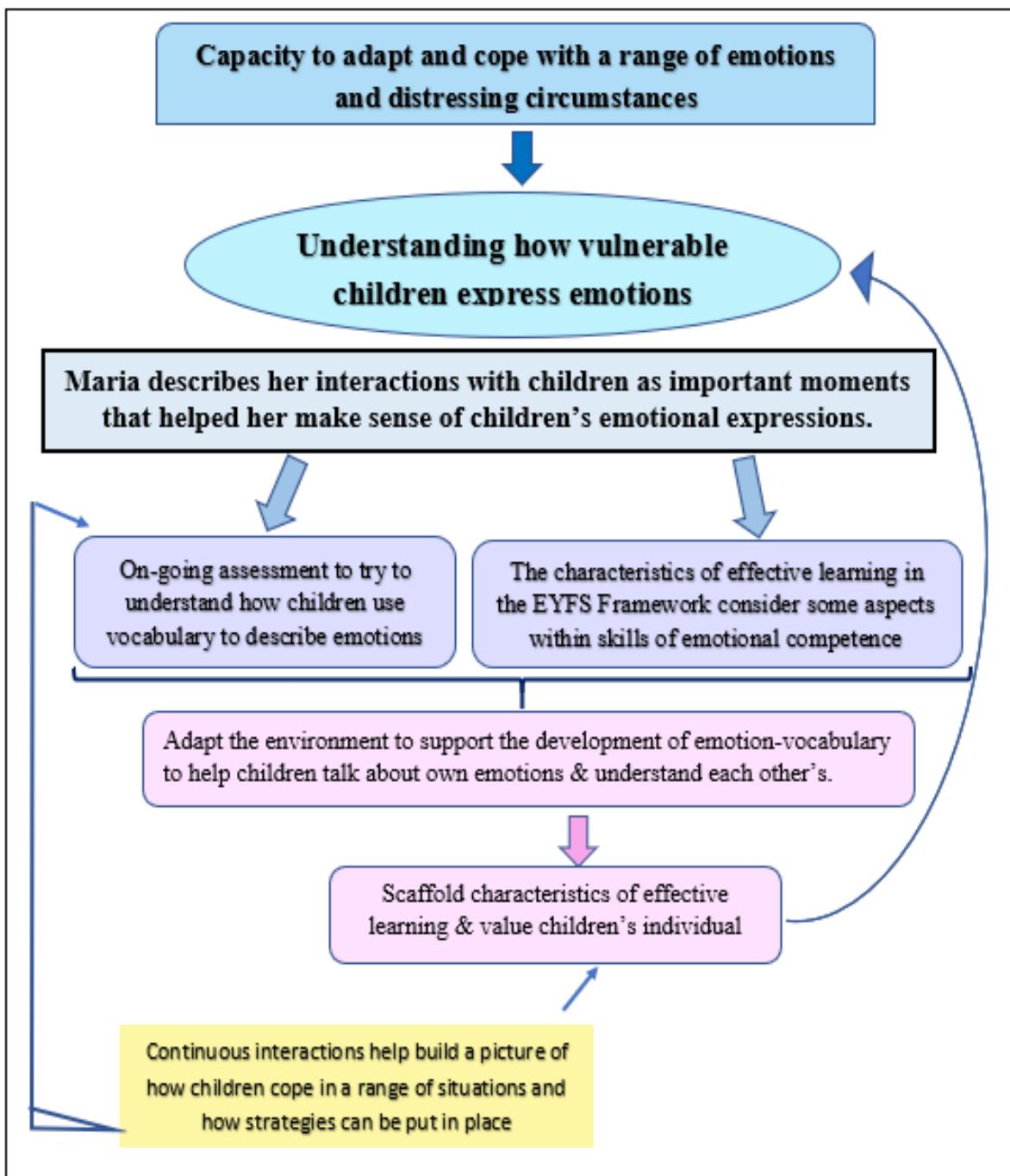


Figure 4.5 Maria's storyboard

During the FGDs, she explained in detail how her planning had changed over time and how she felt her current practice allowed her to get closer to the children. Her story appears to be about developing strong bonds with children and adapting her practice to help them find the emotional tools to cope in different scenarios. She often used phrases such as, “*addressing what happens in the moment*” (Phase 2 interview); her examples of practice clearly included strategies to help children understand and express multiple emotions. Maria talked about using “*the best bits of different assessment methods*” to identify whether children could manage in distressing situations. Her descriptions of practice suggested that she considered skill 6 – the capacity for adaptive coping with aversive or distressing emotions by using self-regulatory strategies as important (Saarni, 1999). Her story included powerful examples of children acquiring the emotion-vocabulary to acknowledge and discuss different emotions as they arose in a range of situations.

4.7 Sally's story - emotional state

Sally was a supply teacher for a couple of years before she started teaching a reception class in a three-form entry school. Working in a big school in a deprived area, she explained how she often felt that early years policy was used to set achievement targets rather than as a “*guiding document*”. She also talked about some of the challenges she faced when trying to use some assessment tools which often did not help her understand how children were developing. Her story revealed a division between “*what needs to be done*” (as dictated by policy) and “*what should be done*” (as dictated by what she defined as objective led planning) which she discussed during the FGD in Phase 1. Although she did not always sound in favour of objective led planning, she explained how she had developed her own system which allowed her to plan, taking into account children’s emotional state. Sally described how she noticed that children showed frustration at times because they were unable to understand how they were feeling. Her story emphasised how important it was for children to develop the ability to understand the difference between what other children feel and what they might express externally, which is in

line with the skill in differentiating that inner emotional state need not correspond to outer expression (skill 5, Saarni, 1999).

The storyboard below illustrates how Sally described the importance of making sense of a child's emotional state during assessment processes. It also shows that whilst trying to interpret children's behaviours, she tried to understand how they expressed their emotions (or not). The lack of detail included in ELGs 6, 7 and 8 in the EYFS Framework (DfE, 2017) (see Table 2.3), with regards to the importance of establishing the difference between internal emotions and external expression of emotions, appears on the storyboard too. Moreover, the board shows how assessment tools such as Speech Link (Appendix 5), a comprehension assessment tool, can help identify whether children's level of comprehension allows them to understand how to express the "*inside feeling*", as she describes during her interview in Phase 2.

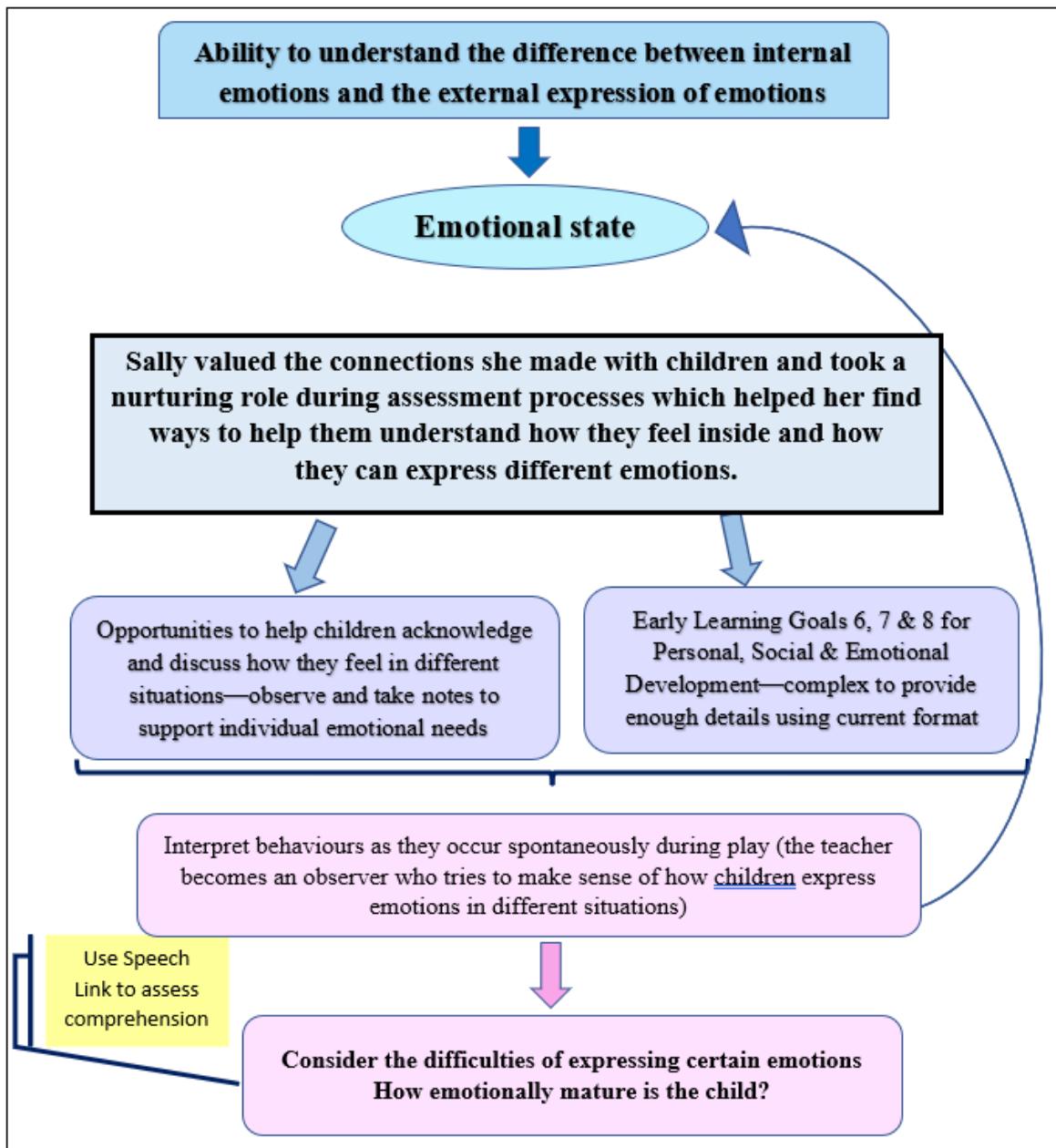


Figure 4.6 Sally's storyboard

During her Phase 2 interview, Sally described how a child talked about “*being calm*” although he was a very active child. His mother explained to Sally that every time he got too excited, she told him to calm down, and this was something that apparently happened often. As Sally worded it, it is about understanding how emotionally mature a child is;

“a little boy who talks a lot about being calm but his face is a different thing. He’s clearly not calm but his mum has conditioned him to say, “I’m calm”...If you go by what he says...it’s not enough. He wants to stay calm but chokes with anger because he can’t get two Unifix cubes apart. So it is about helping him develop the emotional maturity to understand the inside feeling.”

The frustration the child expressed had made Sally think about what he might be feeling but he could not explain; she was trying to make sense of the child’s behaviours to work out how to help him understand how he felt and how to express that. Sally also described how she felt she had the ability to notice the children’s gestures or facial expressions and “*look for dialogue with them*” to try to encourage them to talk about how they felt in different situations. The quality of these dialogues, which Sally also describes as “*regular conversations*” in her video-diaries from Phase 2 (January 2021), could be more meaningful because she had a special connection that might be the result of *cariño* being the pedagogy she used to develop a strong bond with children.

4.8 John’s story - relationships

John was an experienced Early Years teacher who led a team of EYPs in an independent school whilst overseeing the Nursery and Receptions classes. Although he had a slightly different perspective working with a smaller group of children and a well-staffed team, he had previously worked in nursery settings with children and families with a range of needs. The context (a group of fourteen children, a teaching assistant and the teacher in a Reception class) in which John worked made it possible for him to focus on understanding relationships between children and also

between practitioners and children. He told a story of connections between children which he described “*the moments when children can be themselves with each other*” (Phase 2, video-diary 1). He described some of his observations of children and explained how they expressed emotions in different circumstances. The way John talked about the ease or difficulty children found in expressing certain emotions suggested that some were more emotionally mature than others. This reference to emotional maturity relates to the awareness of emotional communication within relationships (skill 7) (Saarni, 1999), in order to express and explain more complex emotions.

The storyboard below illustrates how John considered that assessing children’s wellbeing was possible whilst observing their interactions in different situations. He had unpicked the importance of enabling environments and highlighted that any adaptation required keeping in mind children’s personal, social and emotional needs. It was also very important for John to use different assessment tools as and when they were needed, depending on the circumstances, and always approaching assessment through a holistic lens. He explained how his practice had changed over time, and how he found those assessment tools he created were often more useful than those his school had chosen.

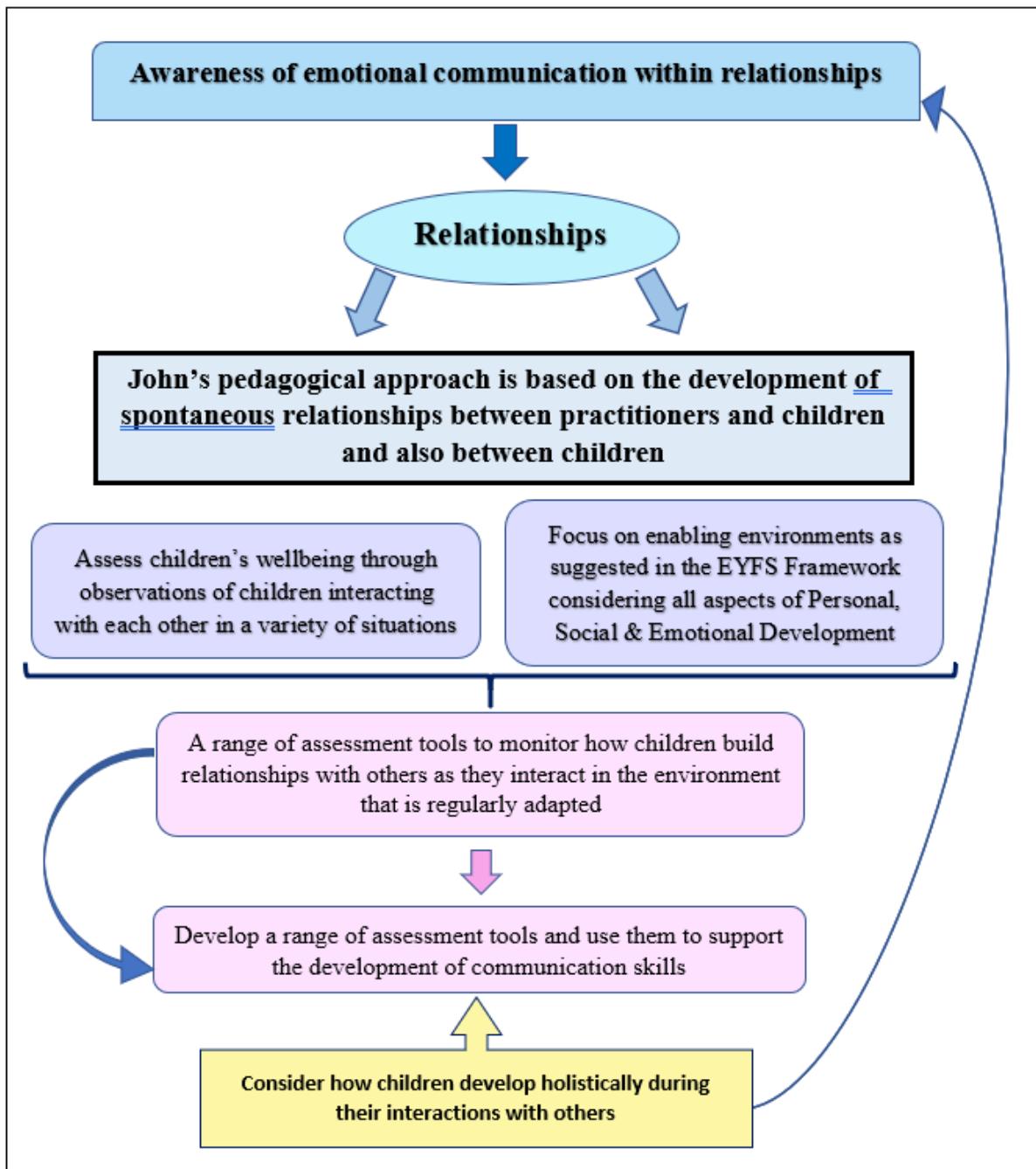


Figure 4.7 John's storyboard

Although John valued observations as assessment tools that helped him develop positive relationships with children, he reflected on how assessment policy guidelines influenced his practice (Phase 2 video-diary 1). Moreover, his relationships with children helped him decide whether some assessment expectations needed to be adapted to suit children's emotional needs. This focus on building strong relationships with children first, also suggests that *cariño* was present in John's practices. However, John still made a clear division between assessing children's performance in some areas of learning and focusing on understanding their behaviours. In his descriptions of practice, he reiterated that when updating children's records of progress he focused on measuring their performance in some areas and not others. These practices are examples of how current early years policy has influenced practitioners' choice of approach. John often described how he often referred to the EYFS Framework (DfE, 2017) to set up the classroom environment to encourage children to solve problems as they arose through social interactions.

4.9 Joshua's story- the child's behaviour in social encounters

Joshua had worked as an Early Years teacher in several schools in deprived areas and also had experience supporting practitioners in a range of settings. He referred to his experience working with children from ethnic minorities as "*what had influenced my choice of teaching approaches*" (Phase 1 interview). The mixed Early Years unit he worked at had Nursery children in the morning who mixed with the full-time Reception children. Joshua described details about the individual contexts of some of the children and their families and emphasised the importance of understanding particular cultural differences, which influenced children's behaviours, in this case, Asian and/or East European cultures. In his video-diaries 1 and 2 in Phase 1, he described how children's behaviours had changed after the first few months at school and talked about how he observed children express emotions differently depending on who they interacted with.

The storyboard below illustrates this. Furthermore, it includes details of the automatic embedding of the assessment tools within everyday practice and how they were used to create an accurate picture of each child. The storyboard also shows how the policy of children being allocated a key person was valued within practice as it offered a strong emotional starting point for all children. Finally, the storyboard illustrates that observations were the most commonly used tools which enabled Joshua to assess children's emotional communication as they interacted with others in the unit.

During the Phase 2 interview, Joshua explained that he found it difficult to associate some of the children's external expressions of emotions to the situation they occurred in. He wondered whether they might be culturally unacceptable in their home and community. It was important for Joshua to try to interpret whether children could demonstrate how they might be feeling inside, and examples of practice suggested that some children were developing the ability to differentiate subjective internal emotions from the actual external expression of emotions, which relates to skill 5 of emotional competence (Saarni, 1999).

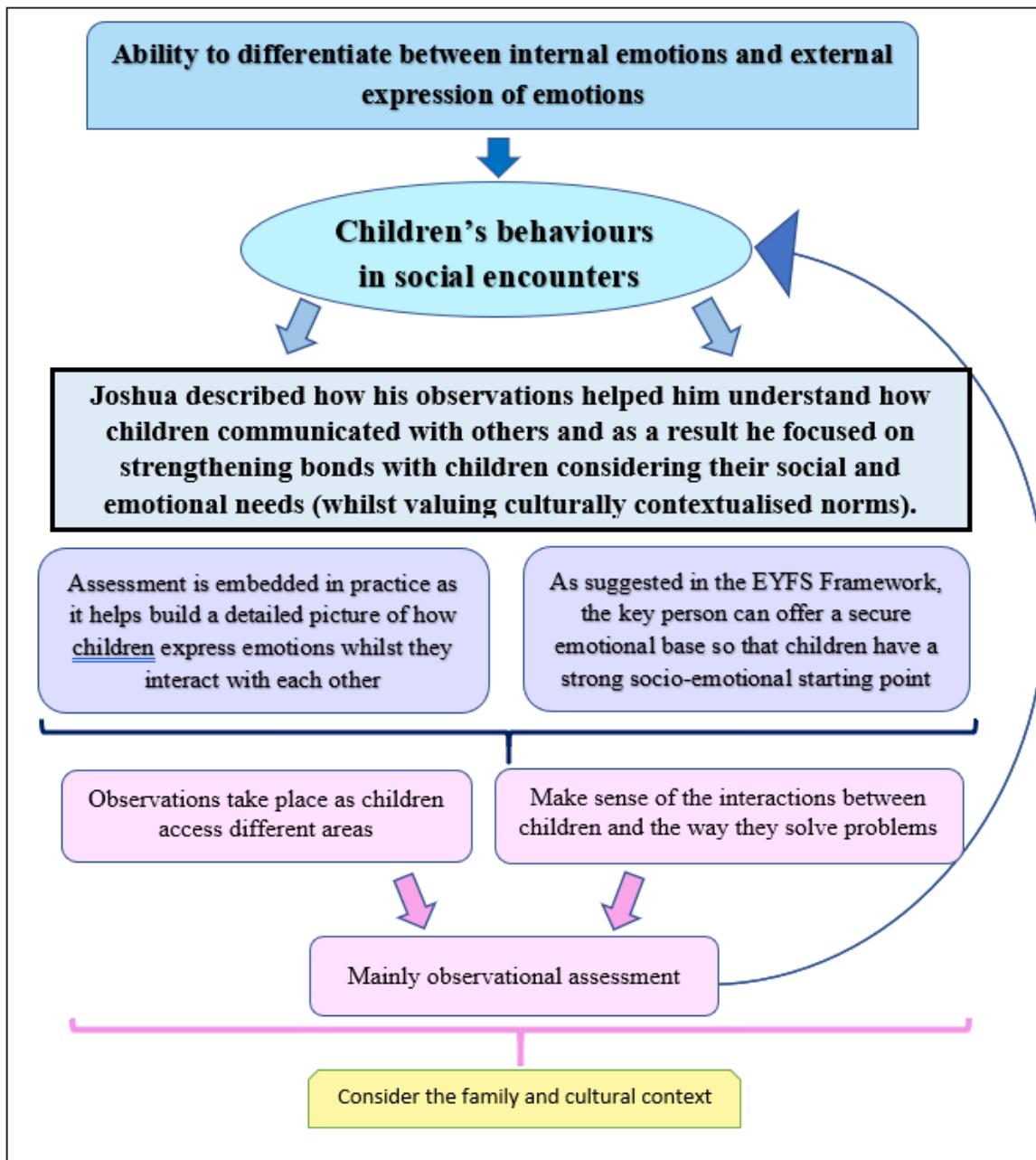


Figure 4.8 Joshua's storyboard

In Joshua's video-diaries 2 and 3 from Phase 2, he described assessment and observations almost as two different things. He used the term assessment to refer to "*the school baseline we do*" during the first six weeks after children start school. Joshua's description of assessment suggests that he interpreted it as a more formal

(compulsory) process which he did because he had to, whereas when he described observations, he talked about gathering information about children “*in the moment, [...] sometimes I didn't record any of that in the observation, but I actually do remember, and write later with other observations*”.

His observations of what was happening during children’s social encounters were to try to understand their behaviours. His need to pay full attention, which was casually mentioned in his video-diaries 1 & 2 from Phase 1, I perceived as an unconditional spontaneous connection he developed with children over time. Although he made no mention of whether he felt more or less connected with the children he worked with, Joshua reiterated that the PSE needs of children were at the centre of his practice. The descriptions of the observations he carried out, included details about observing the development of children’s emotional maturity as he got to know them. Joshua talked about children possibly being more or less emotionally expressive depending on their cultural traditions; he appeared to have developed a range of strategies to identify and make sense of children’s behaviours, taking into account the culture they were part of. This interpretation is in line with Saarni’s (1999) description of how the cultural context children are exposed to can influence the development of emotional competence. Joshua’s examples of practice suggest that *cariño* was present as a ‘malleable’ pedagogical approach (Marti, 1975), which is expressed differently depending on how children understand and express emotions.

4.10 Alia’s, Julie’s and Eleanor’s short stories - Prime Areas and next steps

Alia was interviewed during Phase 1, but her participation in the research was disrupted after that, as she was required to dedicate extra time to her team in school due to COVID-19. She was the reception teacher, Early Years and Key Stage 1 Lead and Assistant Head at a small school with an Early Years department with children from 2 to 5 years of age. Her brief participation in the study offered a perspective that was not highlighted in any of the other case studies. Alia’s story began with a detailed description of how her assessment practices had an initial focus on the three Prime Areas (Communication & Language, Physical Development

and Personal, Social & Emotional Development) before any other skills were assessed. By focusing on the Prime Areas, Alia explained that she regularly assessed children's language and comprehension skills and also observed how they used vocabulary to describe their emotions, which relates to Saarni's skill 3 of emotional competence- Skill in using the vocabulary of emotion and expression.. Alia's description of the relationships she had with children suggested that little time was allocated to building bonds. However, as she was unable to provide video-diaries, I had no examples of practice to draw conclusions about the type of connections she might have developed with children. Having said this, Alia's answers to the questions during the Phase 1 interview suggested that the prescribed agenda dictated by current early years assessment policy was a priority within her practice. Moreover, it as Batra (2013) suggests, this assessment agenda does not focus on the importance of using affection to stimulate the development of emotions in young children (Dunn & Stinson, 2012). She used a ranged of assessment platforms the school had chosen and kept regular records as dictated by these platforms. If she had continued to take part in Phases 2 and 3 of the study, she would have had an opportunity to describe whether these records were used to identify, evaluate and make sense of children's behaviour to help her assess if and how children were developing skills of emotional competence.

Julie and Eleanor were EYPs at a Nursery; both had over ten years' experience working with children from six months to five years of age. They worked with four-year-olds in a Nursery setting which meant they had more flexibility to choose a range of assessment tools since they were not required to submit assessment data to the local authority. Their participation was also interrupted half-way through Phase 1 due to the closure of their setting during the COVID-19 first lock-down period in March 2020. However, their story offered details about the importance of using assessment to collect evidence of progress to consider how to select and support the next developmental steps. This was an aspect that appeared later in the study but was also relevant during the Phase 1 data analysis which was used to write the open-ended questions for Phase 2. The short account about Julie's and Eleanor's practices offered details about how they chose to focus on supporting the

development of further skills, considering children's capacity to independently express and discuss their emotions. They both said the development of this capacity as a Personal, Social and Emotional skill was at the centre of their practice, with examples focusing on daily emotion-expression routines. Julie's and Eleanor's practices suggested that they considered the development of the capacity for emotional self-efficacy very important (skill 8, Saarni, 1999). It would have been interesting to explore some examples of practice in more detail to explore whether *cariño* was also present in their pedagogical approaches.

4.11 Conclusion - The purpose of the collection of stories

In this chapter I explored a series of case studies that reveal how *cariño* was present in practice and how it appeared as the main pedagogy used to bond with children before and during any assessment processes whilst, at times unconsciously and spontaneously, participants expressed *ternura*. Moreover, I described how the interrelationship between *cariño* and the skills of emotional competence can influence how children develop socially and emotionally.

The collection of stories in this chapter, helped me identify the pattern of themes that emerged from the three-phase analysis of the data (phase by phase twice and a third time whilst mixing all the common themes from each phase together). The stories also helped develop a process where once the connections between themes and categories were identified, the relationships between them were examined in order to construct an understanding of participants' experiences.

Chapter 5: A process of *cariño*

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present and discuss the findings as examples of practice which suggest *cariño* is the pedagogical approach present in the assessment process which participants used to make sense of children's behaviours. The theme of *cariño* as the pedagogy takes a central part in the discussion of the findings as it appears at the centre of the CASEC model arising from the theoretical framework that explores assessment, emotional competence and *cariño* in the literature review chapter.

The main theme of *cariño* emerged as I analysed the data of all three phases in a process of constant comparison, and identified four key aspects: assessment practices, assessment policy, children's behaviours, and development. As a result of this, I grouped the findings in four subthemes under the main theme of a process of *cariño* as follows:

- 5.2. *Cariño* is the pedagogy
- 5.3. How the assessment process happens.
- 5.4. Observations as assessment tools.
- 5.5. Emotional competence and other skills.

First, I present and discuss the findings that suggest that participants considered it essential to express their caring disposition and develop strong bonds with children during their assessment practices. I explore details about these bonds which highlight that affectionate relationships expressed with *ternura* (Restrepo, 1995) were part of the pedagogical approach used by the participants in the examples of practice they discussed. As I explore the participants' expressions of *ternura* I discussed how Ortiz Ocaña's (2013) definition of *cariño* fits as the pedagogical approach they used. Moreover, I highlight how Cameron and Moss's (2007) and Noddings's (2005) definitions of care relate to what occurs when the participants develop relationships with children whilst they are looking after them. I then present the findings that relate to the type of assessment practices: (1) those the participants

have to do and record as stated in policy (summative), and 2) those used to build relationships with children in order to understand them and be able to support them holistically (formative), which the participants describe as most useful, and how *cariño* as a pedagogy also appears through these. I also discuss the findings that highlight how the current early years assessment policy agenda has influenced some of the unconscious assessment practices currently taking place in some reception classes. Observation was highlighted as one of the most used assessment methods by the participants. I also discuss how observations of spontaneous moments that happen as children went about their play are valued, and are explored by Crooks (2002), Black et al. (2003), Black et al. (2004; 2010), Goodman (2012), Dubiel (2016), Wortham and Hardin (2019) and Martin (2019). In the final section, I present the findings that identify how emotional competence was assessed before and during the assessment process and discuss the evidence that suggests that *cariño* was present as participants supported the development of children's emotional competence (Saarni, 1999). Finally, I examine how children also appeared to develop other skills, such communication and language skills and physical skills, when participants helped them develop emotional competence (Garner et al., 2013; Hamre & Pianta; 2005).

5.2 Cariño is the pedagogy

The theme of strong bonds that stemmed from spontaneous relationships between the participants and the children, emerged repeatedly throughout the sequential analysis of the data. However, the final comparison of the data from the three phases indicated that all participants valued practices that helped them develop a connection with the children. The importance of this was emphasised by all the participants who completed the three phases and was described as "*an essential part of any assessment process*" by Jane during her interview in Phase 2. The most relevant data regarding connections as essential, referred to informal observations carried out without a prescribed agenda. The detailed accounts from some of the video-diaries offered an insight into the strong bonds the participants developed with the children they worked with. A common view amongst participants was to spend

time connecting with children to make any assessment process meaningful. This view was most significant amongst those who described observations as valuable moments, with the best ones being those not linked to prescribed assessment procedures. In Phase 2, Maria gave an example of one of these moments:

“My TA and also myself will take notes of those things that happen often daily...so observations of important moments...we recognise those moments because we know the children well. But we don’t add those to the Tapestry assessment, they are just for us, you know... to help us.”

This finding reveals that the most beneficial assessment practices were those that occurred more spontaneously when participants and children demonstrated affection towards each other. Although not described by the participants as such, this demonstration of affection can be viewed as the pedagogical approach they applied, that is, *cariño*.

This finding regarding the importance of developing strong bonds through relationships, emphasised by all participants, suggests that participants focused on nurturing relationships with children in order to support and guide them whilst also acknowledging that they felt comfortable demonstrating spontaneous affection. I could have cautioned against the use the word love, as I have little evidence to suggest the participants’ expressions were in fact described by them as love. However, Page (2018) does emphasise that a bond that offers children a sense of security during a caring relationship might be perceived as “professional love”. I interpreted from this that Jane’s expression of “*something special*” was the *cariño* she expressed to engage with children. Moreover, it demonstrates the act of developing relationships with children during the process of looking after them (Cameron and Moss, 2007; Noddings, 2005).

This same finding strongly highlights the significance of care as what we “do to maintain, continue and repair the world so we can live in it as well as possible” (Tronto 1993, p.103). From this finding, the role of the carer may go beyond the action of taking care and become *cariño* when practitioners demonstrate *ternura*

(Restrepo, 1995). Moreover, it corroborates Cameron and Moss's (2007) understanding of care as "an unavoidable element of human condition [...] which encompasses the wider social and physical environment as well as personal relations" (pp. 53-55). Most importantly, it emphasises the importance of approaching assessment with more than just care, but with *cariño* embedded in an ethos of holistic well-being. Van Ewijk et al. (2002) explain this as *cuidado*, the Spanish word for care. The findings also suggest that this ethos of holistic well-being was present when participants supported the development of skills of emotional competence. All participants discussed how often they came across situations where children faced emotional hurdles and had to try to manage their emotions whilst interacting with others. Maria's description showed that skills of emotional competence were assessed whilst children went through a range of experiences; sometimes alone, other times with other children and at times with the adult/s in the classroom (Saarni, 1999).

The findings suggest that through observations, participants were able to identify, value and make sense of children's behaviours and did not need to categorise children as the assessment process occurred, as relationships developed through a pedagogy of *cariño*, where love and care were fundamental. Moreover, they highlighted that the participants prioritised their role as carers, as explained by Kress et al. (2004), and focused on identifying how children might be feeling in order to choose strategies to help them go through a process of emotion expression, emotion understanding and emotion regulation (Denham et al., 2016). It was also evident here that the caring role which appears at the centre of the practices described by participants was unrecognised as a crucial part of the assessment process in current early years assessment policy. The fact that the participants maintained these practices alongside those processes dictated by policy, suggested that there was implicit activism in their practices. Their responses during the social transactions with children, might be interpreted as quiet acts of activism (Horton & Krafts, 2009). Moreover, the findings indicated that participants valued the time spent connecting with children and used those moments to interpret children's behaviours during social transactions. Most participants described their interactions with children as

routine parts of their day and did not emphasise one type of interaction as more important than another. This may mean that the participants might not consider these interactions so crucial. However, they mentioned many of these times of talking with children in most interviews, focus groups and video-diaries. On reflecting on the descriptions of the conversations they had with children, I concluded that participants developed strategies and carried them out with affection, which helped the children feel they belonged. This can be described as the expression of *ternura* (Restrepo, 1995; Ortiz Ocaña, 2013, 2005; & Reyes, 2020). These expressions of *ternura* which might go unseen during the assessment practices, were understood as single moments that the participants used to quietly stand up for what they believed in. One might think that these expressions of affection that might make a difference to the assessment process are too small to have an impact on any official policy changes. However, as mentioned above, they might still be classed as a form of implicit and quiet activism (Horton & Krafts, Archer, 2012; Albin-Clark, 2020) as they had direct impact on the children who should be the main beneficiaries in any assessment process.

Moreover, I suggest that the way the participants often described these regular interactions with children resembles the type of interaction Miguel Unamuno described as “*the relationship between father and son*” (cited in Maroco dos Santos, 2015). I could have thought that Unamuno’s description signifies the common understanding of the father being the powerful main figure in the family unit of Spain of the XIX century. However, I interpreted this as the affectionate bond that can naturally develop in secure family units between parents and their children. What I highlight here is that the relationships the participants described carry an element of unconditional love (Winnicott, 1968), as a deep level of affection which tends to be demonstrated spontaneously as relationships develop, that advocates for *cariño* as the pedagogical approach (Goicoechea-Gaona & Fernandez-Guerrero, 2014); one which has an impact on how children develop the ability to acknowledge, express and regulate a range of emotions and skills of emotional competence as described by Saarni (1999).

5.3 How the assessment process happens

Throughout the analysis of the data, it became apparent that formative assessment practices took place in a more spontaneous manner and, as a result, offered information that could be used to support the development of a range of skills. Summative assessment practices were categorised as part of the prescribed early years policy agenda. Through the research, observations were categorised as formative assessment practices. However, there was a division between the observational practices that were carried out to gather the evidence of progress required from governmental bodies, and those that occurred more informally. Informal observations were the most frequently used formative assessment practices across all the case studies. These were described as regular and often casual moments to connect with children through interactions and recorded as anecdotal moments. The examples described throughout the study fit in with Martin's (2019) definition of observations as informal assessment practices that help the participants interpret children's behaviours and use that information to support their holistic development. There was also a categorisation of assessment practices as: 1) those the participants have to do and record as stated in policy, and 2) those used to build relationships with children in order to understand them and be able to support them holistically. When participants briefly paused during their descriptions of informal observations to reiterate that they ensured they had adhered to the summative assessment, a reluctant acceptance of external assessment measures began to emerge.

In this section, I discuss how participants, using a range of assessment methods, highlighted the importance of developing relationships with children. Moreover, I explain how the findings emphasised the need to categorise practices either as those part of the prescribed early years policy agenda or those that occurred informally, and were used to support further development. Some of the examples of practice described throughout this chapter were compared and contrasted. Moreover, I identified and categorised them as summative or formative assessment practices. The findings regarding the use of observations as informal assessment

practices were discussed as a separate type of practice. This is due to the division created by participants as summative or formative, as defined by policy; and observations were defined as informal practices not included in the documentation submitted to governmental bodies.

5.3.1 Summative, formative and informal assessment practices

A finding that became evident during the three phases of the analysis was the precise categorisation of assessment practices. The process of categorisation started with the two types of assessment as suggested in the current EYFS Framework (DfE, 2017; DfE, 2020). However, a third category emerged when the participants began to discuss their informal observations as important events that occurred regularly as part of their day-to-day practice. This finding also highlighted that it was important for the participants to categorise their assessment practices as those used to gather the evidence that was submitted to the external bodies that oversee how academic performance and progress is measured.

The table below is an overview of how the participants grouped assessment tools. The groupings devised within the table illustrate that observations fit under the category of *other assessment tools* and were not mentioned as individual assessment tools.

Participants	Digital Assessment platforms			Reception Baseline Assessment	Other Assessment Tools	
	S-School N-Nursery	Tapestry	2simple		Dictated by policy	To build relationships with children
Amanda S	✓			✓	Local Authority (LA) tracker	Observations
Jane S	✓			✓	LA tracker	Observations
Sahida S	✓				School Tracking Leuven Scales Insight Tracking system	Observations
Maria S	✓			✓	Pro-tracker	Observations

Sally S	✓			✓	LA tracker	Observations
Alia S		✓			Tracking systems (LA & own) Check lists	
John S	✓				Leuven scales	Observations
Julie N			✓		Tracking systems (LA & own)	
Eleanor N			✓			
Joshua N/S	✓				School tracker	

Table 5.1 Grouping of assessment tools

It is important to explain that observations were also described as formative assessment practices when participants discussed the expectations of the EYFSP (DfE, 2018). However, those types of observations were described as formal (with prescribed criteria) and completed to adhere to the policy requirements.

During the interviews and/or FGDs, summative and formative assessments were discussed whilst we referred to the EYFS (DfE, 2017) used at the time. All participants showed a preference for formative assessment practices and explained how they used either a tool they had created themselves or a digital early years assessment platform their institution had bought into; it was evident throughout that all participants found ways to adapt the policy guidelines set by individual local authorities. However, some settings had internal policies that required numerical data after assessment processes, in the Foundation Stage, the same way as in Key Stages 1 and 2. Two participants from Phase 1 highlighted that:

“I just do it because I have to but I know it’s wrong. You need to be in early years to understand that you can’t measure children’s development with a number...” (Sally, interview)

“what does that number mean to the child anyway? Who is it for? Because I don’t use it...My observations help...not the tracking with a word or a number.” (Jane, FGD)

And one other participant explained that:

“I have a crisis of conscience delivering it and, I discontinued a couple. Some children struggled and thinking about their emotional well-being...it felt so wrong.” (Maria focus group Phase 1)

These reflections offer an insight into what really mattered to them and highlight that the current ‘fever’ of assessment for accountability, as suggested by Biesta (2008) and Batra (2013), is overemphasising the need to rank academic performance and perhaps harming the overall emotional well-being of children. This concern was raised by those four participants who piloted the Reception Baseline Assessment. Indeed, Goldstein et al. (2018) question its ethical validity due to its accountability purposes. More importantly, the findings also highlighted that although participants went along with the summative practices as stated in policy, they did unconsciously rely on observational methods which helped them choose strategies to support the development of other skills. These unconscious responses from which participants also gained emotional satisfaction, were simple acts of quiet activism (Horton & Krafts, 2009) that allowed them to focus on supporting children during observations that valued spontaneous moments that happen as children go about in their play. They are explored by Crooks (2002), Black et al. (2003), Black et al. (2004), Black (2010), Goodman (2012), Dubiel (2016), Wortham and Hardin (2019) and Martin (2019) and defined as observational, portfolio and alternative methods of assessment that can help make sense of how children learn.

This focus is an aspect that emerged through the analysis of the data from all three phases. Interestingly, the idea of observing how children respond in a variety of situations is one of the key aspects practitioners are asked to comment on when they complete the EYFSP at the end of the reception year, as stated in current early years policy (DfE, 2018). Although participants tended to perceive observations as standalone methods, they used them to describe how children were developing the characteristics of effective learning. It can also be understood that participants believed that to choose appropriate strategies to support children, it is essential to

make sense of these characteristics of effective learning described in the EYFS (DfE, 2017; 2021) and *Development Matters* (2012; 2021).

This finding, therefore, confirms that observations were powerful formative assessment methods which participants used to include details about how children learnt in the EYFSP; and that the summative nature of the assessment methods currently used in some reception classes might not provide accurate information about children and therefore do require valuable formative accounts of how children learn (gathered through observations). This questions the suitability of the summative numerical assessment formats to make judgements of children's progress that schools are required to complete and present as evidence to local authorities.

Moreover, the direct observational evidence teachers gathered offered examples of assessment practices that provided crucial information about children's learning and development that are excluded from the criteria dictated by early years assessment policy. Interestingly, it raises another question about whether early years policy aims to support the overall development of children or prioritises the information about progress that can be translated into statistics to rank children's performance, quality of teaching and, as a result, schools' performability (Batra, 2013; Biesta, 2008). In contrast with this view shared by many of the participants, summative assessment would have no purpose if *cariño* was perceived as the preferred pedagogical approach. However, the process of gathering evidence, even in the rudimentary form of a post-it note, is a summative assessment strategy which can in fact help participants cater for the needs of individual children. Whilst formative assessment methods seemed to be at the centre of these participants' practice, when they described how they collected evidence, they were in fact demonstrating how children were progressing. Although the participants did not add a numerical value to this type of evidence about children's progress, it was used to complete the EYFSP and other assessment documentation which at times required percentages. A subconscious process of summative assessment appeared to take place that was less obvious because it was approached with *cariño*. Reyes (2020) would present

this as a process where *cariño* enables the participant to adapt some of the assessment methods in order to maintain the level of *cuidado*, described by Van Ewijk et al. (2002).

The findings also revealed that most participants valued formative assessment practices which focused on the way relationships between children and practitioners develop, and that the interactions with children help them decide which steps to take to support further learning. This supports Denham et al.'s (2016) idea of using assessment as a vehicle to explain how children use their skills to express, understand and regulate their emotions and, as a result, develop holistically. In contrast with the previous findings, participants also pointed out that the summative assessments they are required to complete as stated in local or national policy, make little reference to the importance of developing strong relationships with children and only aim to measure whether knowledge has been acquired at a specific moment in time. Moreover, this finding is in agreement with research that questions the relevance of standardised summative assessment methods that produce numerical data which creates the categories used to compare achievement, but not necessarily to help children develop other skills (Roberts-Holmes & Bradbury, 2017) and the view that over time assessment policy has reflected the political agenda set out to compare education systems globally rather than to identify children's needs in order to support them holistically (Fuller & Stevenson, 2019). Furthermore, the findings also show that participants can at times experience emotional labour as they feel the pressures of the assessment policy agenda (Brown et al., 2018; Grandey, Diefendorff & Rupp, 2013; Lee & Brotheridge, 2012) and try to focus on what children really need on a daily basis (Ball, 2003). Participants' descriptions of the satisfaction of being able to support children during observations might be used as evidence of how their role as carers is in fact a labour of love (Graham, 1983, 1991; Thomas, 1993).

As part of their role as EYPs, all participants collected evidence with digital recording systems which were used to justify progression or not. They all observed children daily, although only six of them considered these observations as assessment tools.

This is a view of assessment as a process of reflection on observations practitioners carry out regularly (Brodie, 2013).

Participants also discussed the value of spontaneous observations and gave examples of observed moments that had become crucial to support children's development further. In the video-diaries, participants described many observations of children and how these enabled them to explore the unique characteristics about individual children. This idea of using observations to value a child's uniqueness and identify individual capacities and potential in order to support holistic development is in line with the Froebelian principles which are highlighted in Flewitt and Cowan's (2018) report, *Observations and Digital Documentation of Play in Early Years Classrooms*.

Most participants referred to assessment as a process when it was used to identify how children were learning and developing rather than what they were learning. Although they talked about observations as part of their daily routine, only some described them as useful assessment tools to support children in their future learning. Observations were often described as spontaneous ways to gather extra information about the children, which helped with future planning but were often not recorded:

"We might not have planned to do an assessment, but something happens and I think it might be useful...I write in on a post-it note to remind myself and sometimes it helps me when I am planning later." (Alia, Phase 1 interview)

This statement suggests that these moments of observation were not always perceived as assessment practices, although it is clear that participants used them as ways to gather information about children which should inform future planning.

A recurrent theme which emerged throughout the interviews and focus groups was that the level of spontaneity which accompanies these informal observations made them seem less worthy of being used as evidence to measure children's progress. In

Phase 1, several participants commented on how they used the more prescribed assessment tools:

“I do it but...the tracking is just for them, for management to have some data that can be turned into statistics. Not sure it means anything to me.” (Sally)

“The head doesn’t get it, I don’t need it. This is early years, I just want to focus on helping children develop at their pace.” (John)

“I assess on a daily basis...that’s formative assessment and then once a term more like summative assessment... for tracking and target setting. Just to complement what I get from the daily assessments that just happen.” (Amanda)

These comments indicate that participants' assessment practices are influenced by policy expectations and some practices can, as a result, be prioritised just to adhere to the guidelines schools are measured against. Moreover, staff (some reluctantly) appear to accept the government agenda of standardising assessment practices as suggested in the timeline of assessment policy by Robert-Holmes et al. (2019). This can be interpreted as a disguised act of obedience to those invisible forces that impose practices through policy. As Freire (1996) explained it “the more the oppressed can be led to adapt to that situation, the more easily they can be dominated” (p.55). All the participants appeared to accept the ready-made formalised systems dictated by policy. However, it is significant to note that the way participants categorised assessment practices sets out a clear division between those recognised in policy and those that were useful but were seldom excluded from officially valued documents. From an interpretivist perspective, I understood the participants were often comparing their own experiences during the spontaneous observations and continuous interactions with children and other types of experiences that had taken place whilst following the prescribed assessment criteria dictated by policy (Mukherji & Albon, 2018). It was also noticeable that when all the data were analysed in a sequence, it became apparent that the participants' responses had gradually become more reflective. The video-diaries were particularly

insightful accounts of participants' experiences, and included details of the reflective journey they had been on whilst taking part in this study.

The current culture of standardised testing has influenced practice, and this is what emerges through the participants' responses (Jarvis, 2016). There is no evidence to suggest that the participants used summative assessment tools as a standalone practice to simply judge what children might know at a specific moment in time. Participants primarily used formative assessment to identify how children are developing individual skills and how they apply these to learn. Six of the participants described all of the formative practices as opportunities to understand if children are able to do something and which of the individual skills they use to do it. However, these same participants also mentioned that they often check the summative assessment results to analyse whether these highlight the aspects that became apparent during formative practices. For example, during the FGD from Phase 1, Jane described this process as reassuring:

"I do check if the assessment checklist points out something I have missed during my observations. I'm usually quite accurate just with the observations but if anyone asks, I've done it."

5.4 Observations as assessment tools

Four of the participants described observations as helpful processes and explained that they could be useful if they needed a more detailed description of where children were at. When asked if they included observational records as evidence of progress in the children's EYFSP, they explained that they only used some when they fitted in the grading categories already established by the digital assessment tool or tracking system. Although they did not describe them as such, they only considered observations as assessment tools when they were presented as planned assessment suggestions set by the standardised method which adhered to policy expectations. During Phase 1, some participants made reference to some of the assessment tools they used:

“Assessment can also be a box ticking exercise...but that is the assessment we do because it says so in policy. To me that is not the one that helps me do my job” (Amanda)

“We use Tapestry and also the local authority tracker. It’s all a bit prescribed really.” (Jane)

These responses add value to Bowman et al.’s (2001) finding that suggests that prescribed tests have gradually become standardised practices dictated by policy. Moreover, they also indicate that some participants might have become part of a ‘polluted’ system that prioritises the ranking of performance, rather than supporting children’s holistic development (Batra, 2013). I interpret from this finding that, those assessment methods that fail to provide numerical data were perceived as less important (Black, 2001; Blandford & Knowles, 2011). It also indicates that some participants felt the pressure of the policy that feeds the accountability political agenda.

Furthermore, it highlights that participants are part of a system which values the ranking of children’s performance more than the ongoing learning and development that can be measured through observations (Bradbury, 2014). The findings suggest that the participants valued observations, but that the tracking systems provided by local authorities fail to prioritise what the participants consider valuable. These were, in most cases, presented as Excel spreadsheets with a colour-coded number and/or a word to describe whether children had achieved each of the seventeen the ELGs (DfE, 2018). The uncertainty in some of the participants’ voices and facial expressions when they talked about local authority tracking systems suggested they doubted the suitability and reliability of some of them. Bradbury’s study (2019), found this to be the case. The findings reflect Biesta’s (2008) argument that the current official assessment processes which focus on the accountability of teachers and schools, have a negative impact on the wellbeing of children.

The participants who worked in Reception classes with only four-year-olds, viewed assessment as a chore, at times, whereas those who worked with three- and four-

year-olds viewed it more of an observational process. Julie referred to assessment as a daily part of her practice:

“We do have a system, we use Tapestry...I like it. We observe children and take some notes... It really isn’t about how many observations we do, it’s more about what we use them for really.” (John, Phase 1)

“We use Family...it’s OK. I love watching the children, you know... when I do observations.” (Julie, Phase 1)

All participants referred to the computerised platforms as ‘systems’ to justify that they did what policy suggested. Everyone described how they were able to monitor children’s progress using observations to collect information about each child and identify specific needs; and seven provided video-diary recordings which included reflections about their assessment practices. Their reflections were more about how they connected with children, what they observed children do and how it happened over a period of time. This suggests that all participants valued formative assessment tools to develop an understanding of how children learn and, most importantly, to decide how to help them with future learning. An initial objective of this study was to examine the types of assessment practices and policies to understand if they were used to identify, value and make sense of four-year-olds’ behaviours. The findings from the video-diaries data confirm that the participants’ use of assessment tools was in-line with the AfL methods explored by Basford and Bath (2014). An example of this was described by Amanda, during the FGD from Phase 1:

“The ongoing assessment happens and it helps me plan new activities and sometimes even change some of my plans. I need to follow the child...otherwise the assessment is meaningless.”

This finding indicates that the most detailed and useful information about children can be gathered during formative assessments (Black & William, 1998). However, this finding needs to be interpreted with caution as it can imply that participants might

have been influenced by the definition of ongoing assessment found in policy documents such as EYFS (DfE, 2017) and the EYFSP (DfE, 2018). Although participants made no direct reference to the characteristics of effective learning included in the EYFS (DfE, 2017), several mentioned that they valued the assessment tools that helped them understand how children learnt and how they used previous experiences to attempt new ones. Thus, assessment can be used as a reflective tool for learning (Basford and Bath, 2014). Sahida (Phase 1 focus group) explained how ongoing assessment could help children become reflective:

“I watched her that day, not just once... and I could see how she was applying what she had learned in phonics. It wasn’t the first time.”

Some of the participants found summative assessment tools useful to assess whether children might have a developmental delay or a specific special need. This supports Stobart’s (2014) use of summative assessment to examine how children might (or not) be developing a particular skill. In this study, some participants also found it can be useful to assess whether children might have a developmental delay or a specific special need.

Interestingly, nobody was in favour of summative assessment tools to rank children according to a prescribed standardised scale. When they described some of the tracking systems, they expressed concerns about the emphasis on numerical measurement and about children who had low scores. There was no evidence to suggest that participants believed that one tool was more or less suitable to the needs of the children they worked with although, interestingly, the choice of digital assessment platforms was random and chosen based on ease of access for parents and participants, rather than what the platform offered. Julie commented on the assessment tools they used:

“The tracker the LA sends, we have to use that one and then another one to help us remember where children are at and also for planning. Family is more for parents, you know. It’s a nice way to check how children are getting on.”
(Phase 1 FGD)

This section has explored how participants spontaneously found themselves using observations to identify, value and make sense of four-year-olds' behaviours to develop strategies to support overall development. Assessment tools were chosen to adhere to the organisational and political agenda although they are not necessarily used to support children's learning.

5.5 Emotional competence and other skills

Trying to understand children's behaviours emerged as a very important part of many of the assessment practices participants described. A significant finding revealed that all participants, whatever their context, referred to PSED milestones to try to make sense of children's behaviours. This emerged from the participants' reflections in the video-diaries from Phase 2 which highlighted that observations had helped them identify where children were at in their PSED. This suggests that not only participants found observations useful as assessment processes that enabled relationships, they also used them to collect crucial information about individuals' PSED in order to make sense of children's behaviours and support the development of skills of emotional competence.

During the interviews and FGDs in Phase 2, all participants discussed examples of what was often described as "*the behaviour you see*" and reiterated the importance of trying to understand what children's behaviours meant. Some participants gave examples of this in their video-diaries, and reflected on some of their observations of children's interactions with different people. Maria (Phase 2 video-diary 1) described how she tried to interpret a child's behaviour;

"There were tantrums coming into school, and this went on for weeks. We had to try to understand how he was feeling before we could think about anything else...that transition period..."

Some of the details from these video-diaries raised a series of questions about the types of skills participants prioritised in their assessment practices. A significant finding was that all participants described, in one way or another, examples of

children exploring their feelings during interactions with others. All participants reflected on situations where children had struggled to understand their emotions and needed help trying to find the words to talk about them. Participants made time to make sense of children's behaviours during spontaneous observations where different situations provoked a range of emotional responses. They discussed how they monitor children's emotional responses in order to identify a starting point to support their PSED. This was one of the commonalities that emerged in every stage of the analysis and in all the video-diaries. Amanda (Phase 1 video-diary 1) explained how she felt it was necessary to be near those children who found it difficult to express their emotions:

"I don't know...sometimes I just need to be there to see how children react. ...it looks like a tantrum but I think they sometimes don't know how to explain the big feeling inside."

This finding suggests that the "inner emotional state need not correspond to outer expression" (skill 5, Saarni, 1999). In some of the examples described by participants in the video-diaries recorded at the end of Phase 1 and Phase 2, negative behaviour was interpreted as lack of emotional maturity. Four of the participants explained that the behaviours perceived as unacceptable behaviour were often expressions of frustration as children were learning to understand their emotions. During Phase 2, seven of the participants described that when children came across a new emotion they could not explain, they became frustrated. This was also discussed in Phase 3 by six of the participants. The recurrent discussion about children's difficulty to express the emotions they felt, is significant and relates to Saarni's argument about how and when children in early years know about separating their inner feelings from the outer feelings they show to others.

Another notable finding which emerged from some of the video-diaries from Phases 1 and 2, highlighted that the way children expressed certain emotions varied depending on their cultural backgrounds. In the video-diaries there were references about children from British Asian, Eastern European and White British cultural

backgrounds and participants described some differences possibly linked to cultural values but often also possibly related to individual family values. Another meaningful finding which arose during Phase 3 suggested that although culture could have an impact on the way children express their feelings, it was more apparent that children who had more opportunities to face and solve emotional conflicts were more able to express their feelings. In some of the video-diaries from Phase 2 participants explained that children who found it harder to talk about their emotions often had few opportunities to attempt to overcome emotional hurdles. Therefore, this aspect of emotional competence depends on the child's interpersonal relations and interactions with those in the most proximal context and the type of emotional responses that might occur during these (Saarni, 1999).

Maria talked about a child who was described as talkative by her parents but did not engage in play with other children and, although she did not appear unhappy, found it difficult to talk with other children and adults in the class:

“She was crippled with shyness. Worried about getting things wrong”.

She communicated and related well with family members in another language and according to a set of cultural values, but in school, she watched how other children spoke and behaved with each other and felt confused. This type of response is what Saarni (1999) describes as socially anxious behaviour which can occur during transitional periods.

From the video-diaries from Phase 2, the development of Saarni's skills of emotional competence appeared to be at the centre of each case study. The participants' stories helped me identify how some of the eight skills of emotional competence were continuously embedded in their practices. This enabled the connection to be made between behaviour, emotion expression, emotion understanding and emotion regulation. The video-diaries were fundamental in identifying how participants made sense of children's behaviours and what they did as a result. Sahida (Phase 2 video-diary 2) described how during her observations of children she developed a

relationship with a child who often became frustrated when he had difficulty engaging with others:

“He had difficulties playing alongside his peers and doing that in a way that he wasn’t leading to frustration. He wasn’t able to initiate that by himself...I was there to help.”

This shows the importance of trying to make sense of children’s behaviours and Sahida used assessment to understand what the child was struggling with. She opted for strategies that helped him adapt to new situations whilst trying to develop the emotional competence required to cope with expressing a range of emotions. This finding presents some evidence of the type of practice that can help a child develop the capacity to adapt and cope with complex emotions and stressful situations which can cause distress. In the second video-diary, Sahida explained how, as the child bonded with her, he gradually adapted to the classroom environment as he felt secure and developed a sense of belonging. By supporting children whilst they attempt to manage aversive emotions, they can learn to reflect on their behaviour and develop the capacity to regulate it independently (Saarni, 1999). The related CASEC model can be used to support the development of other skills.

In the video-diaries, all participants described specific aspects of children’s behaviour, emphasising the importance of trying to understand how children felt at the start of each day. Although participants always had a plan, they often adapted it after briefly observing children as they arrived in school. Maria, for example, talked about a child who often seemed to lack concentration in the mornings and would not engage in play with other children. After observing this behaviour over a short period, Maria had a discussion with his parents about morning routines at home. These discussions became part of the assessment process that helped her make sense of the child’s behaviours. Although the lack of engagement and interaction with other children was not something Maria had to record in the school tracker or the child’s profile, it was the behaviour that helped her identify there was an issue he needed

support with. After having several conversations with the child's parents, Maria commented;

"There were issues with his food...he just wasn't fuelled enough to learn."

This statement is an example of how participants used observational periods outside any planned assessment practices to identify any factors that may affect their PSED and work out strategies to help children develop a range of emotional skills which become the foundations for the development of other skills. Denham et al. (2016) describe how by assessing emotional competence skills before any other skills are assessed, practitioners can have an overview of the child's PSE needs. The types of practices described by the participants involved spending time identifying and making sense of children's behaviour, and addressing emotional issues, using a range of strategies to support children in the development of other skills.

Seven of the participants explained how patterns of behaviour varied depending on the children's abilities to use a range of words to communicate with their peers and the adults in the setting. Amanda (Phase 2 focus group) explained that in the assessment process, even when there was a focus on communication and language skills, she prioritised the identification of PSE skills and whether children communicated more confidently if they were more emotionally mature. This example fits in well with the CASEC model. She commented in general about children's different levels of socio-emotional maturity;

"We have the children who come with good communication skills. They can listen to a story and have the vocabulary...they're ready to interact. And the other children who sit on the carpet and look at you like, what are we doing here?"

This suggests when she assessed children's communication and language skills, she considered it necessary to focus on their PSED at the same time. This indicates the importance of interactions between the participants and children and how they contribute to the overall development of the child (Garner, Moses & Waajid,

2013; Hamre et al., 2013). Amanda (Phase 2 video-diary 1 described how children acquired other skills as they developed the ability to talk about their emotions, they showed signs of empathy and made attempts at regulating their emotions in unexpected situations. Whilst describing the behaviour of a particular child, she emphasised the importance of focusing on developing a bond with children, another representation of *cariño* as described by Ortiz-Ocaña (2013), which plays an important part in the assessment process. When Amanda and Sahida discussed Saarni's skills of emotional competence in Phase 2, it was noticeable that although literacy and mathematics were assessed regularly (as per their schools' assessment criteria), both participants considered it crucial to focus on supporting children emotionally whilst carrying out any kind of assessment. This continuous monitoring of children's emotional well-being was also mentioned in all the participants' video-diaries from Phase 2. This finding indicated that although participants considered it important to identify children's emotional competence prior to assessing any other skills (Denham et al., 2016), the actual assessment of skills of emotional competence in each of the case studies also occurred whilst other skills were being assessed. Moreover, the findings also identified that the CASEC model is applied in this process as the participants ensured they identified, valued and made sense of children's behaviours and then supported the development of further skills through affectionate approaches based on *cariño*. This suggests that *cariño* made the process of supporting children socially and emotionally an essential part of the assessment practices. This idea of filtering *cariño* within the assessment processes is perceived in the examples of practice which described how the emotional needs of children were prioritised and addressed through deep levels of affection (Ortiz-Ocaña, 2013; 2005).

The findings also suggest that in the process of making sense of children's behaviour with *cariño*, the participants acknowledged children's individual skills and took those into account when planning for future learning. Moreover, the findings highlight that when the CASEC model of assessment was applied, *cariño* made it a process that valued the individuality of each child, an aspect Saarni (1999) considers influences the development of emotional competence. The findings also indicate

that, by pausing to identify, value and make sense of children's behaviour during assessment, all participants worked out how to support the development of emotional competence. This shows the importance of considering how children express, understand and regulate their emotions during social transactions (Buckley & Saarni cited in Beck, 2013). Joshua explained how he observed children's behaviours before any other skills are assessed (Phase 3 interview);

"I look at how they are with each other...when they play together. Can they find solutions to a problem? The other areas come after that."

Joshua also pointed out that the girls in his class (in the current academic year and previous years too) seemed to have developed skills of emotional competence before many of the boys. Interestingly, this aspect of emotional maturity also emerged in Jane's and Sally's interviews in Phase 3 in relation to children demonstrating how they were developing a range of skills differently and how this varied depending on how socially and emotionally mature they were. It was not stated whether they were guided by the skills listed under PSED in the EYFS (DfE,2017). The fact that participants considered it necessary to discuss children's emotional readiness and connected with them in affectionate ways, indicates that *cariño* was their pedagogical approach.

5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I explored how assessment can help practitioners identify, value and make sense of children's behaviour. I examined, presented and discussed *cariño* as the pedagogy present in the practices described by the ten participants in this study and, as a result, answered the main research question and two sub-questions (p.4). I identified *cariño* as the pedagogy applied throughout some assessment practices and discussed examples of observations as formative assessment practices used to make sense of children behaviours. Moreover, I discussed how participants focused on developing strong bonds with children and expressed *ternura* during their interactions with children and, subsequently, helped children develop skills of

emotional competence. I also identified how the participants often prioritised assessment processes which focused on (unconsciously) assessing and supporting the development of some of the skills of emotional competence children might need in order to develop other skills.

Chapter 6: My contribution to knowledge: Cariño is a pedagogy.

Because love is an act of courage, not of fear, love is a commitment to others. No matter where the oppressed are found, the act of love is commitment to their cause – the cause of liberation. And this commitment, because it is loving, is dialogical. Freire (1996, p.70)

As my findings suggest, the most intense type of labour amongst the participants is emotional. In this study, emotional labour is partly positive as it enabled participants to courageously (although quietly) use *cariño* to make sense of children's behaviours and, as a result commit themselves to making a difference to the children they love. Amid this powerful bond of affection which presents itself in ways much stronger than the action of loving as defined in English, *cariño* - as my contribution to knowledge - is an intense sense of care, affection and love that fits within, underpins and surrounds the assessment process and other relational encounters between participants and children. *Cariño*, in this study, was to be found during the spontaneous connections between those who feel it and express it, in particular, during observations as assessment practices.

6.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to answer three research questions: MQ: What types of assessment policy and practices help identify, value and make sense of four-year-olds' behaviours? SQ1: How far do practitioners value and support the development of emotional competence in four-year-olds? SQ2: To what extent are practitioners assessing Saarni's skills of emotional competence?

In this chapter, I discuss how the findings helped me conclude that when EYPs use observational assessment, they developed strong loving bonds with four-year-olds and understood their behaviours and, as a result, were able to support children develop other skills. These relational loving bonds were contextualised and described in the literature review as demonstrations of *cariño*. My interpretation of the findings enabled me to conclude that when some EYPs value and support the development of emotional competence, at the same time, they unconsciously assess Saarni's eight skills of emotional competence and how they impact the development of other skills.

6.2 Where do Saarni's skills of emotional competence appear within practice?

To summarise, Saarni's (1999) eight skills of emotional competence are:

- 1- Awareness of one's own emotions.
- 2- Understanding others' emotions.
- 3- Using the vocabulary of emotion.
- 4- Empathy and sympathy in others' emotional experiences.
- 5- Differentiating between internal and external emotions.
- 6- Coping with aversive or distressing emotions by using self-regulatory strategies.
- 7- Emotional communication within relationships emerges during observational assessment practices.
- 8- Capacity for emotional self-efficacy.

These include skills that develop according to levels of physical and emotional maturity and might spontaneously be noticed. The significant conclusion drawn from the case studies is that the ability to connect and engage with others is apparent in children as they develop a sense of belonging. The analysis of each of the seven case studies offers an overview of how skills emerge during observational assessment practices.

There was limited evidence from the stories that form case studies 8 and 9, however there was enough to highlight how: using the vocabulary of emotion (skill 3) and

emotional self-efficacy (skill 8) were present in practice. Although there are traces of each skill in all the examples of assessment practices, the importance of developing strong bonds is a common thread throughout eight of the case studies. However, it is less so in Alia's short story (only data from Phase 1 interview) which emphasised that assessing all ELGs, in particular literacy and mathematics, was a priority.

Whilst Saarni makes no direct reference to the role loving bonds play in the development of emotional competence, some key words that appear throughout the eight skills have a connection with *cariño* (understanding, empathy, sympathy, emotional communication). This study provides evidence of practice that highlights the importance of developing the ability to express emotions and talk about them, understand one's own emotions and those of others and adapt and cope with different emotions in a range of circumstances (Saarni, 1999; Buckley & Saarni, 2006 cited in Ciarrochi, Forgas & Mayer). The case studies included examples of how participants valued and supported the development of emotional competence as they made sense of how children tried to understand and express their own emotions. Even without the participants reporting that they did not directly assess the skills of emotional competence, it is clear that their descriptions of observational assessment practices also suggest that whilst they try to make sense of children's behaviours, they are unconsciously assessing the eight skills of emotional competence.

6.3 Cariño and the quiet presence of relational and implicit activism

Although, it might seem that some EYPs are still adhering to the guidelines dictated by current early years assessment policy; this study provides examples of observational assessment practices where *cariño*, in fact, appears to channel forms of activism. By approaching assessment in ways that help practitioners make sense of children's behaviours, EYPs can, through loving relationships with children, use *cariño* to commit to making a difference to those children (Freire, 1996). The findings of this study suggest acts which focus on strengthening loving bonds, might be described as a type of activism that goes unseen due to their humble nature. In my

view, other types of activism which include more active and public protests against current early years assessment policy, are yet to demonstrate whether they can influence change on a large scale. Organisations such as '*More than a Score*', '*Let kids be kids*' and '*Reclaiming schools*' might consider this alternative type of activism as a loud enough to have an impact on policy. These organisations represent many EYPs who consider that summative assessment practices that aim to categorise children and measure performativity have no place in Early Years. These EYPs have evidence of practices which do make a difference to children. Although the aforementioned organisations are also supported by many researchers, their work has not yet had a permanent impact on policy. However, in this study, relational activism presents itself implicitly through the power of the loving bonds that occur between the participants and four-year-olds during observational assessment. Moreover, activism itself often happens through small acts which have an impact on those directly involved first Horton and Krafts (2009), and can cause a ripple effect as a result (Archer, 2012; 2017). The examples of practice from the case studies led me to conclude that affectionate bonds between the EYPs and children can strengthen during observational assessment practices that require interactions. During these practices, activism is implicit (Horton & Krafts, 2009) whilst *cariño* becomes the pedagogy. My interpretation of the findings, as a researcher, also enabled me to conclude that implicit activism is a spontaneous occurrence that presents itself as a form of relational activism. By spontaneous, I imply that, *cariño* in this study, is something that develops during the interactions between the participants and the children that take place during observational assessment (Fromm & Goddard, 1956). Therefore, I conclude that this process might be described as spontaneous as it is unplanned and happens as a result of the strong affectionate bonds that develop between the participants and the children they demonstrate *cariño* towards.

It can be concluded that observational practices are commonly used alongside other tools dictated by current early years policy. This common use of observations in daily practice suggests that, although it might seem as if some EYPs accept and adhere to the statutory guidelines, they are quietly acting in response to children's

behaviours. These acts which take place in response to children's needs, can transform those relationships (Martin, Hanson and Fontaine, 2007), which in turn can also influence behaviours in new social encounters (Albin-Clark, 2020). In this study, the unplanned interactions that occurred are social acts that create strong loving-affectionate bonds which have an impact on how children develop emotional competence. This form of activism can also be perceived as a contextual adaptation to the skills of emotional competence those children already have (Saarni, 1999). These observational practices apply *cariño* within an assessment model that can transform relationships supporting four-year-olds in the development of skills of emotional competence, and impact PSED as a result.

It can also be concluded that the most recent changes in early years policy diminish pedagogical approaches which reflect values based on *cariño* and undervalue informal observational assessment practices unless they provide numerically measurable data. Conclusively, the recent changes in policy which ignore the value of observational practices raise ethical issues as they categorise children and turn their achievements into statistical results used to rank performance nationally and globally.

6.4 “It’s just mad!” The emotional labour of EYPs used to feed accountability.

The types of relationships described in the case studies suggest that working with four-year-olds is an emotional endeavour which requires a high level of emotional commitment from EYPs (Yin, 2015). In this study, this emotional commitment is explained as a process that participants became part of as they develop an affectionate bond during the interactions that occur in observations with the children they care for. I use the term care in this context, although these EYPs described themselves as teachers working with four-year-olds. Although they did not refer to themselves as carers, a lot of the descriptions of practice suggested that care was an unavoidable element of their assessment practices as EYPs (Sevenhuijsen, 1999). In some of today's social and professional contexts, the EYP might still be perceived as 'a person who imparts knowledge' rather than a person who cares for

children. Throughout this study, care appeared as the starting point of the relationships between practitioners and children, and gradually became strong affectionate-loving bonds where *cariño* led practice. These types of assessment practices include a range of caring and loving actions which enable EYPs to maintain, support and repair the environment so that children can develop the skills of emotional competence which will help them experience the world (Tronto, 1993). This study also concludes that what occurs during observational assessment practices is more than an act of care, as it involves relationships and feelings (Noddings, 2005; Cameron & Moss, 2007) with an intense labour of love (Graham, 1983, 1991; Thomas, 1993). A significant amount of labour goes into caring for children whilst focusing on assessing them according to the expectations set by current early years assessment policy (DfE, 2021; DfE, 2020; DfE, 2019; DfE, 2014b). This type of labour might be both physical and emotional. However, I would argue that the most intense type of labour apparent amongst some EYPs is emotional and it emerges from the pressures of the expectations dictated by policy. The labour that is described as loving by Graham (1983, 1991); Thomas (1993) and Cameron and Moss (2007) makes the application of *cariño* an intense relational process (evident in the case studies which report examples of observational assessment) that requires great emotional work. However, the findings suggest that the participants did not show signs of emotional pressures when they described the part of the emotional work which focuses on developing loving connections with children, in order to make sense of their behaviours. From the participants descriptions, I perceived that this type of emotional labour was considered as an emotional reward, almost as unconditional love (Ortiz Ocana, 2013; Restrepo, 1995). The EYP pays attention to the child during an observation, the child feels loved and responds positively, and a bond begins to develop because both give and receive what I describe as *cariño*, due to its intensity. Some aspects of this process might be understood as professional love (Page, 2018). However, in the case studies analysed for the purpose of this thesis, the intensity of the bonds described by the participants go beyond the professional sense of love. The demonstrations of *cariño* described suggest that participants dedicated time to comfort children by showing

them love and affection. Sahida, for example described how it was crucial for her to ensure children felt comfortable around her: “*I needed him to trust me*” (Phase 2 video-diaries). When an intense expression of love and affection was reciprocated during the observations, it went beyond the boundaries of professional love and became *cariño*.

The other type of emotional labour presents itself as participants hold some of their emotions in order to work towards the organisational goals (Brown et al., 2018; Grandey, Diefendorff, & Rupp, 2013; Lee & Brotheridge, 2012) dictated by the current early years assessment requirements. These requirements come from the demanding establishments that form the political chain: the school’s leadership body that gathers the assessment data about four-year-olds in reception classes, which is passed on to the local authority that translates it into the statistics which are fed into the government accountability agenda. These demands create a cycle of confusion for EYPs who willingly engage in the emotional labour of demonstrating *cariño* but, feel unable to express how they feel about the current assessment policy agenda. This study therefore concludes that policy expectations attempt to disrupt the exchange of *cariño* that often occurs through a positive process of emotional labour, and adds a dimension of emotional pressure to achieve a set of goals that define the performance of children and professionals. By using a statement from one of the participants, “*It’s just mad!*” (Jane, Phase one interview), I illustrate how practitioners question the importance of identifying, valuing and making sense of four-year-olds’ behaviours fit within the accountability agenda children that EYPs are also made to comply with. My description of quiet and implicit activism stems from my interpretation of the undervalued, unrecognised and oppressed work EYPs undertake which presented positively in many different ways. Although at times the participants might have felt unrecognised and undervalued as professionals, they described the intensity of expressing and receiving *cariño* during observations as a positive emotional reward for their work. Despite the external pressures, my interpretation of this led me to conclude that they chose to quietly act on ensuring children felt loved, and that is a form of quiet activism that impacts those who need it most - the children.

6.5 Cariño as a coping mechanism against “institutional schizophrenia”.

We take our collective pulse 24 hours a day with the use of statistics. We understand life that way, though somehow the more figures we use, the more the great truths seem to slip through our fingers. Despite all that numerical control, we feel as ignorant of the answers to the big questions as ever.

(Boyle, 2001)

The participants in this study disagreed with the early years policy demands that focus on the production of numerical data and found the managing of institutional expectations a complex endeavour. However, as hard as it can be to step away from such control created by the neoliberal global agenda, when participants applied *cariño* to observational assessment processes they coped with the almost ‘schizophrenic’ institutional demands to feed the political agenda and at the same time justify that these same practitioners are fully immersed in their practice (Ball, 2003).

Although the participants in this study do value the use of observations to focus on children’s PSED, and developed systems that prioritised these types of practices, they still found themselves fitting into a system which somehow by-passes the impact assessment practices based on *cariño* can have on children (Basford & Bath, 2014). They developed strategies which allowed them to combine observational assessment practices that focus on supporting the development of skills of emotional competence and the more formal types of assessment methods included in current early years assessment policy (DfE, 2021; DfE, 2020; DfE, 2019; DfE, 2014b).

These strategies helped practitioners dive through ‘the institutional must dos’ which provide the numerical data expected, but that create a false sense of value according to a set of figures (Bradbury & Roberts-Holmes, 2016; 2017; 2017c; Bradbury, 2019). At institutional level, there are discussions about supporting the emotional well-being of children (Kellock, 2020) but the constant persistence to find processes and procedures to numerically measure it (Goldstein et al., 2018), creates confusion amongst practitioners who see themselves as professionals and expect

trust from the institution (Bradbury, 2019). The institutional behaviours which have become accepted by society and are dictating how we should value current assessment practices do not promote professional trust. What they are provoking is often professional and personal self-doubt when practitioners doubt whether principles based on relational pedagogy are good enough to get them the institutional recognition governments require them to aim for. These levels of self-doubt were discussed by participants (Phase 1 interviews and focus groups) when they questioned whether practices that did not appear in policy might at some point be described as inappropriate by those who manage the political agenda (Ball, 2003). The constant questioning of practice undoubtedly creates insecurities amongst practitioners who can find themselves having to justify their principles. Some might be trying to find a balance between the expectations set by the global performativity agenda and their practices which focus on understanding children's behaviours through *cariño*. In this study, however, it is the prioritisation of the observational practices through *cariño* which can be described as implicit activism, that overtakes the institutional must dos'.

When compared with love and care, *cariño* in its full sense and as an action that occurs within a process of relational pedagogy, can sit beyond these two concepts (Dunn & Stinson, 2012; Reyes, 2020). The way in which participants described the relationships with children during observational assessment suggests that, amongst the aforementioned levels of "institutional schizophrenia" apparent in primary schools today (Ball, 2003), participants are spontaneously applying *cariño* to manage it. These exercises can have an impact on how loving relationships between practitioners and children develop if they are to be prioritised (Smyth et al., 2000). The fact that a small number of practitioners are managing to persevere by prioritising observational practices, suggests that an intense wave of love (Freire, 1996) can have an impact on the children who need it most. Moreover, what the case studies in this thesis reflect is that by observing with *cariño* we can manage to make sense of four-year-olds' behaviours and as a result, find suitable ways to help children develop the skills of emotional competence they will need to develop socially and emotionally.

6.6 Limitations

This study has a series of limitations. Initially, it was conducted with 10 EYPs who worked with four-year-olds although only seven completed the three phases of data collection. This study should therefore be perceived as an example of how observational assessment happens when *cariño* is what makes it possible for practitioners to bond with four-year-olds and, as a result, identify, value and make sense of their behaviours. Furthermore, those participants who piloted the Reception Baseline assessment were unable to comment on whether they had the opportunity to reflect on the data they had collected when they carried it out. Therefore, without evidence, it is not possible to reach a conclusion about its usefulness. It would have been relevant to explore the impact of the Reception Baseline Assessment soon after it was carried out and subsequently utilise its results to adapt classroom practices based on *cariño* to focus on supporting the development of skills of emotional competence. However, the introduction was not carried out as originally planned due to COVID-19, and the only examples discussed in this study refer to schools that chose to pilot it. Although the detailed case studies provided evidence to suggest that *cariño* has a place in observational assessment processes, they were only explored over a period of six months. This same study over a longer timespan could analyse in more detail the social-emotional impact of observational assessment practices. If I were to carry out this study again, I wish to gather data from a larger sample of EYPs in order to explore to what extent they approach observational assessment through *cariño*.

6.7 Recommendations for further research

There is much to be done to investigate the impact of observational assessment practices, not just in Early Years but in Primary, Secondary, Further and Higher education. Whilst we are becoming immersed in the accountability agenda, we are tricked into believing that numerical results can measure children's progress and performance, as stated in *Bold Beginnings* (OFSTED, 2017). In order to move away from this obsession to categorise children's performance, further studies should be

carried out on the impact observations can have on children's social and emotional development. Two longitudinal studies could be carried out alongside each other over a period of the four academic years with children from three to seven years of age. One study could focus on interviewing practitioners across early years and Key Stage 1 in various schools. The data from these interviews could help write case studies about practitioners' observational assessment practices with two different children over the four years. This type of study could allow practitioners to reflect on how they observe children and how these observations have an impact on the way they develop relationships with them. The second study could require observations to be carried out on how these two different children (each year) respond to observational assessment. Case studies might offer details of how children can develop skills of emotional competence whilst being observed by the practitioner who embeds *cariño* in their observational assessment practices. In order to focus on analysing the impact of these practices, the sample would take into account participants' understanding of relational pedagogies that focus on the development of loving bonds with children.

This study should be considered the beginning of a journey where the concept of *cariño* might help EYPs reflect on the types of connections they develop with children and how these might spontaneously become strong loving-affectionate bonds.

6.8 How *cariño* helped me reach a conclusion

Before I even thought about doing a PhD, as an EYP, I had been an advocate of relational pedagogies although I had never attempted to name my own. However, through this study, I have realised that one can construct new knowledge by exploring perspectives that might have unconsciously been perceived as less important. Exploring Winnicott's work on unconditional love, Page's work on professional love, Nodding's work on the value of care in education, Saarni's work on the development of emotional competence and Cameron's and Moss's work on the cultural contextualisation of care was helpful as I went through the process of

constructing my own contribution to knowledge. However, the most significant discovery emerged as I wondered whether there would be a word in my native language for the intensity of the loving-affectionate bonds described by the participants in this study. I questioned whether a word in Spanish would help me construct new knowledge in a field where English native speakers had already developed such powerful conclusions linked to relational pedagogies. My heart took over at this point and I began to explore terms by Restrepo, Ortiz Ocaña, Reyes, Altarriba, Bułat Silva and Miguel de Unamuno when they described love, *cariño* and pedagogy in their work. Unamuno's book *Love and Pedagogy* was particularly interesting as I found myself immersed in it. After all these years unconsciously stepping away from literature in my native language, I was able to not only understand, but feel the words I was reading. Emilio Gasco Contell described Unamuno (1902) as the spiritual brother of Don Quijote. He was more than just a thinker, he was a *sentidor*. Recognising the power of *cariño* during observational assessment became my contribution to knowledge and, it was this same power that helped me feel proud of being more than a thinker but a *sentidora* constructor of new knowledge based on the quiet acts of activism which are present in many early years settings. I became familiar with a few of these practices in this study, but I am now eager to embark on one of Don Quijote's adventures and search for more practices based on *cariño*. After all, as Díaz Marchant (1999) invites us to recognise, "the educator must love the learner."

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Appendices

Appendix 1

(free sample from Devon County Council Early Years support materials)

Early Years Foundation Stage - Progress check at age two

Child's name: _____ **Date of birth:** _____ **Age (in months):** _____

Setting: _____ **Setting Contact/Key Person/SENDCo:** _____

(delete as appropriate)

Setting Contact/Key Person/SENDCo comments:
Parent(s) or Carer(s) comments: (Has the Healthy Child Review meeting taken place?)
<p>I give permission for information from this review of my child's learning and development to be shared with other professionals via the Public Health Nursing Hub.</p>
Integrated Review: The setting has responsibility to follow up identified actions and ensure appropriate support is available for children and their families.

Child's name:	
Ways to support your child's learning and development:	
Are there any concerns that need to be shared with the Health Visitor?	
In the setting:	At home:
Integrated Review: The setting has responsibility to follow up identified actions and ensure appropriate support is available for children and their families.	

Communication and Language

Significant comments

Please refer to page 28 of Development Matters Observation checkpoint to inform your comments. Please provide specific examples of what the child can say.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Significant comments:

Please refer to page 50 of the Development Matters Observation checkpoint to inform your comments.

Physical Development

Significant comments:

Please refer to page 64 of the Development Matters Observation checkpoint to inform your comments.

Appendix 2

Phase 1 Instructions, EYFS (2017) sections and Questions (January 2020)

Focus groups and Interview Questions and Instructions

1. Describe some of the different types of assessment tools you currently use with 4-year-old children.
2. Are any of these assessment tools associated with a particular scheme or have you developed it/them yourself?
3. This is the section of the EYFS (current and pilot) that explains how assessment should be carried out in the Foundation Stage.

Describe an example of practice in line with the following statement from the EYFS.

2017--- Ongoing assessment (also known as formative assessment) is an integral part of the learning and development process. It involves practitioners observing children to understand their level of achievement, interests and learning styles, and to then shape learning experiences for each child reflecting those observations. In their interactions with children, practitioners should respond to their own day-to-day observations about children's progress and observations that parents and carers share.

4. Are you familiar with the ELG for Personal, Social and Emotional Development?

Personal, social and emotional development

Self-confidence and self-awareness: children are confident to try new activities, and say why they like some activities more than others. They are confident to speak in a familiar group, will talk about their ideas, and will

choose the resources they need for their chosen activities. They say when they do or don't need help.

Managing feelings and behaviour: children talk about how they and others show feelings, talk about their own and others' behaviour, and its consequences, and know that some behaviour is unacceptable. They work as part of a group or class, and understand and follow the rules. They adjust their behaviour to different situations, and take changes of routine in their stride.

Making relationships: children play co-operatively, taking turns with others. They take account of one another's ideas about how to organise their activity. They show sensitivity to others' needs and feelings, and form positive relationships with adults and other children.

Explain how you may assess these.

Do you assess all areas of development at the same time or separately?

Why?

If you assess them separately, do you assess some before others or in a random order?

Why?

Sections of policy documents

EYFS (2017)

Section 2 – Assessment

2.1. Assessment plays an important part in helping parents, carers and practitioners to recognise children's progress, understand their needs, and to plan activities and support. Ongoing assessment (also known as formative assessment) is an integral part of the learning and development process. It involves practitioners observing children to understand their level of achievement, interests and learning styles, and to then shape learning experiences for each child reflecting those observations. In their interactions with children, practitioners should respond to their own day-to-day observations about children's progress and observations that parents and carers share.

2.2. Assessment should not entail prolonged breaks from interaction with children, nor require excessive paperwork. Paperwork should be limited to that which is absolutely necessary to promote children's successful learning and development. Parents and/or carers should be kept up-to-date with their child's progress and development. Practitioners should address any learning and development needs in partnership with parents and/or carers, and any relevant professionals.

EYFS PILOT-In place September 2021

Section 2 – Assessment

2.1. Assessment plays an important part in helping parents, carers and practitioners to recognise children's progress, understand their needs, and to plan activities and support. Ongoing assessment (also known as formative assessment) is an integral part of the learning and development process. It involves practitioners observing children to understand their level of achievement and interests and, and then to shape learning experiences for each child reflecting those observations. In their interactions with children, practitioners should respond to their own day-to-day observations about children's progress and observations that parents and carers share.

2.2. Assessment should not entail prolonged breaks from interaction with children, nor require excessive paperwork. When assessing whether an individual child is at the expected level of development, practitioners should draw on their knowledge of the child and their own expert professional judgement and should not be required to prove this through collection of physical evidence.

2.3. Parents and/or carers should be kept up-to-date with their child's progress and development. Practitioners should address any learning and development needs in partnership with parents and/or carers, and any relevant professionals. Assessment should inform an ongoing dialogue

between practitioners and year 1 teachers about each child's learning and development, to support a successful transition to key stage 1.

Assessment at the end of the EYFS – the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP)

2.7. In the final term of the year in which the child reaches age five, and no later than 30 June in that term, the EYFS Profile must be completed for each child. The Profile provides parents and carers, practitioners and teachers with a well-rounded picture of a child's knowledge, understanding and abilities, their progress against expected levels, and their readiness for Year 1. The Profile must reflect: ongoing observation; and practitioners should draw on their own knowledge and professional judgement of a child to inform discussions with parents and carers, and any other adults whom the teacher, parent or carer judges can offer a useful contribution.

2.8. Each child's level of development must be assessed against the early learning goals (see Section 1). Practitioners must indicate whether children are meeting expected levels of development, or if they are exceeding expected levels, or not yet reaching expected levels ('emerging'). This is the EYFS Profile.

2.9. Year 1 teachers must be given a copy of the Profile report together with a short commentary on each child's skills and abilities in relation to the three key characteristics of effective learning (see paragraph 1.9). These should inform a dialogue between Reception and Year 1 teachers about each child's stage of development and learning needs and assist with the planning of activities in Year 1.

2.10. Schools must share the results of the Profile with parents and/or carers, and explain to them when and how they can discuss the Profile with the teacher who completed it. For children attending more than one setting, the Profile must be completed by the school where the child spends most time. If a child moves to a new school during the academic year, the original school

must send their assessment of the child's level of development against the early learning goals to the relevant school within 15 days of receiving a request. If a child moves during the summer term, relevant providers must agree which of them will complete the Profile.

Video-diaries instructions

See grid comparing the skills of emotional competence developed by Carolyn Saarni and the ELGs for PSED in the current EYFS and the Pilot EYFS. Look through these over the next few days. Do contact me if anything needs clarification.

Reflect on some of your assessment practices for the next 5-6 weeks and start a video-diary telling me whether you have considered the skills of emotional competence, as described on the grid:

BEFORE YOU START ASSESSING

WHILST YOU ARE ASSESSING

AFTER YOU HAVE ASSESSED ANY AREAS TOGETHER OR
SEPARATELY?

Are you planning to use the information gathered about children's emotional competence to support the development of other skills and how? 2 video-diary entries (minimum).

Send them to me via WeTransfer.

You may consider the following questions when you reflect on your assessment practices:

Can you describe an example of practice in line with the following statement on assessment from the EYFS?

Do you assess all areas of development at the same time or separately?

Why?

If you assess them separately, do you assess some before others or in a random order?

Why?

You may:

- describe assessment practices that require the use of a particular assessment tool linked to a scheme or a software, or talk about ongoing assessment that took place with assessment tools you created yourself.
- consider the statement from the EYFS we discussed during our first Focus Group meeting (details in document that lists questions for Phase 1 Interview or Focus group)
- consider the descriptors you currently refer to when you focus on assessing PSED. Remember to think about Saarni's skills of emotional competence and how these are connected to the ELGs for PSED. (Details included in a grid in Chapter 2).

EYFSP

ELG Self-Regulation:

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Show an understanding of their own feelings and those of others, and regulate their behaviour accordingly;
- Have a positive sense of self and show resilience and perseverance in the face of challenge;
- Pay attention to their teacher and follow multi-step instructions.

ELG Building Relationships:

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Work and play cooperatively and take turns with others;
- Form positive attachments and friendships;
- Show sensitivities to others' needs.

Appendix 3

Phase 2 Focus Groups and Interview Questions

1. Do you have any vulnerable children in your class?
Can you briefly describe what makes them vulnerable?
Can you give me an example of formative and summative assessments with one of these children?

2. Can you describe an example of formative and summative assessment with a child you would describe as average?

3. Looking at the Skills of Emotional competence. Go back to the two examples you have talked about before. Do you think you had considered any of the skills of emotional competence before you decided what tool to use to assess these children?
Did you consider them when you were assessing these children?
Did you consider them after the assessment to plan future learning opportunities?

Phase 2 Video-diaries

3 video-diaries about 2 different children (6 recordings in total- max 5 mins each) you assessed over 2-3 weeks. These could be about past experiences since you might not be in school due to COVID.

Video-diary 1

- What is unique about this child?
- What areas did you choose to assess first? Why did you decide to do it this way?
- What assessment tools (observations, evidence gathered from worksheets, digital assessment tool, etc...) did you use and what records did you decide to keep?

Video-diary 2

- Talk about anything peculiar you noticed during the assessments you carried out. Describe how the assessment took place and comment on the child's responses and reactions.
- Did the information you collected help you help the child in any way? How?

Video-diary 3

- Referring to the grid comparing PSED Early Learning Goals and Saarni's Skills of Emotional Competence, do you think you considered any of these during the assessment practices you describe? Why?
- What do you know about these 2 children that you did not know before these assessments?

Appendix 4

Phase 3 Focus Groups and Interview Questions

1. Referring to the practices you describe in your video-diaries, what types of assessment practices have helped you identify, value and make sense of 4-year-olds' behaviours in order to support the development of other skills? Has the information you have gathered during those assessments helped you support children develop other skills?

2. Do you value the development of emotional competence? Do you think it is important for children to develop emotional competence in order to acquire other skills?

3. Do you think you assess emotional competence when you assess other skills? If so, how do you do this? Can you refer to the examples in the video-diaries to reflect on this?

Appendix 5

Technical report: Infant Language Link

The critical relationship between language and learning is well documented (Goswami & Bryant, 2007). Children with language impairments are at greater risk of developing literacy difficulties (Dockrell et al., 2007). Language, in particular, vocabulary skills at school entry, provide a powerful predictor of later academic achievement (Snowling et al., 2011; Roulstone et al., 2011; Lee, 2011; Block & Mangieri, 2006).

The prevalence of language difficulties in pupils aged between 4-5 years is generally reported to be between 2% and 19% (Law et al., 2000). This figure is generally regarded as much higher for pupils from socially deprived backgrounds. Teachers are under increasing pressure to both identify and support pupils with SLCN as early as possible at a time when access to specialist support is threatened.

The Infant Language Link Assessment

The Infant Language Link assessment is delivered online. It consists of 64 items presented across 8 sub-tests: Concepts, Verb Tenses, Instructions, Pronouns, Negatives, Questions, Verbal Reasoning and Association.

Pupils are presented with a choice of 3 or 4 pictures and a recorded verbal prompt. The distractor pictures vary in syntactic or semantic elements. The test takes about 25 minutes to administer. All pictures and probes were reviewed by an expert panel for their suitability and relevance for the age group of the children concerned. Particular care was taken with selection of familiar scenarios, vocabulary and cultural relevance.

Scores are reported as a total score and section scores. Standard scores and percentile ranks are presented for the total score. Students are flagged for support at different levels. The assessment is used as a universal screen at school entry and then to track any identified pupils across KS1.

Selection of test items

Infant Language Link is comprised of two equated assessments; Reception and Infant. The Reception test was based on a previous criterion referenced test with some additional test items. Data were available from 35,000 pupils aged between 4:00 and 5:06 years for this test. The Infant test shares many items with the Reception test with the addition of some more challenging questions.



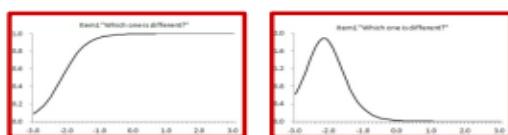
LanguageLink

Infant Language Link is an identification and intervention package devised by Speech and Language Therapists and used by over 2,600 mainstream schools. The online standardised assessment is used to identify developmental difficulties with understanding of spoken language in children aged 4 - 8 years old. It is also suitable for those new to English and will identify gaps in their understanding.

The assessment will highlight any pupils who need to be seen by Speech and Language Therapists. The package suggests interventions at universal and targeted levels through use of strategies, planned language groups and 1:1 activities. The website provides information about a wide variety of speech and language issues with advice on how best to develop language skills to support literacy and boost attainment.

Sub-test	Description
Concepts	Tests the understanding of simple concept vocabulary
Verb Tenses	Tests the understanding of simple past and present verb forms
Instructions	Tests the understanding of sentences involving simple concepts and sequences
Pronouns	Tests the understanding of simple personal pronouns
Negatives	Tests the understanding of early negatives forms
Questions	Tests the understanding of basic questions words
Verbal Reasoning	Tests the understanding of simple cause and effect relationships and why questions
Association	Tests the ability to make links between vocabulary items

Two small scale pilots were carried out to select the final items. Selection was based on a number of criteria: the pass rate, the bi-serial correlation coefficient, the item response function, the item information function, the item category response line, the correlation between the item and the total test score, the discrimination parameter, the difficulty parameter and feedback from testers.



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