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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD PRACTITIONERS

By

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DECLARATION

As the author of this minor-dissertation, I, Anzhela Lvovna Andrasyan-van Pletzen, declare that the work contained in this minor-dissertation is my own, original work and that it has not previously, whether in full or in part, been submitted to the University of Johannesburg or any other university for the purposes of a degree. Every effort has been made to reference all sources used and I have adhered to the highest possible technical and ethical standards. Data has not been fabricated or falsified and strict measures have been put in place to ensure that any form of plagiarism in this minor-dissertation is rejected. This minor-dissertation has been professionally edited and signed off by my research supervisor as complete.

Name: A.L. Andrasyan-van Pletzen

Signature:

Date: 26.01.2018
Thank you to my supervisor, Dr. Tumi Diale. You never gave up on me; you supported me and understood my challenges and obstacles. Thank you for helping me to see the bigger picture. I appreciated your valid and thoughtful comments, while your positive attitude kept on inspiring me. We both had a very challenging year, but you always tried to make time for me, thank you for being available. Thank you for giving me an opportunity to make this research my own, giving me space and encouraging me to learn more and to think critically, deeply and creatively. I would like to wish you good health and a great success in all your future endeavours.

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DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to the research participants.

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”

Nelson Mandela

May you be empowered with knowledge, so that you can fulfil your hopes and dreams.

May you positively change the lives of many children and help to make this world a better place for all.
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore professional development needs of ECD practitioners in the Zamdela Township. Set within an interpretivist paradigm, this research utilised the qualitative approach in order to conduct an in-depth exploration of the research topic. A generic qualitative research design was used to explore the professional development needs of the research participants. The chosen design allowed for thorough exploration and included elements of description, interpretation and understanding (Merriam, 2009). The Bio-Ecological Theory of Human Development by Bronfenbrenner (1979) was used as theory to support the literature review and the study findings due to its relevance to the professional development of ECD practitioners.

Five ECD practitioners from a Zamdela Day Care Centre took part in the research. Two data collection methods, namely open-ended questionnaires and individual interviews were used to explore the professional development needs of ECD practitioners in the Zamdela Township. Data was analysed through means of thematic content analysis, from which five themes emerged: (1) need for training and knowledge development; (2) teaching practice and classroom management; (3) school-parents relationships; (4) collaboration and mentorship; (5) addressing children’s social-emotional well-being. In-depth descriptions of the themes were provided, followed by recommendations. The findings of the research contribute to the understanding of the professional development needs of ECD practitioners.

From the research, it was found that the research participants had definite professional development hopes and dreams. Findings showed that the participants are aware of certain obstacles and barriers to their professional development and they have cognizance of ways to overcome these challenges. Research and action on the professional development needs of South African ECD practitioners from low socio-economic backgrounds is needed as it could lead to a dramatically improved quality of education. Early Childhood practitioners are in urgent need of support in order to experience professional development and reach their long-term goals and dreams.
KEYWORDS

Professional Development
Professional Development needs
Early Childhood Development
Early Childhood Education
Early childhood Practitioners
Day Care Centre
Township
LIST OF ACRONYMS

DBE - Department of Basic Education

DSD - Department of Social Development

ECD - Early Childhood Development

ECE - Early Childhood Education

EFA - Education for All

GDE - Gauteng Department of Education

NDP - National Development Plan

NEPA - National Education Policy Act

NGO - A non-governmental organization

RTO - Resource and Training Organisation

SASA - South African Schools Act

UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

UNICEF - United Nations Children's Fund

VET - Vocational Education and Training
CHAPTER ONE
ORIENTATION TO THE RESEARCH

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Early childhood is a time of remarkable physical, cognitive, social and emotional development which is crucial in preparing children for school. Early childhood development (ECD) can be defined as programmes, activities and involvements aimed at encouraging the overall health and education of children under the age of nine years (Preston, J.P., Cottrell, M., Pelletier, R., & Parce, J.V. 2012). The White Paper 5 on Early Childhood Development defines ECD as “a comprehensive approach to policies and programmes for children from birth to nine years of age with the active participation of their parents and caregivers. Its purpose is to protect the child’s rights to develop his or her full cognitive, emotional, social and physical potential” (Department of Education, 2001).

The term ECD straddles two educational phases namely, the period before formal schooling which was known as pre-primary education and the Foundation Phase, formerly known as the Junior Primary School in South Africa or elsewhere in the world ‘Elementary School’. The Foundation Phase now includes a traditional pre-school year, Grade R as well as Grades 1 to 3 (Excell & Linington, 2007). Early childhood care and education are an integral parts of basic education. This developmental phase represents the first essential step in the process to achieve the goals of education for all (SA 2001a). The aim of early childhood development and education services is to encourage interventions on the cognitive, emotional, physical and social development of children before the age of formal schooling. These services are conducted by early childhood care- and educational institutions that serve in different ways, such as day-care centres and primary schools providing for pre-school children (Kartal, 2007).

In South Africa Early Childhood Development (ECD) is a priority and is supported by legislation, national policies and strategies. The rights of the children were reinforced by the Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989), the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA 1996a) and the South African Schools Act (RSA 1996b).
Recent South African government initiatives point to high-level awareness of the importance of ECD for human and social development and national productivity. The White Paper 5 (2001) set as goal that all children should by 2010 have access to a reception year programme and for 85% of children to attend Grade R at a public school. After publication of the National Integrated Plan for ECD in South Africa (2005) passage of the Children’s Amendment Act (2007), ECD has become a national priority. In 2008 ECD was included in the Human Resources Development Report for the first time. As it was pointed out by Biersteker and Dawes (2008), this indicates the extent to which the South African government has realized just how essential ECD is for laying the foundation for success in the schooling system and how important it is to introduce children from poverty stricken environments to quality ECD provision.

A strategic plan was formulated by the Department of Basic Education (DBE, 2011) to improve, overarching, the quality of teaching and learning in South Africa and, among other educational goals, to increase the participation of children in Grade R programmes to include all children by 2014 (DBE, 2011). According to the GDE Annual Report (2016/17), a total of 1,366 public schools offered Grade R education to 147,955 learners during the period under review.

Policy decisions and investments by government towards early childhood development (ECD) provisioning increased in recent years. The General Household Survey of 2015 indicates that it is problematic to measure the direct contribution of the state towards ECD activities since a household survey is improbable to accurately identify the suppliers of ECD services. It seems that access to ECD activities among children aged 0-4 has increased overall, but it can’t be proved without doubt by specific statistics. According to statistics provided by the General Household Survey (2015), approximately 48, 1% of South African children aged 0-4 years attended day-care or educational facilities outside their homes. The highest educational care centre attendance was reported in Free State (45,6%) and Gauteng (44,9%). In the Northern Cape (26, 5%), which is more than quarter of children, attending these facilities or centres. An interesting tendency was noted in KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape. Although KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape show higher population statistics, the parents or care givers of children aged 0 to 4 tend to prefer to keep the children at home with parents or guardians. An overview of the information on the whole for the country
shows that 45.8% of children remained home with their parents or guardians, while another 5.9% were looked after by other adults (General Household Survey 2015). The fact that such a huge portion of children in their early development phase don’t have access to development facilities is an indication that future investment in the early stages of children’s development can play an important role in reducing societal inequalities.

Early Childhood Development is one of the seven development programmes the Gauteng Department of Education runs. This programme provides ECD education services in Grade R and earlier levels and is aimed to increase learner access to the sector in accordance with Education White Paper 5. As it has been stated in the 2016/17 GDE Annual Report, these services are inclusive of resourcing of registered public and independent ECD sites, training services to improve the professional capacity of practitioners and payment of stipends of Pre-Grade R Practitioners (GDE Annual Report 2016/17). One of the purposes of this programme is to insure that the Norms and Standards for ECD sites are implemented across the province through consultation with stakeholders.

The initiatives of the past decade included significantly increased funding for ECD by the National Treasury. It was an important step forward as major ECD services in South Africa were historically implemented by the non-profit sector. Training, materials and other resources were provided by resource and training organisations (RTOs), while direct services were delivered by community-based organisations (CBOs), individual crèches and preschool centres. The production of a National Diagnostic Review of ECD in 2012, recognition of the importance of the early years in the National Development Plan (NDP) Vision for 2030, and the commissioning in 2013 of proposals for a new National ECD policy and programme paved the way to an improved ECD system. The South African Department of Social Development (DSD) and the Department of Basic Education (DBE) are nowadays geared to provide the main sources of government funding and oversight.

According to the South African Child Gauge of 2009 (2011) children make up 38% of South Africa’s population. More than half of these children live in severe poverty which jeopardises the realisation of their right to education as contained in the South African Constitution (Du Plessis & Conley, 2007). According to the 2012 Diagnostic Review of Early Childhood Development, South Africa had an estimated number of 5.1 million children of 0-4 years of age, of whom about 2.3 million children were classified as poor. Poverty has pervasive
effects on children’s health development, being associated with inadequate food, poor sanitation and hygiene, which, combined, lead to increased infectious illnesses and stunted growth. Poverty is also associated with poor maternal education, increased maternal and family stress, maternal depression and lack of stimulation in the home (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002). These factors detrimentally effect children’s development in the most crucial stage of their lives and present a major challenge to the government and, specifically, the education system.

The given statistics are an indication that future investment in the early stages of children’s development can play an important role in reducing societal inequality. Investments in ECD are among the most important investments a country can make as interventions in early childhood development have the probability to break the cycle of poverty and inequality (Bateman 2012; Berlinski & Norbert, 2015).

An appropriate investment in early childhood development can positively impact on national health, education and socio-economic outcomes. Anderson, Shinn and Mindy (2003), as well as UNICEF (2004; 2007) established that a child’s educational experience in early years has an immediate effect upon their readiness to learn in the school setting. It is also an indisputable fact that a head start in their cognitive and social development creates long-term effects upon their educational achievements and life prospects. In his book, The conditions of learning, Robert M Gagné (1985) explained how cognitive strategies are internally organised skills whose function it is to regulate and monitor. During their early childhood years children learn how to learn, how to remember and how to perform the reflective and analytical thoughts that lead to more learning. They become aware of certain situations, get a hold on it and understand the problem or opportunity it offers.

The importance of investment in early childhood development (ECD) is well documented (Camilli, Barnett, Ryan & Vargas, 20101; Van der Gaag, 2002). According to Kartal (2007) and Steyn et al. (2011) early childhood development forms the foundation of human development and provides financial resources in the long term. The effects of investments in early childhood development are extremely significant in the sense that poor and underprivileged families become more aware of the importance of education and that early childhood development programmes can diminish the educational differences caused by
socio-economic dynamics (Kartal 2007; Butler-Adam 2013; Msila 2014; Pardo & Woodrow 2014).

In order to ensure quality education, GDE conducted the Grade R Readiness process. Readiness for curriculum implementation focused on human resources in relation to practitioners’ qualifications and current studies, the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) in Grade R, availability of Learning and Teaching Support Materials (LTSM), shortages and records thereof and the availability of outdoor equipment (GDE Annual Report 2016/17).

Democracy has brought increasing interest in and support for the delivery of services to young children. The realities of the South African education situation remain dire. We simply are not reaching all the children we need to reach, especially the most vulnerable. As outlined in a report by the NCRC and NPO’s, “South Africa has a long way to go to effect quality of life for the majority of her children”.

In South Africa a number of interrelated factors challenge the linearity of an input-output view of early childhood development and education. ECD remains problematic with low access, low programme quality, poverty, lack of resources, overfull centres with a high caregiver-child ratio and low levels of teacher qualifications being just some of the challenges faced. Ngobese (2006) points out that the inability of the often illiterate and poor populations in rural communities to contribute the very important part which parents and communities are meant to play in the development and academic progress of their children also significantly contributes to the problems of improving rural children’s development and later school performance. In the same vein, the early childhood care and education that children get can help to give them a better chance of breaking free of the self-perpetuating cycle of poverty (EFA Report, 2010).

In the South African context, many early childhood institutions have developed with the sole purpose to “entertain” children. Due to a lack of education and skills training, ECD practitioners seriously lack in educational understanding of children’s development and growth. The poor infrastructure and the lack of equipment constitute another threat. In South Africa, township ECD centres are considered low-economic environments and practitioners often have to perform their teaching duties without the basic resources (Fourie, 2014). To improve service delivery in community based centres, the GDE has over the past two years
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD PRACTITIONERS

continued to strengthen the inter-Departmental collaboration with the Gauteng Department of Social Development, the Gauteng Department of Health as well as with municipalities on issues of registration and compliance (GDE Annual report 2016/17).

When addressing the existing gap in early childhood development urgent attention should be given primarily to the practitioner’s professional development and the quality of the education provided. In order to support ECD practitioners, the GDE surpassed its target to train 750 Grade R practitioners to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom by training 1 717 Grade R practitioners (GDE Annual report 2016/17). The same documents indicat that 214 practitioners were enrolled for B.Ed. studies with the University of South Africa and had commenced with tuition.

The human brain is experience-expectant and experience-dependent. When the environment is of poor quality, some potential neurocognitive functions either don’t develop completely or their capacity weakens (Rodier, 2004). Foetal and infant growth predicts early cognitive development and schooling (Liddell &Rae, 2001). In turn, schooling predicts adult productivity and income (Psacharopoulos & Patrinos, 2004). Educators need to be well aware of the plasticity of the brain and that the brain doesn’t develop backwards. When a solid foundation for future learning doesn’t exist, the opportunities missed by young children are difficult (if not impossible) to remedy. Damage done in the early years is very hard to reverse, hence the utmost importance of proper and timeliness training of ECD practitioners to enter into the planned system. What grew crooked when young cannot be straightened later.

The quality and standard of foundational education is important as it determines to what extend it will equip children with the requisite basic skills needed for a specific educational level. Quality education also ensures increased access and equality (Mirza, 2003) and it is mainly due to these reasons that the effective professional development of ECD practitioners is of the outmost importance.

Teacher’s skills, knowledge, experience, qualifications and professional development play an important role in achieving quality education. It is therefore imperative that the professional development of ECD practitioners enjoys priority. In order to put the needs and challenges of EDC in perspective, an overview of the background will shed light on the nature and scope of the problem.
1.2 CONTEXTUALIZING THE STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

It is impossible to assess the state of affairs in South African Basic Education without being clued-up about the two major aspects influencing it, namely the role players and the programmes that is used (or should be used) for skills development and intervention of both the children and the teachers/caregivers/practitioners.

The holistic and complex nature of child development require the involvement of multiple partners. The most prominent role players are identified as caregivers, parents, teachers, NGO’s and development professionals whose inputs are implemented, regulated and assessed by the Department of Basic Education. For many years the major contributors to ECD have been the non-governmental agencies, religious communities and other civil bodies who, together with unemployed women in the townships, started quite a number of innovative community based ECD programmes (SA, 2001a).

There have, no doubt, been improvements in ECD provision since 1994. However, it is fair to say that much work is still needed. It has already been established that it is imperative to start with the improvement of early childhood development if we want to improve the quality of children’s lives in South Africa (A Comprehensive Research report on ECD to the National Development Agency 2012). As part of its on-going efforts to improve education in South Africa, the Department of Education is intensifying its efforts to raise awareness of – and increase access to ECD services. The South African Government has acknowledged this during the past years through the importance of ECD being annually noted in the President’s State of the Nation 2017 Address.

It was suggested in the Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report (2010), that “teachers are the single most important education resource in any country”. As Biersteker & Dawes (2008) state: ‘the quality of ECD delivery depends to a large extent on teacher quality’. Although the warning bells ring clear and many role players suggest that immediate and serious care should be given to the grievous situation concerning ECD, the majority of South African ECD practitioners have not been exposed to any form of training or professional development. In 2008 only 12% of ECD practitioners were recognised as qualified by being in possession of a matriculation certificate and at least a three year tertiary diploma (Human Development Review, 2008). But, given the scope of needs, it is advisable
to adjust one’s expectations of having a highly qualified ECD work force in the country in the near future. As noted by Klein and Knizer (2006) the association between teacher education and child outcomes is small on average. It is difficult to determine how much education and training is needed and exactly how to offer this training to improve teachers’ effectiveness in the classroom. These authors suggest strongly that, overall, children do achieve more when they have teachers with better levels of training, especially if their knowledge and skills are closely tied to knowledge about early childhood and child development.

Motlanthe (2011) stated that teachers have to take responsibility for their own professional development. They should be held accountable for enhancing learning and teaching outcomes as there can be no successful reforms in education without the active involvement of teachers. Several studies have reported positive changes in teacher’s attitudes as a result of training (Wenger, et al. 2001; Tok, 2011; Askell-Williams & Murray-Harvey, 2015).

The quality of the training programmes determines the attitude toward professional development. Training programmes should be practical and functional. The result of a study, in which teachers’ own perceptions of teacher development were explored, indicated that workshops and other training interventions were only found to be effective if they were meaningful and relevant to the situations faced by teachers and if they address the needs as perceived by the teachers themselves (Mestry, Hendricks & Bisschoff, 2009). Tok (2011) supported this statement when arguing that if everything stays theoretical, what is learned will not be useful in future. Professional development should be characterized by facilitated teaching and learning experiences. It should be transactional and designed to support the attainment of knowledge in practice (Snyder, 2011; Moyo & Ndlovu, 2012; Askell-Williams & Murray-Harvey, 2015). It is important that practitioners have a deep understanding of the principles of teaching and learning. Practitioners need to know what a practice looks like in applied settings. Their training should be clear about the purpose of the practice in order to understand which guidelines and standards relate to it. They should be aware of the evidence that exists to show that their foundation and training are sound, effective and will be successful (Moyo & Ndlovu, 2012).

For practitioners in rural areas professional development remains a big challenge, since it requires time and money. The vast distances they have to travel and the ever increasing travelling cost are in many instances a stumbling block.
In order to address the shortage of well-trained practitioners for early childhood development in South African townships, many intervention programmes have been - and are still being introduced. Ideally such programmes should be aligned with the desired outcomes and should be structured in a manner that would lead to efficient implementation in practice. It is essential to identify clear objectives; to present theory about knowledge and skills to be acquired or mastered; to demonstrate and model; to create opportunities to practice skills in real-life context; to give feedback about the implementation; to follow-up in order to support implementation; and to help to adapt the implementation in relation to the specific context (Snyder, et al. 2011; Butler-Adam, 2013; Mishra, 2015).

The role of development professionals can be described as a duel. As educational experts they should be able to plan, train and address disadvantages in such a way that it not only make sense to the people who work with the children on a daily basis, but it should also empower and motivate these role players. Literature indicates that the majority of development projects are introduced by outsiders and that these projects are seldom founded spontaneously by the community itself (Botes & Van Rensburg, 2000; McNall, 2015). At present the role of educational specialists is a top-down process as development professionals often think that they know best and that their main function is to transfer knowledge to communities whom, by definition and in their opinion, know less. They often regard themselves as the exclusive owners of developing knowledge and as having the monopoly of solutions which consistently underrate and under-value the capacities of local people to make their own decisions as well as to determine their own priorities. It seems difficult for developers to view community needs and opportunities through the eyes of the end-recipients, especially when they aren’t in direct contact with the realities on grass root level. (Dudley, 1993; Ennis & West, 2013; McNall, 2015).

In order to assess the role and need of community involvement in ECD a sound understanding of the problems and the challenges facing communities is required (Van Schalkwyn, 2013). Due to the complexity of communities, guidelines for participatory development can never be seen as blueprints, but rather as frameworks of values, principles and approaches to promote the ideals of participatory development. Participatory developers should therefore:

- Demonstrate awareness of their status as outsiders;
- respect the community’s contribution in terms of their skills, belief systems, knowledge and potential;
- promote co-decision making in defining needs, goals and plans;
- guard against the domination of a specific interest group; and
- acknowledge that soft issues, such as socio-economical background and the challenges arising from it are important (Botes & Van Rensburg, 2000).

It is felt that the values, culture and history should also be an integral part of the above-mentioned process. Development professionals should thus adopt the motto of planning ‘with’ and not ‘for’ the people, thus being a ‘facilitator’ rather than an ‘implementing agent’, by acknowledging and accepting their status as outsiders.

Available literature regarding ECD training mainly focuses on describing the structural features of the intervention and its contents (Snyder, et al. 2011). Although Botes and Van Rensburg (2000) as well as Cumming et al (2015) emphasise the importance of community contribution and participation in the design of intervention programmes, insufficient literature exists in this regard; especially in this context, since this study is focussed on a township ECD centre.

1.3 THE RESEARCH QUESTION

This study was therefore motivated by a need to understand and identify professional development needs of ECD practitioners in the Zamdela Township near Metsimaholo in the Free State.

The research question of the study will focus on the identification of the specific development needs of ECD practitioners in Zamdela Township. In short: What are the professional development needs of ECD practitioners in the Zamdela Township?

1.4 THE AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THIS RESEARCH

The aim of this research is to explore professional development needs of ECD practitioners in the Zamdela Township. The objective is to identify the professional development needs of the practitioners in this particular township centre.
1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN, METHODOLOGY AND PARADIGM

According to Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2005), research is a process that involves obtaining scientific knowledge by means of various objective methods and procedures. Leedy and Ormrod (2005) affirm that research is a systemic process of collecting, analysing and interpreting information in order to increase understanding of the phenomenon about which we are interested in or concerned about. Creswell (2013) further explains that research design essentially points to the researcher’s approach to data collection, analysis and report writing.

As noted by Merriam (2009) the term methodology in the social sciences refers, in a broad sense, to the process, principles and procedures by which the researcher approaches problems and conducts research. Therefore, research methodology considers and explains the logic behind methods and techniques. This study was viewed within a constructivist-interpretivist paradigm, as the multiple and socially co-constructed realities of the participants were taken into consideration. The advantage of this paradigm, according to Ponterotto (2010), is that the researcher-participant relationship leads to discovered meaning and the expression of experience when the constructivist-interpretivist paradigm is used.

1.5.1 Research approach

The study falls within a qualitative research approach. Willig (2008) suggests that qualitative research is a field or investigation that can be applied to many disciplines and subjects, such as sociology, anthropology and psychology. Nieuwenhuis (2007) concludes that the approach enabled him to explore the experiences of the participants, considering their social and cultural contexts.

Flick (2006) writes that qualitative research is intended to approach the world out there in order to understand, describe and explain social phenomena from the inside by analysing various experiences of individuals or groups that may be interrelated to biographical life stories or to everyday customs. Strauss & Corbin (1988) give a broader explanation that qualitative research can refer to research about people’s lives, their experiences, emotions, behaviours and feelings. Qualitative research can also give insight and make predictions about social movements, cultural phenomena and interactions between nations. “These qualitative studies focus on giving voice to those who live experiences no one else could know about directly” (Strauss & Corbin, 1988).
Baxter and Jack (2008) add that a qualitative research approach allows phenomenon to be explored through a variety of lenses. According to Creswell (2014) and Minichiello and Kottler (2010) qualitative research developed in social and human sciences as a reaction to the view that human beings can be studied in the same way than objects. Creswell (2014) defines qualitative research as a multi-method involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that the qualitative researcher studies things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.

1.5.2 Research design

Babbie & Mouton (2009) explain design as the planning of scientific inquiry. Creswell (2013) writes that research design essentially points to the researcher’s approach to data collection, analysis and report writing.

This specific research is aimed at the gaining of information regarding the professional development needs of a group of ECD practitioners from a particular ECD centre in the Zamdela Township by using a generic qualitative research design. As it been emphasised, the participants’ perspectives are the ones we seek to investigate and understand, not those of the researcher (Creswell 2013; Merriam 2009). It is, however, true that the generic qualitative approach - also called basic qualitative or, simply interpretive approach – provides the space for a researcher’s articulated approach (Merriam, 2009). In identifying the unifying design features of the generic qualitative approach, Merriam (2009) suggested that these studies seek to understand how people interpret, construct and make meaning from their world and their experiences. Her conclusion is that generic studies are social constructivist, theoretically interpretive studies that focus on “(1) how people interpret their experiences, (2) how they construct their worlds, and (3) what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (Merriam, 2009). Data is most often collected through interviews, observations and/or document analysis.

This specific research is aimed at the gaining of information regarding the professional development needs of a group of ECD practitioners from a particular ECD centre in the Zamdela Township by using a generic qualitative research design. The generic qualitative approach - also called basic qualitative or, simply interpretive was selected – because a
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD PRACTITIONERS

researcher has direct, personal contact with the subject (in this case the specific ECD practitioners selected), as well as inside knowledge of the way they operate on a daily basis. The knowledge gained by this approach will not be too abstract or general for direct application. My previous contact with ECD practitioners in Zamdela Township has established a relationship of trust and respect and will be strength. As Merriam (2009) indicated the qualitative research design can “stand alone as a researcher’s articulated approach” (Merriam, 2009) but I want to emphasise that the participants’ perspectives are the ones we seek to investigate and understand, not those of the researcher (Creswell 2013; Merriam 2009).

A qualitative research design was suitable for this research as it takes into account the context and the participants’ categories of meaning, it allows me to explore these meanings and pursue the understanding and relevance within the specific context. It further allows for examining complex issues so that the researcher can generate explanatory theory about the phenomenon.

1.5.3 Research method

According to Creswell (2009) the beliefs of the researcher regarding a research phenomenon and the role of the participants during research, determine the research method chosen by the researcher.

Qualitative research methods have been selected in order to explore and understand professional development needs of ECD practitioners’ in the Zamdela Township. Research will be conducted to identify and to determine professional development needs of ECD practitioners in the Zamdela Township.

1.5.4 The role of the researcher

My interest in ECD started during my own experience as a member of the Riverside Rotary Club. As an international organisation, clubs serve communities around the world, trying to provide support with unique concerns and needs. Rotary International and The Rotary Foundation is mainly a service organisation that locally and internationally support in six focus priorities. Basic Education and literacy is one of the major concerns.
As the chair person for Community Services in her club, I was asked to get involved with the Zamdela community. I had to do a need analysis by identifying challenges and possible support interventions. I obtained a degree in Industrial Psychology and a Ph. D. in Education Psychology in the Ukraine and had been a lecturer and teacher for more than 20 years. I have always been passionate about early childhood education and development, and having good theoretical and practical knowledge about the specific field. It was therefore a natural response to get involved with ECD centres.

I was appointed as a project leader for the “Mapheo” ECD project in 2011. The project involves 20 Day Care centres in the Zamdela Township, over 1500 children and 86 staff members. After assessing the existing situation and performing a need analysis in Zamdela, the following areas of great concern had been identified:

- a lack of teaching skills,
- very poor knowledge of Didactic and Pedagogic principles,
- a low level of confidence and initiative,
- limited or little vision of goal setting,
- little or no skills in the application of teaching aids,
- serious barriers caused by the socio-economic environment,
- insufficient managerial skills,
- poor infrastructure of the Day Care centres,
- health and safety hazards,
- water and sanitation problems, and
- nutrition and balanced dietary needs.

In order to address these needs the following objectives were proposed:

1. Improving the quality of the development in early childhood.
2. Creating opportunities for the holistic development of children.
3. Developing and improving the ECD practitioners’ professional training and skills
4. Improving the Day Care centres’ facilities.

To be able to achieve these objectives the following programmes were implemented:

- upgrading of the facilities,
• ECD practitioners’ professional training and skills development program,
• providing educational toys and teaching aids,
• establishing fruit and vegetable gardens,
• training on the nutritional side of feeding children,
• a parent’s involvement and education programme.

I was, and still is, closely involved in all of the above mentioned programmes, especially in ECD practitioners’ professional training. As a researcher I am fully engaged with the phenomenon and the participants of the study - a complete participant (Creswell 2013). This allows me to create rapport and good connections with the participants.

The project turned into a big success. I had been recognised as a project leader by Rotary International, but the best recognition for me still is when local communities and businesses support us and understand the importance of what we are doing. Personally the most special recognition was being given the name, Mamosa, meaning: a caring, giving and kind person, by the Zamdela community.

By providing better education, ECD centres became more popular and attracting more children. More income means more possibility to improve and provide better service. By increasing the number of children, each centre is able to provide job opportunities to the local community.

Trained practitioners cascade knowledge to new colleagues entering Day Care centres. The ECD Centre’s ability to generate an improved income and provide improved education and a healthy and safe environment makes this project sustainable. It is important to note, that ECD practitioners in Zamdela Township were open and eager to improve their professional development from the start.

Since I am a researcher and also a project leader, it will be necessary for me to acknowledge and bracket these experiences during my study. Creswell (2013) states that it is necessary for the researcher to acknowledge his/her experiences when taking on a phenomenological study, especially when the researcher has experienced the phenomenon under investigation. Firstly, I am involved in the Mapheo ECD project and I have six years previous experience with the ECD practitioners in the Zamdela Township. Secondly, I am a researcher. I will be interviewing people that I worked with over the past six years. Therefore, it is essential for me to acknowledge these experiences so that I will be able to approach the lived experience
with an open mind (Patton, 2002). This will help me to set aside the feelings and perceptions I have about early childhood education in Zamdela to be able to reach better understanding of the ECD practitioner’s professional development needs.

1.5.5 The participants

The target population is the total group of people from whom information could be obtained and whose opinions were needed to fulfil the objectives of the research (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). For this study, the target population consisted of a limited group of five Sesotho speaking practitioners in the Zamdela Township. Their ages range between 31 and 50 years. All of them are Black-African women who practise Christianity. Their educational level vary between level III and level V, with one participant who had successfully completed matric. Their experience range between two with limited experience (two to five years), one with average experience (between 6 and 10 years) and two experienced practitioners who have between 11 to 16+ years of experience each. Participants were chosen on the basis of being able to provide rich descriptions relating to their specific experiences, corresponding to the investigation on the professional development needs of Early Childhood Practitioners.

Purposive sampling is a strategy to choose small groups or individuals likely to be knowledgeable and informative about the phenomenon of interest; selection of cases without needing or desiring to generalise to all such cases (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). Van Rensburg (2000) explains purposive sampling as a method that “selects a sample that can be judged to be representative of the total population.”

In order to access in-depth knowledge about the phenomenon of study the researcher purposely chose participants by virtue of their experience and interaction with the phenomenon being studied. According to Rule & John (2011) in a purposive sample, participants are deliberately chosen because of their suitability regarding the research question. Although they may not be representative of other similar ECD centres in the area, and their comments may not be generalised, they were purposively selected to acquire in-depth information about the specific phenomenon of study.

Five EDC practitioners from Zamdela Township were identified to participate in the research. The following table show the profile of the five participants in the study.
Table 1.1: Participants information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age range</th>
<th>Home Language</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Religious views</th>
<th>Level of Education</th>
<th>Years of experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>Sesotho</td>
<td>Black-African</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>Busy with Level IV</td>
<td>2-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>Sesotho</td>
<td>Black-African</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>Busy with Level V</td>
<td>11-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>Sesotho</td>
<td>Black-African</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>Level V (2013)</td>
<td>16+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>Sesotho</td>
<td>Black-African</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>Busy with Level IV</td>
<td>6-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>Sesotho</td>
<td>Black-African</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>Matric</td>
<td>2-5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.5.6 Data collection and analysis

In this qualitative research, data was collected at the site where the participants experience the phenomenon (Creswell 2013; Willis 2007). In other words, the data for this study were collected in a natural setting in the Day Care centre, where participants work.

As it has been stated by Willis (2007) and Merriam (2009), that the data-collection and analysis process are totally dependent on the researcher; the researcher is therefore the primary tool. The researcher should examine the documents, conduct observations and interviews themselves (Creswell, 2013).

In planning the research it was important to be aware of the fact that when using a generic qualitative methodology, data collection and data analysis may need to occur simultaneously (Yin, 2004; Merriam, 1998). Multiple sources of data collection are encouraged in qualitative research. This may include various forms of documents, interviews and observations. Creswell (2013) and Willis (2007) also stated that through multiple sources of data collection various perspectives and diverse views of the phenomenon may be presented and different
meanings may arise. Data was thus collected by means of administrating open-ended questionnaires and conducting semi-structured, face-to-face interviews. A questionnaire is a self-report data collection tool that each research participant fills out as part of a research study (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). Participants completed the questionnaire in their own time. Through conducting semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with all participants, the researcher established a relationship with them and strived to gain their co-operation. The interviews were audio recorded to assist in transcribing for the purpose of data analysis as the responses to the questionnaire items and the interview questions would be used as the basis for establishing professional development needs of ECD practitioners in Zamdela Township.

The semi-structured, face-to-face interviews were open-ended and unstructured, giving enough time to explore the topic in depth. This data collection method facilitated a deeper understanding of each participant’s unique view of their career development (Merriam & Merriam, 2009). The length of the interview depended on the language proficiency of the participants and the amount of self-reflection the participant felt comfortable sharing. This gave the researcher the opportunity to hear the participants talk about their concerns, future plans and experiences. The interviews were perceived as conversation, but the research question drove the interview (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

The goal was to collect meaningful data containing experiences and knowledge that could help to answer research question. The focus was on the understanding that each participant tried to get her message efficiently delivered in English despite certain communication barriers. Positive interpersonal engagement with the participants was established, as rapport, sensitivity and ethical considerations are of the utmost importance. Each interview was focussed on the experience of the participant and was theme-orientated. Complex questions and issues were discussed in an informal manner. The researcher tried to describe the meaning of the identified themes or experiences to assist the participants in understanding aims and outcomes better.

According to the professional development needs semi-structured interview protocol the interviews could be divided into following procedures:

1. Participants were introduced to the purpose and format of the interview.
2. Each participant’s biographical information, such as age group, language of communication, religious denomination, level of education and years of experience was collected.

3. Specific questions to identify the professional needs of every participant were put on the table and discussed.

4. Participants provided examples and information of possible ways to improve their individual professional development.

The following conversation is an example of a semi-structured interview with a participant. The reality that all five participants are Sesotho mother tongue speakers and not fluent in English was a slight barrier and required extra sensitivity in order to ensure that the exact meaning of their input was correctly communicated and understood. I also was aware that my accent could have some influence on their understanding of the questions since English is my third language. It proved not to be a real issue; because the participants became familiar with the way I speak as I previously (during the Rotary Project) had many training sessions with them over a long period of time.

Table 1.2: Extract from transcribed interview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>R:</th>
<th>What do you enjoy doing the most? Which tasks?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P:</td>
<td>I enjoy teaching the learners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R:</td>
<td>OK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1:</td>
<td>I enjoy very much because I like the children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R:</td>
<td>So you enjoy the teaching part of your profession very much?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1:</td>
<td>Yes, I enjoy teaching very much.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R:</td>
<td>Okay. What else?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1:</td>
<td>Umm. What?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R:</td>
<td>No, just think about your day. When will you go home and say: &quot;Wow! I had such a wonderful day!&quot;. Why will you say you had a good day? Will you say it because of something you've done that you enjoyed very much?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1:</td>
<td>I enjoy it when the kids behave nicely, because on my first day the kids made a lot of noise. Oh, I was so confused! I stressed and eish …I didn’t know what to do … Nowadays I handle it better and I am happier, but it took time … I am happy for the children … I love them. I see them improve, so I enjoy my job.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data was analysed through thematic analysis. This means that themes could be identified from the interviews with participants. Mouton (2001) sees thematic analysis as a method that allows the researcher to identify, analyse and report patterns (themes) within the collected data. A thematic data analysis was undertaken and interpretation was applied on integration of the data analysis methods. This included transcription of the responses of the focus group and descriptions of themes that reflect the overall meaning of the study as suggested by Creswell (2009). Common themes were identified and their contents will be explored.

1.5.7 Trustworthiness in this study

Trustworthiness is the manner in which the researcher is able to convince the audience that the findings in the study are worth paying attention to and that the research is of high quality (Lincoln & Cuba, 2003). Willig (2008) defines trustworthiness as the extent to which our research describes measures or explains what it aims to describe, measure or explain. According to Conrad and Serlin (2006), trustworthiness can be classified into the following measures, namely, credibility, reliability, transferability and conformability as seen in the following figure (Marshall & Rosman, 2006, cited in Afonso, 2009)

![Figure 1.1: Criteria of trustworthiness (Marshall & Rosman, 2006)](image)

**a) Credibility**

For Merriam (2009), credibility refers to correspondence between the participant’s perspectives and meanings, and the way in which the researcher interprets and presents his/her findings. As been noted by Conrad & Serlin (2006), credibility refers to the

20
accountability of the whole research process as well as the correlation between the findings of the study and the participants’ understanding of the phenomenon. According to Shenton (2004), different strategies could be used to promote credibility, such as triangulation and reflexivity. Merriam also writes that triangulation will either corroborate (support with evidence), intricate or conflict with research findings and as such provides as a strategy of promoting the trustworthiness of a study (2002). More than one source of data generation were used to substantiate research findings.

b) Transferability

For Marshall & Rossman, as cited in Afonso (2009), transferability refers to whether the study can be transferred to other similar studies or situations. According to Strauss & Myburgh (2001), transferability involves the level of applicability of this study to other studies. During research the researcher should question whether the findings can be applied to another group of people. For this study the researcher purposefully selected a small, non-random sample group of ECD practitioners from Zamdela Township in order to study the particular in-depth experiences of this group in a bounded context. In this research transferability will be established by providing readers with a detailed account of the context within which this research will take place, as well as a rich description of the topic under investigation, to allow readers to compare this research with other situations (Shenton, 2004).

c) Dependability

In the literature, the term dependability refers to whether the data can be replicated in similar studies (Merrim, 2009). Dependability is closely linked to credibility. As Lincoln & Cuba (1985) writes, dependability is the extent to which the research findings would be consistent, should the research be replicated in similar contexts. In this study dependability was established through a dense description of research method, triangulation and analysis of data so that the findings would be consistent (Strauss & Myburgh, 2001; Pillay, 1996).

d) Confirmability

Confirmability relates to a researcher’s ability to refrain from bias through reflective acknowledgment (Shenton, 2004). In order to achieve confirmability in this study, the researcher needed to remain as neutral as possible. Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006) points out that trustworthiness can be achieved by the triangulation of multiple data sets, through
interviews, observations and qualitative methodologies. By applying different methods of
data collection trustworthiness is ensured.

Therefore the researcher’s aim in this study was to establish trustworthiness by utilizing
open-ended questionnaires and by conducting semi-structured, face-to face interviews.

1.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

As noted by Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006) ethics is an integral element of the research
process from the beginning through the analysis and publishing of findings.

According to the Health Professions Act (2006), “When a psychologist conducts research or
provides assessment, psychotherapy, counselling or consulting services in person or via
electronic transmission or other forms of communication, he or she shall obtain the written
informed consent of the client concerned, using a language that is reasonably understandable
to such client”.

For the purpose of the study, certain research ethical principles were adhered to, namely
informed consent, privacy, confidentiality, anonymity and protection from harm (Babbie,
2010). Ethical clearance was obtained from the University of Johannesburg’s Faculty of
Education Ethics Committee.

An explanation of the purpose of the research study was provided to participants prior to the
study commencing. Participants understood that their participation was voluntary and that
they could withdraw from the study at any point without penalty. Permission for audio
recording was obtained for the purpose of data collection. The research was conducted
according to the prescribed departmental protocol that is, ensuring that the research is not
conducted during teaching time. Although the centre does not fall within the GDE, the GDE
protocol was followed. Permission was also obtained from the manager of the ECD centre.
Questionnaires were administrated and collected after teaching hours.

The questionnaire was accompanied by a covering letter requesting the participants to
complete it and assuring them of the confidentiality with which their responses were handled.
No identifying information, such as participant’s names, was used during the research process.

1.7 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

According to the definition provided by Bronfenbrenner (2005), development is “the set of processes through which properties of the person and the environment interact to produce constancy and change in the bio-psychological characteristics of the person over the life course”. Development can also be explained in terms of the relationships between individuals and their environment, classifying all of the individual and contextual variables that affect development and specifying how they interact.

Professional development is a process of adult learning which occurs as one develops the desire to improve and enhance one’s knowledge and skills in order to meet the ever-changing challenges of life’s needs and roles (Shapiro & Last, 2002). It includes formal and informal activities aimed at helping teachers grow professionally as teachers (Coldwell, 2017).

Formal professional development refers to attending workshops, seminars, professional meetings and conferences, while informal professional development relates to reading publications and watching media documentaries related to the academic discipline, according to Villegas-Reimers (2003).

Early childhood development (ECD) can be defined as programmes, activities and involvements aimed at encouraging the overall health and education of children under the age of nine years (Preston, 2012). ECD refers to a process by which children from birth to about nine years grow and thrive physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, morally and socially (Birken, 2004; SA, 1996; Gauteng Department of Education, 2001; SA, 2001a; UNESCO, 2004; UNICEF, 2004).

Term ECE (Early Childhood Education) used in many other countries refers to the widely used term, ECD, in South Africa. Early Childhood Education often focuses on guiding children to learn through play. The term commonly refers to preschool or infant/child care programme.
Townships were intentionally designed for control and exclusion; they were thus located along the peripheries of cities to operate as satellite settlements that provided labour to the city (Prnegger & Godehart, 2007). These spatial patterns were largely driven by the exclusionary principle of separate development that promoted the physical segregation of races in South Africa. Townships were characterised by inadequate infrastructure, monotonous housing patterns and low support services owing to the unfair distribution of resources during apartheid (Lester et al., 2009).

### 1.8 DEMARCATION OF THE STUDY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter One</th>
<th>Provided an introduction to the study by presenting the background and an overview of the research paradigm, design, approach, methods of data collection and analysis. In this chapter the concept of trustworthiness and ethical considerations were also discussed.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Two</td>
<td>Explores the theoretical framework for the research with an in-depth discussion of literature and theory that underpins this research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Three</td>
<td>Chapter three will focus on the data presentation, data analysis and interpretation of the findings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Four</td>
<td>Draws a conclusion and provides an overview of the study. It presents a discussion and offers the limitations and strengths of the study. Recommendations are made for future research which could be done in a similar context.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 1.9 CONCLUSION

Chapter one has orientated the reader. The background to the research, indicating that EDC in South Africa is still in its baby shoes and is primarily implemented by private initiative or the non-profit sector. The huge number of children in need of ECD and the social and financial disadvantages they have to cope with on a daily basis are identified as negative influences on their natural development, standing in the way to unlock their full potential. The urgency of efficient ECD, where well-qualified practitioners with positive attitudes, equipped with the
practical skills and relevant learning material has been explained. The problem statement, being the need for the professional development of ECD practitioners, explained the necessity of this research. The aim and objectives of this research were stated as the exploration of professional development needs of ECD practitioners, specifically in the Zamdela Township, in order to provide guidelines for effective professional development. The research design within a constructivist-interpretive paradigm and qualitative methodology utilised in this research were clarified. The concept of trustworthiness was discussed and ethical considerations in this research have been highlighted. Finally, a demarcation of the study was outlined for the reader.

Set against this background, chapter two will provide a review of relevant literature that has informed this study and will explore the theoretical framework that underpins it.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter one explained the gap in contextually relevant research that made this research necessary. It outlined the research design and research methods to be used, and discussed the ethical measures undertaken. The purpose of this study is to explore the professional development needs of early childhood practitioners in the Zamdela Township, and in order to do this, it is necessary to establish both a theoretical and a conceptual framework.

This chapter will provide an overview of the professional development needs of early childhood practitioners in the Zamdela Township, as explored in this research. This review of literature does not seek to provide information on all studies done in the field; it does, however, seek to provide an overview of some of the literature which is directly relevant to this study. The chapter begins with defining the term “professional development” and takes into account different factors that influence this definition. In addition to this, professional development from a lifespan approach is discussed with a brief focus on theory which seeks to understand professional development in this regard.

This research is anchored within the offering dimensions that enhance the professional development of early childhood practitioners in the Zamdela Township.

Furthermore, professional development is discussed in terms of its relevance to the research topic from both an international and a South African perspective. Finally, the importance of the professional development of early childhood practitioners in the Zamdela Township concludes with a focus on their specific professional development needs.

2.2 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

According to the definition provided by Brown and Earley (in Bush & West-Burnham 1994), professional development are those activities teachers engage in to enhance their knowledge, skills and attitudes in an attempt to bring about systemic change and the conditions that engage them in educating learners more effectively. Avalos (2011) described teacher
professional development as teachers gaining knowledge through facilitated learning and applying it in practice in order to benefit learners.

For Bredeson (2001) the essence of professional development is to give teachers learning opportunities at engage their creative and reflective capabilities and strengthen their practice. When the opinions of Helm (2007) and Wesley & Buysse (2006) are taken into account professional development refers to an “outside-in” process wherein the information necessary for behavior change or professional growth comes from external authorities. According to their studies it is observed as an extrinsic rather than an intrinsic process as it is imparted through lectures, readings, demonstrations and verbal advice. Professional development therefore implies the participation from ‘outside’ from peers, supervisors, coaches, mentors or consultants.

It has been suggested that to participate in professional development is a mind-set; it becomes a practice; and eventually an integral part of a person’s personality achieved through being open to life-long learning (Johnson, 2013). Later, however, professional development ideally progresses to becoming an "inside-out" process where individuals retain responsibility to direct their own ongoing growth and improvement through continued study of current and best practice and reflective personal goal-setting in collaboration with respected colleagues.

Effective professional development is a continuing process which includes training, practice and feedback, adequate time for follow-up support (OECD, 2009), taught courses, in-work training, coaching, mentoring, self-study and action research (Coldwell, 2017). Professional development also includes a personal development component (Matthews, 2014).

In general, professional development efforts have traditionally taken five forms: (1) formal education; (2) credentialing; (3) specialized, on-the-job or in service training; (4) coaching and/or consultative interactions; and (5) communities of practice or collegial study groups (Zaslow & Martinez-Beck, 2006).

At a professional level teacher development is typically taking place in a formally structured settings, as an opportunity to learn to use different teaching activities and work on a curriculum at a personal and social level. The formal development examines the constructed beliefs and ideas about education (Bell & Gilbert, 1996). According to the definition provided by Brown and Earley (in Bush and West-Burnham), professional development are those activities teachers engage in to enhance their knowledge, skills and attitudes in an
Professional development applies to a full range of activities that attempt to increase the knowledge base, skill set, or attitudinal perspectives brought to bear as a practitioner engages in home-visiting, parent education, child care, preschool education and/or kindergarten to third grade teaching or educational support services (Harvard Family Research Project, 2004). Its ultimate, long-term goal is to facilitate the acquisition of specific learning and social-emotional competencies in young children, and in many cases, to promote important family-specific attitudes or abilities to support children's learning and development. In other words, the desired long-term, indirect outcomes of all early childhood professional development initiatives involve the enhancing of children's learning across cognitive, communicative, social, emotional and behavioral domains (Guskey, 2000; 2001). Such outcomes are the ultimate measure of successful professional development initiatives. The long term impact of the training is lasting and sustainable as it directly builds and develops human capital and resources (DGMT 2016).

In agreement with Hayes and Puriefoy (2004), the researcher wants to accentuate the importance of professional development as a continuous process of embedded procedures within a supportive working environment.

Being a professional goes beyond any academic degrees and experiences one may earn. The literature has emphasized the importance of high-quality professionalism in early childhood education. Morrison (2012) identified six standards of professional development, which will be briefly reviewed in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Standards of Professional Development (Morrison, 2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standard 1: Promoting child development and learning.</strong></td>
<td>As an ECD practitioner you need to know how to promote child development and learning. Knowledge of child development is fundamental. Research consistently shows that children cared for and taught in enriched environments are healthier, happier, and more achievement oriented. To attain this goal for all</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
children, an ECD practitioner must provide them with environments that are healthy, respectful, supportive and challenging.

**Standard 2: Building family and community relationships.** Families are an important part of children’s lives. Creating a collaborative relationship with families and the community has a holistic positive impact. It is very important to be respectful of children and their families in order to build strong relationships.

**Standard 3: Observing, documenting and assessing to support children and education.** This is one of the most important responsibilities of an educational practitioner. Through assessment, observation and documentation practices, the ECD practitioner can identify special needs and provide support, like accommodations for children with disabilities and also involve parents in the process.

**Standard 4: Using developmentally effective approaches to connect with children and families.** To be a professional in this area, an ECD practitioner should demonstrate positive relationships with children and families, creating strategies with the child’s best interest at heart.

**Standard 5: Using content knowledge to build meaning curriculum**. Children benefit when ECD practitioners develop in-depth understanding of content areas.

**Standard 6: Becoming a professional.** The ECD practitioner should (1) know about and engage in ethical practice; (2) engage in continuous lifelong learning and professional development; (3) collaborate with colleagues, parents, families, and community partners; (4) engage in reflective practice; and (5) advocate on behalf of children, families and the profession.

In addition to the six professional standards described in Table 2.1, professional dispositions play an important role in assuring that an ECD practitioner will be a well-rounded and highly qualified professional. According to a definition provided by Morrison (2012:19), professional dispositions are the values, commitments, attitudes and professional ethics that influence behaviors toward students, families, colleagues and communities and effect student learning, motivation and development, as well as the educator’s own professional growth. Morrison suggested that caring should be the most important of all professional dispositions for every early childhood professional.

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Other authors (see Candy, 1991; Jonson & Jonson, 1989) highlight that professional development in early childhood education takes place to accomplish two primary objectives. Firstly is it anticipated that professional development will advance the knowledge, skills, dispositions and practices of early childhood educational providers in their efforts to educate children and support families. A second objective is to promote a culture for ongoing professional growth in individuals and systems.

It has been emphasized, that professional development should be characterized by facilitated teaching and learning experiences that are transactional and designed to support the attainment of knowledge in practice (Snyder, et al. 2011; Moyo & Ndlovu, 2012; Askell-Williams & Murray-Harvey, 2015). Professional development will more likely have a positive effect on teaching and learning when it has the following elements:

- Consist of content specific rather than general instruction.
- Is aligned with instructional goals, learning outcomes and materials that practitioners use in their practice.
- Learning opportunities are intensive, are sustained over time and include guidance and feedback on how to apply specific practices through methods such as coaching, consultation or facilitation (Buysse, et al. 2009; Askell-Williams & Murray-Harvey, 2015).

In this study the professional development of early childhood practitioners’ (teachers without any formal qualifications) is seen as a foundation to ensure quality education. Professional development is not uncomplicated, it takes time and it is even more difficult for the practitioners in the townships, because of distances and travel cost.

2.3 EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

The early years of life are a particularly sensitive period for survival, growth and psychosocial development. If the contexts in which young children grow up are not supportive, their later participation and inclusion in society may be severely compromised (Biersteker & Kvalsvig 2010). The definition of ECD, as it is currently used internationally, can be divided into two parts, namely early childhood development and child development (De Witt, 2009:4). The early childhood and child development will be discussed in this section.
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD PRACTITIONERS

Britto, Kagan and Brookes-Gunn (2003) and De Witt (2009) regard child development as the dynamic and continuous process of physical, social, emotional and mental change that occur in sequence with each change building on the preceding stage. They further emphasize that development occurs as a child is able to handle consistently more complex levels of moving, thinking, speaking, feeling and relating to others.

Myers (2001) also defines child development as the process of change in which the child comes to master more and more complex levels of moving, thinking, feeling and interacting with people and objects in the environment. Development involves both a gradual unfolding of biologically determined characteristics and the learning process. Learning is the process of acquiring knowledge, skills, habits and values through experience, experimentation, observation, reflection, study and instruction (De Witt, 2009). In line with these definitions, child development has been seen as a process of change in the development of a child.

According to Erasmus (2006) development of young children should be holistic, thus, social, emotional, physical and intellectual. He asserts that it is not simple to separate the different areas of development in young children. De Witt (2009:4) emphasizes that development in childhood is connected to future development and never ends as long as a person lives.

The knowledge, skills, and practices of early childhood development practitioners are important factors in determining how much a young child learns and how prepared that child is for entry into school. Much is wrong with the perception that children only need to be taken care of until they are old enough to start school. The early childhood stage between birth and primary school is actually a time when children develop some of their most important intellectual abilities (thinking, reasoning, imagining, learning words or using language), attitudes and skills. An ECD practitioner is like a teacher or professional. She is in a unique position, using her unique set of skills to facilitate the process of developing every child in her care holistically (Odendaal, 2015).

Early childhood practitioners are being asked to have deeper understanding of child development and early education issues; provide richer educational experiences for all children, including those who are vulnerable and disadvantaged; engage children of varying
abilities and backgrounds; connect with a diverse array of families; and do so with greater demands for accountability and in some cases, fewer resources, than ever before (Sheridan, 2009).

ECD refers to a process by which children from birth to about nine years grow and thrive physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, morally and socially (Birken, 2004; SA, 1996; Gauteng Department of Education, 2001; SA, 2001a; UNESCO, 2004; UNICEF, 2004). The term ECD was originally selected because it conveys the importance of a holistic approach to child development and signifies an appreciation of the importance of considering a child’s health, nutrition, education, psycho-social, physical and additional environmental factors within the context of the family and the community (SA, 1996; Gauteng Department of Education, 2001; SA, 2001a; UNESCO, 2004).

According to the Education White Paper 5 on Early Childhood Development (2001), Early Childhood Development (ECD) refers to a comprehensive approach to policies and programmes for children from birth to nine years of age with the active participation of their parents and caregivers. Its purpose is to protect the child’s rights to develop his or her full cognitive, emotional, social and physical potential. The Interim Policy for ECD (1996) stated that the term ECD conveys the importance of a holistic approach to child development and signifies an appreciation of the importance of considering a child’s health, nutrition, education, psycho-social and additional environmental factors within the context of the family and the community.

Seifman and Surrency (2004) affirm that ECD is a combination of education, health and skills development, and involves laying a sound foundation from which a child can grow to become a functional human being. The authors further assert that ECD includes all interventions directed at children or their caregivers, preferably integrated as a package of services that support the holistic development of the child. As noted by Vegas and Santibanez (2010), there is evidence that three prominent interlinked ECD outcomes play a major role in determining lifelong later outcomes for a child: cognitive development, socio-emotional development and health, growth and physical well-being.
The above definition implies that a child should be developed from birth up until she/he reaches the independent stage which involves all stakeholders, being responsible for her/his growth.

2.4 THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK INFORMING THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD PRACTITIONERS

As a researcher, one consciously or unconsciously develops through one's life experience a personal theoretical framework or lens through which one sees the world. This framework is determined amongst other things by one's personal values and worldview, which in turn influence and guide one's research strategies. A theory is a statement of principles and ideas used to explain how things happen (Morrison, 2012). Ary, Chesser-Jacobs, Razavieh and Sorensen (2006) define theory as "a set of interrelated constructs and propositions that presents an explanation of phenomena and makes predictions about relationships among variables relevant to the phenomena". Bryman (2008) furthermore accentuates that theory provides a "backcloth" and rationale for the research conducted, thus providing a framework against which a phenomenon can be understood and the research finding can be interpreted.

The Bio-Ecological Theory of Human Development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) shaped the researcher’s conceptualization and understanding of what is entailed in the professional development of ECD practitioners. The rationale for choosing this theory was based on the belief that the interaction between individual ECD practitioners’ development and the systems within the social context play an important role in determining the kind of support that they need. It is also important to remember that within the South African context, understanding ECD practitioner development cannot be separated from the broader social context within which the ECD practitioner live and work.

2.4.1 The Bio-Ecological Theory of Human Development

Understanding what the professional development of ECD practitioners should entail and how professional development contributes to meaningful teaching is likely to be best understood by considering both the intrinsic factors that have to do with the individual ECD
professional practitioner’s biological and psychological context as well as the extrinsic factors that deal with the environmental influences over their professional development over a period of time. The most intriguing aspect of the discussion is the fact that the environment in which the ECD practitioners operate, has become more turbulent, forcing them to adapt and modify themselves in a variety of contexts.

By considering cultural-contextual theories of development comprehension of how ECD practitioners’ personal attributes and their multi-system environmental factors influence their own professional development can be gained. One such theory appropriate for application and enlightening of the problem statement is found in the works of Urie Bronfenbrenner (Lewthwaite, 2006). Bronfenbrenner's Bio-Ecological Theory of Human Development (1979; 2005) can be used efficiently to present the different levels in which the ECD practitioners function. The theory also focuses on how these levels are interconnected and indicates their significance in professional development.

The Bio-Ecological Theory of Human Development posits that "development is a joint function of the person and all levels of their environment" (Lewthwaite, 2006). In understanding these levels, ECD practitioner development programmes must acknowledge that to successfully deliver programmes that will contribute meaningfully to curriculum delivery, ECD practitioners’ individuality and their uniqueness in a multi-system context is crucial to their professional development. It is in this context that Bronfenbrenner (1989) sees the ecological environment as a living system of five nested structures. Lewthwaite (2006) states succinctly that in these nested systems "things can come together just at the right time for an individual, but potentially, not for all".

In order to make sense of these nested systems, Bronfenbrenner's Bio-Ecological systems perspective will be explicated as it studies not only the levels of interacting systems resulting in change, growth and development, such as the physical, biological, psychological, social and cultural, but also the manner in which human societies adapt to their environment (Swart & Pettipher, 2005).

Bronfenbrenner identifies five interrelating environmental systems: the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, the macro-system and the chronosystem (Morrison, 2012). Each system influences and is influenced by the others. This suggests that the development of the individual ECD practitioner can be better understood if the context in which
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development takes place is considered. It also implies that changes in their development may be possible when patterns of social and organizational relationships change or the physical environment changes (Visser, 2007). In addition, external environmental influences, life events and experiences such as the birth of a child, studying, divorce, the death of a close relative, etc. and influences within the organism such as adulthood, menopause, severe illness, etc. alter the relation between the person and the environment, thus creating a dynamic that may initiate developmental changes (Bronfenbrenner, 2005).

The microsystem is defined as "a pattern of activities, roles and interpersonal relations experienced between individuals and the systems in which they actively participate, such as the family or the school or the peer group" (Swart & Pettipher, 2005:10). When discussing ECD practitioners' professional development it is therefore valuable to note that their development cannot exist without their individual participation and willingness to change.

The mesosystem includes linkages or interactions between microsystems. Interactions and influences there relate to all of the environmental influences in the microsystem (Morrison, 2012). In the ECD practitioners’ lives it involves relationships and processes that take place between two or more settings or microsystems containing the developing person (e.g. home and the ECD centre, the ECD centre and the community, home and the workplace). According to McWhirter, (2004), mesosystemic influences include the relationships between an individual and the surroundings. The mesosystem is therefore viewed as a system of microsystems (Bronfenbrenner, 2005).

The exosystem is the environmental system that encompasses those events with which ECD practitioners do not have direct interaction, but which nonetheless influence them. The exosystem refers to the social setting that does not directly include the ECD practitioners, but can have a powerful impact on their professional development. These include community health services, social support groups and informal groups, including the teachers'/practitioners’ external involvement within their socio-economic context (Van Breda, 2006).

The macrosystem includes the culture, customs and values of society in general (Morris, 2012). It refers to “an overarching pattern of micro-, meso-, and
exosystems characteristic of a given culture, subculture, or other broader social context, with particular reference to the developmentally instigative belief systems, resources, hazards, lifestyles, opportunity structure, life course options and patterns of social interchange that are embedded in each of these systems” (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). The chronosystem also includes environmental influences over time and the ways they impact on development and behavior (Morris, 2012).

Gregson (2001) refers to the macrosystem as the large-scale societal factors that have an impact on people's lives, such as ideology, laws, values and even governmental policies and decisions. As Bronfenbrenner’s theory illustrates, there are many influences on the ECD practitioner’s professional development. Currently there is a lot of interest in how these influences shape the professional development of ECD practitioner’s and what systems can do to enhance positive influences and minimize or eliminate negative environmental influences as well as negative social interactions. Whatever macro-level support is given will affect the support they receive at inner levels of the environment. (Van Breda, 2006).

Figure 2 depicts the bio-ecological model, illustrating the dynamic and complex nature of the systems influencing the complexity of ECD practitioners’ professional development.
Having discussed the Bio-Ecological Theory of Human Development of human development, it is clear that the development of the ECD practitioner should be evaluated as a whole in order to capture the dynamics and synergy of all the parts. Lucouw (2004) claims that the performance of a system can be enhanced when focusing on the deviations from the standard and investigating the reasons for these deviations. Both comparison and analysis are
therefore needed to interpret behavior within a system; in this case the international and South African perspectives on early childhood practitioner’s professional development.

2.5. INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON EARLY CHILDHOOD PRACTITIONER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In this section different international perspectives on Early Childhood Development will be discussed and compared. Acronyms for early childhood education and care vary, though the terms have a lot in common. ECCE (early childhood care and education) is used by UNESCO, as well as the Education for All (EFA) initiative and the Global Monitoring Report (GMR). UNICEF prefers ECCD (early childhood care and development) to refer to care and education/development provided to children in the pre-school years. In order not to confuse the reader it is important to note that the term ECE (Early Childhood Education) used in many other countries refers to the widely used term, ECD, in South Africa.

It is essential to gain insight into the standing of Early Childhood Education (ECE) and the specific role practitioners play into perspective. ECE requires an understanding of the international and national trends in order to reach workable solutions regarding the specific professional developmental needs of local professional practitioners as ECE is seen in the perspective of how children develop. Mims et al. (2008:1), Zaslow and Martinez-Beck (2005) and Click (2004) indicate that individual characteristics of educators, including education level, have been associated with classroom quality and the quality of ECD programmes. ECE consists of activities and/or experiences that are intended to effect developmental changes in children prior to their entry into elementary school.

By the early 1900s, ECD was a part of American life, but, although the field was established, there was no uniform approach or programme for the care and education of the young (Seefeldt & Barbour, 1994). There was no concept of early childhood as a professional field, serving children from birth up to eight years of age, and there were divisions among those who worked in kinder-gardens, nursery schools and child-care centers (Seefeld & Barbour, 1997 and it took decades before this field would have its own identity.

In New Zealand, the government has made provision for free ECE for up to 20 hours a week for three to four year olds. Funding for the centers is based on the qualified (degree trained)
educators as well as the number of children attending the service. All educators in this system will be required to be qualified and registered by 2012 (Neugebauer, 2007).

To obtain information on early childhood education and care in Finland the Early Childhood Education and Care policy in Finland’s background report for the OECD Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care Policy (2000) was scrutinized. According to this document, early education in Finland fit in with the larger education objectives of the Government Programme, which aim to raise the level of knowledge, expertise and innovation of the population so that Finland can be developed into an equitable and sustainable information society. When designing activities for young children, it is important to consider cultural heritage and social and religious background. Since 2000-2001 pre-school education for six-year-olds in Finland is free of charge. All the children under the age of six attend day care and children of six years old receive pre-school education. The main purpose of day care is to support and be aligned with the child’s upbringing at home and parents are seen as prime educators of their children and should be kept informed of the nature of the education their children receive at day care.

In Finland growing and learning are viewed as a life-long process in which early childhood care and education plays a very important role. The focus is more on the communality element, instead of individuality in early childhood education and care delivery. Basic care, alongside education and instruction, remains an element even in early childhood education, because most of the Finish children often need full-time care while parents work. To bridge the gap between day care and formal schooling, pre-school education involves a systemic, pedagogically orientated and content-based approach.

Interestingly, an understanding of childhood development and learning is more important in the Finish pre-school than managing specific teaching methods. Children explore the world together with teachers in a thematic and project-type manner during which topics are studied in an integrated way across various fields and which articulate with the topics covered in the initial education at school. Similar or related systems existed in the other Scandinavian countries (Denmark, Norway and Sweden). The result of these highly effective ECD systems can be observed in the highly evolved societies and their ranking in international educational gauging. Early education in Finland makes use of the diverse and educational backgrounds of its personnel to design multi-disciplinary activities that help children learn in an integrated
way. Importantly, most staff had received training that focuses on children’s development and how the day care environment and activities can enhance these. According to the report, at least every third person working at care and education at a day care centre must have a post-secondary qualification.

In contrast with the efficient Finnish system staff in early childhood centers (ECC) across Australia had a wide range of qualifications and experience Elliot (2006). Each State and Territory has its own early childhood staffing requirements, guidelines and/or regulations. There is no nationally shared understanding of appropriate credentials for staff responsible for the development, education and care of children below school age or about the content or focus on courses preparing early childhood practitioners. There are no readily accessible national data on the number of students enrolled in degree level of early childhood education (ECE) courses or in children's services (or equivalent) diploma and certificate courses in the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector. There are varying pay scales and awards and no nationally consistent career pathways.

The problems with qualifications in ECE are not new or unique to Australia. Concerns about staff shortages, quality, preparation and pay in Australia have been voiced for many years (EPAC, 1996). An advantage in Australia nowadays is the consciousness of the crucial importance of ECD for future generations and the grant system that is implemented to motivate mothers to stay at home to rear and stimulate their kids in their first years themselves.

While the funding for the training of ECD practitioners is a priority in developed countries, the same cannot be said for developing countries, but in a country like India, where the political willpower exists to empower its population the situation has already changed for the better. According to Deepa (2003:4), ECE in India is a significant input to compensate for early environmental deprivations at home as it provides a stimulating environment to children. While it is expected to provide the necessary maturational and experiential readiness to the child to meet the demands of the primary curriculum, it also impacts on the enrolment and retention of girls in primary schools by providing substitute care facility for younger siblings. The wellbeing of children has been a concern and has been an integral part of the country’s developmental planning. At independence, pre-school education was primarily in the hands of a few voluntary organizations, but the situation has changed dramatically over the past decade. (Neugebauer, 2007). The input into ECE in India is
already bearing fruit with a more empowered young workforce that is turning India into an economical power to be reckoned with.

According to Pence (2004), as progressively more African states achieved independence in the latter half of 20th century, ECD was seldom identified as a priority as countries struggled with the complex dynamics of their colonial legacy, political instability, lack of resources, the participation of NGO’s and private agents and the influence of donor funders on development of ECD provisioning. As Pence & Marfo (2008) point out: “the current day dynamics of most sub-Saharan African countries still bear the results of decades of colonial activities -mostly from Euro-Western sources. In the same vein, Nsamenang (2007) notes that the effect of these activities is that the practice of ECD in Africa is derived, to a large extent, from systems of early childhood care and education which were developed between the 16th and 19th century in Europe and which has variable relevance to the African context.

In the Sub-Saharan region, challenges to successful implementation of quality ECD are diseases, severe malnutrition and developmental delays. Neugebauer (2007) indicates that wars, famine, migration, domestic violence and lack of basic social services have all taken their toll on vulnerable children. These problems affect the quality of ECD provision.

For Van der Haag (2002), paying attention to the educational aspect of early childhood development is, apart from the immediate value it adds to a young child’s life, such as social and cognitive development, also a pathway to the optimization of human development through improved health, increased social capital and greater equality. Similarly, Biersteker & Dawes (2008) found that the role which ECD could play in ameliorating the effects of poverty and on improving the potential for success later on in life for children in developing countries has led to an increased focus on ECD as a human development intervention.

When deciding which criteria would be appropriate to measure the quality of ECD in the African context, one should remember the different values underlying the African and Western view of child rearing and early education. These values are described by Nsamenang (2007) as pre-occupation with personal ambition and competition promoted in schools molded on the Western worldview as it stands in contrast to the values of cooperation, family
unity and sharing which forms the bases of the African orientation in education. The same author concludes that Africa’s natural resources are often utilized to develop Western industries in order to sustain Western capitalism. According to Pence and Marfo (2008), it is therefore clear that early childhood care and education needs to be reconceptualised.

Probably the best way of finding a workable way forward before an irrevocable loss of essential indigenous knowledge would be to search for a way which would allow for the best of Western ECD knowledge and practice to be integrated with the rich body of knowledge which has ensured the survival and thriving of African children in the context of local communities, customs and cultural systems for generations. To support this initiative, in the UNESCO document titled “ECD Policy Development and Implementation in Africa” (2004), Pence offers a synopsis of the landmarks of ECD development in Africa which culminates in the establishment of the African Early Childhood Education Virtual University (ECDVU). The aim of this programme is to integrate Euro-Western and indigenous knowledge to create site-specific ECD curricula which will utilize the most recent research on early childhood development while retaining essential knowledge about child rearing and education.

Much can be learnt about the ECD systems in these developed countries, but it would not be fair to compare our South African situation at this point in time to them. The political and financial factors as well as educational awareness in developing countries are not nearly at the same developmental level. It will probably take two to three decades for developing countries to reach the level in ECE that developed countries already manage successfully.

The role of the ECD practitioner today is radically different to what it was in the past. Although the goals of professionalism and the characteristics of the high-quality professional remain the same, responsibilities, expectations and roles have changed and will continue to change. Morrison (2012) provides some of these new roles of the contemporary ECD practitioner.
Roles of the contemporary ECD practitioner

Teacher of performance-based accountability for learning. Teachers today are far more accountable for children’s learning.

Teacher of literacy and reading. Although the teaching of reading has always been a responsibility of early childhood professionals, this role has greatly expanded.


Teacher that maximizes full-instructional time. Teachers are expected to maximize the full length of instructional time with activities and content that will provide students with a valuable learning experience every day.

Teacher as a reflective professional. A reflective professional possesses the ability to think before, during, and after teaching in order to make decisions about how to plan, assess, and teach children.

Teacher as a continuous learner. Teacher will participate in ongoing professional staff development.

Teacher as an instructional leader. Teachers have always been responsible for classroom and program instruction, but this role is now reemphasized and given a much more prominent place.

Teacher in inclusive classrooms. Teaching in an inclusive classroom offers many new opportunities for you and your students. With the fields of early childhood and early childhood special education merging together, there is a greater demand for all teachers to have knowledge and skills for how to teach in inclusive classrooms.

Teacher twenty-first century skills. The role of the contemporary teacher to be able to improve and advance students’ knowledge of twenty-first century skills is becoming more and more important in early childhood education.

Teacher of federal, state, district, and program goals and standards. Federal and state standards provide a framework for what teachers should be teaching and students should be learning.

In addition, professional development must engage each ECD practitioner to work together with other practitioners and education partners to broaden their knowledge and expertise. A sense of calling and a passion for the extra-ordinary task they are taking up is needed to guide them towards the successful attainment and mastery of the curriculum to create supportive and effective ECD centers. Professional development goes beyond training per se, with the implication that it has to do with learning skills and encompasses a definition that includes formal and informal. That means helping ECD
practitioners not only to learn new skills, but also to develop new insights into pedagogy and their own practice, and to explore a new, advanced understanding of content and resources.

As the field of early childhood education continues to change, the details of the early childhood professional’s role will continue to be refined internationally.

2.6 THE SOUTH AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE ON ECD PRACTITIONERS’ PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

According to alarming recent statistics (DGMT 2016), less than a quarter of the one million South African children that start Grade 1 each year, make it to Grade 12. The tragedy of the South African National discourse on education is that too much emphasis is being placed on the final outcome, with educational interventions aimed at Grade 11 and 12, and little or no investment being made into the most important phase of a child’s development and education, the early years.

ECD practitioners vary widely with respect to their qualifications, experience, race and culture and they serve children who are themselves diverse in many aspects. The majority of South African early childhood development practitioners have not been exposed to any form of training or professional development. There is a shortage of well-trained teachers for early childhood development in South African townships (Steyn, et al. 2011; Atmore, 2013; Fourie, 2013). The teachers themselves are generally poorly educated, with limited or no previous exposure to preschool education. Their formal training if any, has been effective to the extent that it gives them only foundational understandings of ECD, but there are various problems when it comes to implementing, in a practical manner what they have learned in theory. They also have limited access to books, toys and other learning equipment.

Since the dawn of democracy, a range of school reforms and teacher professional development activities have been implemented across South Africa. These reforms occurred in response to wide-ranging social and political conditions that had a direct impact on all levels of education. Change is inevitable in all organizations. However, within the SA context the constant stream of changes in curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation have exacerbated rather than alleviated the already relentless pace of teachers' daily work. In order to build the professional capacity for improvement, teachers must prioritize their professional
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development so as to achieve sufficient synergy for effective teaching and to ensure that they have common purpose in their change and growth (Durant & Holden, 2006).

In South Africa all training programmes promote the career path as illustrated in the table below. It is unfortunate that in South Africa, additional training has not been linked to salary scales. Community-Based Centres (CBC) pay practitioners what they can afford (Meier & Marais, 2007). The situation is different in School Based Centres (SBC) where practitioners get a stipend from the Department of Education and this is subsidized by the money that is paid in by the parents.

Table 2.2: The career path for ECD educators in South Africa (SAQA, 2006).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualifications</th>
<th>Exit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 5 National Diploma</td>
<td>Access to a degree (level 6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 5 Higher Certificate</td>
<td>Access to diploma or degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 4 National Certificate</td>
<td>Access to level 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 1 Basic Certificate</td>
<td>Access to level 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Biersteker (2008) attributes the numerous challenges to quality faced by the ECD sector in South Africa to historical neglect, including an under-skilled workforce with low pay and poor conditions of service. She further indicates that if the sector is to grow and be upgraded, it will need to become more attractive as a career option, with incentives to improve qualifications.

White Paper Five ECD (SA, 2001 a) attributes the variable quality of ECD services and programmes, among other things, to the following:

- Absence of a mechanism for the professional registration of ECD practitioners/educators and of the requirement that they be registered with the South African Council of Educators (SACE);
- Inequities in the qualifications of ECD practitioners/educators; and
- Absence of an accreditation system for trainers of ECD practitioners/educators.

In this study an ECD practitioner’s development is viewed in quadrangle form as characterized by:
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD PRACTITIONERS

- Personal development - An ECD practitioner is aware of and accepting the ongoing need for professional growth. One aspect of this involves practitioners taking more control of their learning and being reflective.
- Professional development - An ECD practitioner is open to learning about teaching/learning/assessment activities for classroom use.
- Social development - An ECD practitioner can liaise and work with other ECD practitioners to reconstruct what it means to be an ECD practitioner.
- Reflexive being - An ECD practitioner is willing to practice and evaluate new teaching activities over an extended period of time, in a collaborative situation where she or he is able to receive support and feedback, critically reflect, renegotiate and reconstruct what it means to be a teacher. (E. Sweeney 2003)

Quality is the most important issue in education. In an effort to ensure quality education in schools, Pandor (2009) appealed to South African educators to promote quality learning and teaching. According to Gordon and Brown (2004), quality is related to improving professional practice and working conditions in ECD, advocating for high quality ECD programmes and building and maintaining networks of strong, diverse and inclusive ECD programmes. It is believed that children who receive quality foundational education are more likely to be successful in a variety of areas later in their lives (Mims, Scott-Little, Lower, Cassidy & Hestenes, 2008).

Quality of education, according to Mirza (2003), means setting standards which make a way for assessment of standards, comparability of programmes and accountability for meeting the targets (SA, 2001b). Quality education refers to a system of education that through a programming process, structure and content, enables a learning environment that is healthy, safe, protective and gender-sensitive and provides adequate resources and facilities (UNICEF, 2002). Its objective is to promote healthy families and communities in a child-friendly environment through the provision of quality education and health care, meeting the needs and protecting the best interest of the child (UNICEF, 2002). Therefore, quality education requires the development of systems of education that closely connect a child-centered learning environment with community development (SA, 2002).
Mims et al. (2008), Zaslow and Martinez-Beck (2005) and Click (2004) indicate that individual characteristics of educators, including education level, have been associated with classroom quality and the quality of ECD programmes.

Several studies conducted to address the relationship of educator background and quality (Barnett, 2003; Bowman, Donovan & Burns, 2001) have all come to the conclusion that the presence of BA level educators with specialized training in ECD, can lead to better outcomes for the children. Whitebook (2003:5) indicates the following regarding results of studies conducted on this subject:

- Educators interacted with children more and children show more cooperation and greater task persistence; and
- Children exhibited greater cognitive test score gains than those cared for by less educated practitioners.

These findings are commonly interpreted as that ‘some training is better than none and more child-related education is better than less’.

Townships are home to 40% of South Africa’s urban population and yet remain spatially and economically marginalised with little prospects for development (Finmarkltrust, 2004). To this day, township economies function, in stark contrast to their neighbouring vibrant economies, as low income settlements with marginal economic activities, low volume, low-value markets and very low investment levels (public, private or household) from which to catalyse local economic development (Pernegger, 2007). Masondo (2012) and Gradin (2013) point out that for most children in townships the standard of education is of poor quality. They further state that good education can only be accessed by the middle and elite classes. Educators are responsible to prepare the youth for further education. Therefore, empowering untrained ECD practitioners on an on-going basis can never be over emphasized.

Having said the above, it becomes more important to review the various pieces of legislation that support ECD within the South African context.

2.7 SOUTH AFRICAN LEGISLATIONS SUPPORTING ECD

ECD service provision falls within the policies and programmes of several departments, the major responsibilities residing with education, social development and health. The health and
social development departments focus particularly on children up to five years, while education is concerned with the full 0-9 years. Education policies reflect this, focusing on services for children from five years (Grade R, the reception year). As it been stated in Gauteng Department of Education Annual Report (2015/2016), the Department of Education is only responsible for the delivery of ECD programmes to children in Grade R, up to the period of compulsory schooling.

To reaffirm the Department’s commitment to transforming the provision of ECD, the Department has provided policy guidance through the publication of a notice titled Transforming ECD in Gauteng: Early Childhood Development Policy (General Notice 5807 of 2001). The Reception Year (Grade R) programme has been progressively introduced to begin delivering on Government’s commitment to providing 10 years of basic and compulsory education (Grades R-9). The Reception Year programme has been informed by the process and findings of the National ECD Pilot project (1998-2000) and Education White Paper 5 on Early Childhood Development. The progressive phasing-in of the Reception Year as a compulsory school year would begin to address the Department’s commitment to the key Constitutional principles of access, redress, equity and the provision of quality education.

Over the past decade the State has enacted several education policies as an approach to enhancing educational transformation in South Africa. To promote ECD, South Africa has one of the most progressive ECD policies, but unfortunately there are still no effective framework in place. Although there may be some rapid growth in ECD provision, the type of ECD services is often of poor quality with no professional benchmarks, few training opportunities and lack of recognition for ECD professionals. The poorest and most vulnerable groups are still receiving poor quality service.

Most transformation has occurred in the area of policy development. There has been considerable transformation over the past years in the field of ECD in South Africa. The ECD policy White Paper 5 on Early Childhood Development and the Constitution facilitated the change in the provision of ECD. The purpose of the White Paper 5 was to protect the child’s rights so as to develop his or her full cognitive, emotional, social and physical potential. Its formulation was also based on the need to redress the apartheid government ECD status, which had few policies and regulations for children (Neugebauer, 2007). By implementing this policy, the Department of Education aims at creating opportunities for processes by
which children from birth to at least nine years grow and thrive physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, morally and socially (Gauteng Department of Education, 2001). The emphasis on ECD is based on the terms of Section 29 of the Constitution which indicates that every child has the right to basic education. The rights of children stated in Section 28, are specifically non-negotiable rights. The principles that guide ECD intervention are given on the basis of the Constitution.

Several provincial departments and local government departments support ECD in an uncoordinated way, which has resulted in gaps and an overlapping of functions particularly in the areas of funding and resourcing (Gauteng Department of Education, 2001). All departments have an important role to play in developing efficient support systems and delivering cost-effective ways of working together in order to achieve the greatest output with extremely limited resources (Gauteng Department of Education, 2001).

The main challenge for the South African government is to help break the cycle of poverty by increasing access to ECD programmes, particularly for poor children, and to improve the quality of these programmes, especially by empowering ECD practitioners (Meier & Marais, 2007, Gauteng Department of Education, 2001).

As development of an efficient ECD system is a top down process the following section will focus on the acts and policies relevant to ECD/teacher professional development.

2.7.1 The National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy

This Policy was approved by Cabinet on 9 December 2015. The policy states that early childhood development is a public good. According to the National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy of 2015 a good foundation in the early years of life to enable children to perform better in school is a national priority, because developed children are more likely to be gainfully employed as adults and live as healthy, contributing adults in an improved society.

This is the latest early childhood development policy for the country, which provides for an integrated approach. It sets a clear policy position for the early childhood development sector in rendering services for infants and young children. It brings together the range of services
provided across departments to ensure an integrated, comprehensive approach in serving South Africa’s infants and young children as well as their parents. It aims to give directions and facilitate the provision of a comprehensive package of early childhood development services for all infants and young children, including children with special needs, children with disabilities and other developmental challenges.

2.7.2 The National Education Policy Act

As required by the National Education Policy Act 27 (NEPA) of 1996, teachers must be properly equipped to undertake their essential and demanding tasks. They must be able to continually enhance their professional competence and performance, and be able to provide a high quality of education. Furthermore, the policy is directed towards enabling the education system to contribute to the full personal development of each learner, and to the moral, social, cultural, political and economic development of the nation at large. This includes the advancement of democracy and human rights, thus providing opportunities for and encouraging lifelong learning (NEPA, 1996).

According to NEPA, both conceptual and content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge are necessary for effective teaching, together with the teachers' willingness and ability to reflect on practice and learn from the learners' own experience of being taught. These attributes need to be integrated, so that teachers can confidently apply conceptual knowledge-in-practice. The focus of this policy on learners' personal, moral, social, cultural and political development touches on the key learning outcomes of ECD practitioners.

2.7.3 The Skills Development Act

The Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 was promulgated in support of this Act to provide an institutional framework aiming to develop the skills of the South African workforce, to encourage employers to use the workforce as an active learning environment, and to provide employees with opportunities to acquire new skills and to ensure the quality of education and training in the workplace (Slabbert, Prinsloo, Swanepoel & Backer, 2004). In terms of this Act, as part of the South African workforce
teachers need to enhance their skills for the delivery of the new curriculum. With this in mind I argue that ECD practitioners are the custodians and the proponents of their professional development within their centers. It is therefore the role of their managers to ensure that their development initiatives are supported.

2.8 CONCLUSION
A detailed discussion of the factors that influence professional development of ECD practitioners was pursued in this chapter. In conclusion it calls for empowered and skillful practitioners with emphasis on the importance of high-quality professionalism. The discussion of the role of ECD within the NCS and society at large states that cooperation between all stakeholders in the development of our children from birth up until they reach independence is essential, but that the knowledge, skills and practices of ECD practitioners should be regarded as of the utmost importance.

As Bronfenbrenner’s Bio-Ecological Theory of Human Development anchors this study, the interactive systems influencing the professional development of ECD practitioners were examined in order to get a clear picture of the needs and relationships ECD practitioners have to deal with.

We don’t have to reinvent the wheel, therefore this chapter was concluded by focusing on the state of international and South African ECE, focusing on perspectives regarding ECD practitioners’ professional development. The outcome of this overview of ECE in other countries was that we can learn a lot from the more advanced systems of the developed world, but that every system has unique characteristics. The relationships between the components as well as the presence or absence of different components form the pattern the system will develop into. From recent policies and laws it seems that the South African ECD system is in the wake of a dynamic new era of development where the professional development of ECD practitioners will need to be a primary concern.

In order to solve the research problem the following chapter will focus on explicating the collected data, thus focusing on the analysis of the findings that emerge.
CHAPTER THREE

DATA ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The research aimed to explore professional development needs of ECD practitioners in Zamdela Township. Open-ended questionnaires were administrated and semi structured, face-to-face interviews were conducted to determine the professional development needs of ECD practitioners.

In this third chapter, findings from the collection of data will be carefully examined. This chapter will provide a detailed and integrated understanding of the data presented and contributed by the participants. In-depth evidence of analysis will be provided in order to substantiate the identification of themes and patterns that would best answer the research question. The collected data was analysed, individual interviews recorded, transcribed and coded into the themes. The themes coded from the data collected will be discussed in detail below. The data discussed in this chapter was further utilized to draw conclusions and make recommendations to be discussed in Chapter four.

3.2 OVERVIEW OF DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Creswell (2012) identified five steps in the process of qualitative data collection; they were implemented during the research process together with an ethical conduct. The required steps are to:

1. Identify participants and sites to best support you in understanding your central phenomenon and addressing your research question.

The Day Care centre for the study was situated in the Zamdela Township and given the pseudonym of Lerato Day Care to protect the identity of the participants. The selected practitioners from Lerato Day Care centre are currently working at the facility. This was significant as it had future implications for identifying professional needs development. Practitioners were easy to identify as I worked with them before. I presented a number of teacher’s workshops and skills development trainings from which they benefitted in the past.

2. Gain access to site and participants by gaining the necessary consent.
It was important to follow ethical practices during the research process and obtain consent from the participants in the study. Permission to conduct interviews was obtained from the participants themselves, having signed the consent forms. These steps were taken to ensure that the research would be conducted in an ethical manner and the participants are protected from harm. The participants of this study had a contact session with me before the data collection, which provided them with the opportunity to ask questions regarding the research. It was highlighted that participation in this research was voluntary and it was explained that participants had the right to withdraw at any stage during the research without any consequences.

ECD practitioners were given an ethical assurance of confidentiality and it was explained that their privacy would be protected. They were also informed that data gathered will be kept safe. The practitioner’s real names were not used during this research, in order to maintain confidentiality, as prescribed by the University’s Ethics Committee. Practitioners were made aware that the benefit of the research was to identify professional development needs and to look for possible solutions. During the research process participants were encouraged to ask questions and clarify any uncertainties that they might have experienced.

3. Consider what type of information gathered will best support the research question.

Open-ended questionnaires were administrated and semi structured, face-to-face interviews were conducted for the purpose of the research that best supported my research question.

4. Design protocols or instruments for collecting and recording the data.

Different instruments were used during the process of collecting and recording the data. I used open-ended questionnaires and semi structured face-to-face interviews, which I audio recorded. All interviews were audio taped and then transcribed. The open-ended questionnaires and the semi-structured, face-to-face interviews were compiled according to the research topic and the research question. All the participants were asked similar questions.

5. Administer the data collection with attention to specific ethical issues that could arise.

As it was mentioned and discussed before, ethical practices and procedures were integrated throughout the research process. Special attention was given to the safety, confidentiality and the well-being of the participants. The demographic of the Day Care centre was African (black) Sesotho speakers and the study was conducted in English. During my research it was
important for the participants to understand each question and the possible language barrier was taken into consideration.

3.3 DATA ANALYSIS

The main aim of the data analysis was to uncover the scope of the participants’ professional development needs. As noted by Merriam (2009) qualitative data analysis is an inductive process, which means that the analysis begins when the researcher compares one unit of data to another in an attempt to find patterns which are eventually coded into themes as the data analysis progresses. Therefore the data were approached inductively in order for the themes of the study to emerge from the data itself without any preconceptions.

As Silverman (2010) points out: ‘Qualitative data analysis is not a single or linear stage that researchers use to arrive at in sequence after completing the various stages of qualitative research, but rather can be seen as an ongoing active process of ongoing development that occurs throughout the research process.’ In order to identify and to explore the professional development needs of ECD practitioners on Zamdela Township, it was necessary to interpret the collected data. Data was analysed through thematic analysis. This means that themes were identified from the interviews with participants. As it been described, thematic analysis is a method that allows the researcher to identify, analyse and report patterns (themes) within the collected data (Mouton, 2001).

The raw data was thoroughly and systematically analysed, coded and categorised into themes, keeping the research question in mind. Themes and codes emerged as I worked at sentence and phrase level to identify relevant codes. After writing codes, different coloured highlights were used to group them into categories to present the themes emerging. Common themes were identified and their contents were explored. Through this inductive process, the researcher was able to work back and forth between the respective themes that emerged from the data as well as between the themes and the data (Creswell 2013; Merriam 2009).

In order to increase the trustworthiness of my findings, I actively engaged with all data sets collected. After data was collected all the interviews were transcribed as part of the data analysis process, thereafter it was sorted into categories and themes. As themes were analysed, findings were generated to provide relevant recommendations regarding the professional development needs of ECD practitioners.
As I was engaging with the data, I considered the perceptions, attitudes, knowledge and feelings of the participants in order to better understand how they constructed meaningful content from their experience (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). I also needed to be aware of my own role as researcher and how my personal bias and expectations could influence the study.

3.3.1 Steps for Data Analysis

In the following section I will provide an overview of the different procedures that been used during the gathering and analysis of data. To analyse data, in my research I made use of Creswell’s (2012) steps for data analysis and is explained in Table 3.1

Table 3.1: Steps for Data Analysis as outlined by Creswell (2012, p. 237)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 1</th>
<th>Collect data based on the research question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Data was collected in two sessions with 5 ECD practitioners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Data collection methods included: open-ended questionnaire and semi structured, face-to-face interviews.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 2</th>
<th>Prepare and organise data for analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I used two folders to organise the data. Each participant’s questionnaire and transcript of the interview were placed in a separate folder.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 3</th>
<th>Read through all the data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I carefully and meticulously studies all the data to gain a preliminary sense of the information contained in each of the completed documents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I listened to the audio-recording of the interviews several times in order to fill in gaps that accrued during the transcription process. I read through the transcription repeatedly in order to get the implied message of the whole conversation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 4</th>
<th>Code the data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I colour coded the face-to-face interview transcriptions. I worked at a phrase and sentence level and then labelled the segments with codes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I checked the codes for overlap and redundancy and then combined them into broad themes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• During this process I re-visited the interview transcriptions several times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 5</td>
<td>Use codes to generate themes for analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• During the coding process, I narrowed down the data into a few themes and less relevant data was disregarded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• To create main themes I used codes that the participants discussed frequently and of which I had the best evidence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• With the help of my research supervisor I used the triangulation of data to identify the main themes and some of the sub-themes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Five main themes and thirteen sub-themes were identified. I analysed information from each of the data sources according to each participant’s responses and according to each theme and sub-theme in order to verify the relevance of the themes and to confirm that there was triangulated evidence for each theme and sub-theme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I created tables for each main theme (5 in total) and sub-theme (thirteen in total) using detailed information from the questionnaire and from the interviews.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 6</th>
<th>Identify and discuss interrelated or interconnected themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The themes and sub-themes were arranged and organised. This step allowed for the interconnectedness and interrelation of the themes to be more easily identified.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 7</th>
<th>Interpret the meaning of themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The meaning of the themes were interpreted based on the literature and theoretical framework (provided in chapter two as well as other relevant literature).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.2: An example of the introduction to an interview as it was transcribed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line number</th>
<th>Interview with participant 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Researcher: Hello and welcome. Thank you very much for this opportunity and for seeing me. We have completed questionnaires before. Do you remember: you completed the sentences. Which one is yours?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Participant: This one.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Researcher: Okay. This one is yours. As you see, I am not writing names. You are participant number 4. Look, I am just writing number 4. Is it ok with you? Today I would like to ask you some more questions and learn a little bit more about you. Is it okay?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Researcher: I am going to use a recorder to make our conversation more comfortable so that I don’t need to sit and write. In this way we can spend more quality time. Is it okay with you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Participant: Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Researcher: Are you comfortable?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Participant: Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Researcher: Would you like us to move forward?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Participant: Yes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.4 PRESENTATION AND OVERVIEW OF THE FINDINGS

The findings are discussed in detail in this chapter and I presented the voice of the participants and the meaning of their professional development needs. I discussed my understanding of the findings and supported them with literature and Bronfenbrenner’s Bio-Ecological systems theory as the framework.

The professional development needs of the ECD practitioners were discussed in detail using quotes and references from the data collected in order to support the findings.

The data was coded and similar codes were aggregated into themes. The data was compared and contrasted to determine the extent to which it agreed or did not agree with each other (Maree, 2010). As the data correlated positively, more complete and well-substantiated
conclusions could be reached. The following 5 main themes were identified in this research from the analysis of the questionnaires and individual interviews, and are outlined in the Figure 3.1.

![Figure 3.1 Main and sub-themes that emerged from the analysis of data](image)

Theme 1 directly related to the research question, which asked: “What are the professional development needs of ECD practitioners in Zamdela Township?” Themes 2, 3 and 4 strongly influenced the participants’ professional development needs, thus also making them related to the research question.

3.5 DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The aim of this research was to explore professional development needs of ECD practitioners in the Zamdela Township. The question focussed on ECD practitioners in a Day Care centre in Zamdela Township. The findings of the research were presented in a manner that reflects
the participants’ experiences, expectations, ideas, views, challenges, hopes and future plans, and collected data was used to identify and to highlight the themes that emerged.

In the following section reference will be made to the various data sets that were utilised in this research and abbreviations will be used in order to make reading easy. The letters used at the beginning of the abbreviation refer to the specific data set (questionnaire or individual interview) to which reference is being made, followed by the participant’s number (1-5). Not all data sets produced findings for every theme and therefore only the relevant data sets are discussed under each theme.

Table 3.3 provides a key for the abbreviations used in my discussion.

Table 3.3: Key to the Abbreviations used in this Discussion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Set</th>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaire</td>
<td>QP1</td>
<td>Questionnaire Participant 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>QP2</td>
<td>Questionnaire Participant 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>QP3</td>
<td>Questionnaire Participant 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>QP4</td>
<td>Questionnaire Participant 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>QP5</td>
<td>Questionnaire Participant 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Interview</td>
<td>IP1</td>
<td>Interview Participant 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IP2</td>
<td>Interview Participant 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IP3</td>
<td>Interview Participant 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IP4</td>
<td>Interview Participant 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IP5</td>
<td>Interview Participant 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.5.1 Theme 1: Need for training and knowledge development

The need for training and knowledge development was the first main theme that emerged after analysis of data. This theme unpacks the need for training and knowledge development of ECD practitioners in this study under four sub-themes, namely, current levels of training, envisaged future training and development, self-empowerment and challenges for future training and development.
Most of the practitioners who participated in this research had very limited or no recognised professional training in any field, nor did they have any training for educating and developing pre-school learners. They have some (varying) practical experience in the ECD field. The participants indicated that because of the fact that they have no formal qualifications, nobody takes what they do in terms of teaching and learning seriously. The data made it evident that the practitioners have limited confidence in what they are teaching because of the fact that they are not qualified. Indeed, professional learning improves teacher confidence (Nolan & Molla, 2017).

The fact that some of the ECD practitioners are attending training and are busy with studies reflects positively on their self-esteem and as a result, on their confidence to teach pre-school children. They voiced a serious need to improve their knowledge and skills, as well as the teaching and learning environment at their ECD centre. The views of the participants clearly implied a dire need for increased professional development.

Supporting Quotes:

‘Now I am still busy with level 4 ECD’. (IP 1)

‘I am still learning now. Level 4’. (IP 2)

‘I am at level 5. I work hard’. (IP 3)

‘I start level 4 at Rumpadise. Level 5 I studied at Nkesetseng School’. (IP4)

‘I want to read more, but I see I am old’. (IP 5)

‘I want to learn more’. (IP 2)

‘I need more. I need more training. I need more training to be a professional. I need ... I need more training. I need to study: I want to learn more and more ’. (IP 3)

‘I want to be a better teacher. I want to ... want to... want anybody / somebody to help me’. (IP 4)

‘Oh. I need to get training. To be qualified for what I am doing. To know all about how to develop a child’. (IP 5)

‘I need to know what I am doing by getting training and by being well qualified about children’. QP1)

‘I need to learn more in training’ (QP2)
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD PRACTITIONERS

‘I need to be a loving practitioner and a well-qualified one’. (QP4)

The participants indicated that they have to deal with children who are ill, disabled or have special needs or are injured. The practitioners revealed that they have no knowledge or skills to deal with these learners. They act purely on intuition.

Supporting Quotes:

‘Like when they were sick. I wish I could know what I can do to help this child’. (IP 1)

‘Special needs, yes, I meant to say that. I need to know how to treat them because we are working now with only the normal children that don’t have a problem. So I need to know more about that also’. (IP 2)

‘When I have a child injured I need first aid, gloves’. (IP 3)

‘Sometimes the child is playing and gets injured and so I am not afraid about bleeding, I have to help’. (IP 4)

‘I also need to learn about good nutrition for children who are HIV positive’. (QP1)

The data revealed that the ECD practitioners are motivated to change their ECD environments and improve on their professional development in order to be more effective in the teaching and learning of the pre-school children. Professional development acts as a work adjustment leverage to increase work adjustment and thus job satisfaction (Winter, 2009).

The data made it evident that the practitioners have a lack of confidence in what they are teaching, because of the fact that they are not qualified. They also revealed that they strive to implement what they have learned during trainings and workshops which they attended. Reflection from all the participants indicates that the professional development needs of ECD practitioners should be addressed, which will result in a wide range of better learning and development opportunities for children. It became evident that ECD practitioners face a number of challenges in their daily day professional lives. Limitations in the professional skills of ECD practitioners were identified as the most critical challenges.

The data obtained from this research support the statements of Cumming et al. (2015) as well as Rouse and Spradbury (2015), suggesting that practitioners should be supported to gain or improve their qualifications and to be engaged in ongoing professional development.
Evidence from interviews correlated with the findings of the questionnaires in confirming the need for the professional development of ECD practitioners.

3.5.2 Theme 2: Teaching practice and classroom management

The practitioners indicated their lack of knowledge about different teaching methodologies and programme content. The ECD practitioners revealed that the number of children and the mixed classes are the factors influencing the quality of education. According to the practitioners they do not have enough space and classrooms are overcrowded. The lack of the necessary teaching aids and teachers’ resources has a negative impact on the quality of education and they have to accomplish their daily duties with the minimum resources. It became evident in the analysis of the data that the participants are aware of present challenges and barriers to their providing quality education. Results show that the participants have a fairly good understanding of what is needed to develop children holistically.

**Supporting Quotes:**

‘To help me – maybe to maybe to read, to help me with books’. (IP 1)

‘And I also need the materials like educational toys and also building – a suitable building that will be nice for children so that I can separate them - the different ages’. (IP 2)

‘I wish I could get something that will give me more information. Yes, training and materials that can help me to improve’. (QP 3)

The practitioners said that they focus on having discipline in their classrooms as well as during outside playing time.

**Supporting Quotes:**

‘Sometimes the children like to beat other children so I tell them no don’t beat the other children. When we are here, we have a rule’. (IP 1)

‘When I am working with the children, I try to teach the children. I mean to treat the child equally. So sometimes when maybe the child hit the other one you can say to that child: ‘Haai Wenu!’ You hear me when I say, Angela, sometimes when a child hit another one – so at the ECD I learnt that a teacher must not say to other child to discriminate the child’. (QP 3)

The data obtained from the open-ended questionnaires and the semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with the ECD practitioners clearly indicated that they face many obstacles and challenges in the providing quality education. The data also made it evident that many of the
practitioners find it difficult to create an environment that is conducive to teaching and learning. All the above mentioned challenges can be related to the lack of professional development of the ECD practitioners.

The above data confirms the arguments of Marais et al. (2011), Wenger et al. (2002), Tok (2011) and Butler-Adam (2013), namely, that quality ECD interventions can result in significant benefits in terms of school-readiness and achievement.

Planning the teaching and learning environment is one of the most important components of successful teaching and learning. Cevher-Kalburan’s (2014) study also makes it evident that the lack of resources; teaching and learning material; equipment; and a lack of space are not contributing to a conducive ECD teaching and learning environment.

3.5.3 Theme 3: School-parents relationships

The practitioners revealed that they would like to address the lack of parental respect and parental involvement and build better relationship. Parents do not give attention to learners at home or support learners at playing, learning and developing. Some parents cannot assist learners because of the fact that they themselves are innumerate and illiterate. These learners struggle to progress and will not be ready for formal schooling. It became clear that there is a lack of communication with the parents of learners. Many parents never communicate with the ECD practitioners and can’t therefore support their children with their school work.

Supporting Quotes:

‘Sometimes the parents – they are very rude’. (IP 1)

‘Sometimes the parents, the parents will shout. So is difficult when the parents – maybe the children, maybe they say maybe the teacher shout me in the class when the parents they come to ask me and when they come they want to fight. Yes, the difficult parents’. (IP 2)

‘I hate the fact that sometimes we meet with the rude parents. Just like I need to discuss something with her children, it is not always all of them that they will be that she will talk with you nicely, she will never be open. Maybe we talk about the children’s life or maybe her child is sick and I need to know all about her children and she will never be open to me. So that gives us the problem’. (IP 4)

‘Maybe when the parents come they don’t know how to talk with teacher. So I want to know to have patience with the parents’. (IP 5)
‘I must treat the children and the parents good’ (QP3)

ECD cannot be separated from families. Participants in this study indicated that better relationship with parents and by educating parents, could be a solution to negative attitudes of parents towards ECD practitioners. According to Alameen (2015) communication is essential to motivate and influence people to contribute to the objectives of an organisation of which parents are also members. Chever-Kalburhan (2014) also states that parent-teacher communication has an influence on learners’ positive attitudes towards school and that it helps parents to develop self-efficacy and self-confidence.

3.5.4 Theme 4: Collaboration and mentorship

Cevher-Kalburhan (2014) posits that a school culture is crafted by learners, teachers and school managers. In order to achieve the goals of a school, interaction between these elements is essential. It must be clear what the ECD centre’s vision and ethos are and everybody must work together towards achieving these.

Collaboration between stakeholders is important when working with children since it results in improved outcomes, but also the well-being of teachers (Price & McCallum, 2015). In order to create a professional learning community, relationships between members of the staff and members of the community must be built. Such relationships should involve a culture of trust and risk-taking (Kadji-Beltran, et al. 2013; Alameen 2015).

The information that was revealed indicated that the practitioners also have a need for personal well-being in order to cope better with the demands of being a ECD practitioners. Individuals must be encouraged to contribute ideas and share examples of good practice. Through the theoretical views of society being responsible for children’s social participation and social integration, the principles of Ubuntu and it takes a village to raise a child are applicable.

Supporting Quotes:

‘Ya and I hate to see other practitioners, my colleagues. Let me make an example, if I see someone sad, I hate to see that. I wish we could be happy all the time’. (IP 1)

‘I need patience, care and love’. (IP 2)

‘I enjoy teaching my children with smile’ (QP5)
Developing a capable and motivated ECD staff is critical to achieve the goals of the centre. This could only happen when there is clarity and determination about not only what the ECD centre should seek to achieve, but also why and how it might be achieved (Cumming, 2015). Commending, developing and inspiring practitioners are important elements in creating a positive school culture and in retaining a committed team.

3.5.5 Theme 5: Addressing children’s social-emotional wellbeing

The data collected indicated that the participants would like to be more motivated towards their daily work and that they want to be more friendly and caring. It also became evident that they have a vision for their teaching.

Supporting Quotes:

‘I need to be patient and treat all the children equally’. (QP1)

‘I teach my children nicely’. (QP2)

‘I enjoy when children are well developed and smile with me’. (QP3)

‘I need to be lovingly to all my children’. (QP4)

‘My role in the ECD centre is to achieve the children’s needs and to develop them, take care of them and treat them with love and care’. (QP1)

‘I need more training about children and how to give them support if they are emotionally abused’. (QP5)

‘I enjoy teaching the learners. I enjoy it very much because I like the children’. (IP 1)

‘I like to play with them. I like to see them happy, running and I like them to follow instructions. I like them to follow instructions. I like them to understand what I teach them. That is the most I like about the children’. (IP 2)

‘When I am in the class, maybe I learn children all of them to understand. If they don’t understand, I try to explain again to see if it is right’. (IP 3)

‘And to also know about the children I am working with. If I know all of the children I know what they need. That will be simple to work with them, which will make my work easier’. (IP 5)

As it has been stated by Phillips and Hatch (1999) as well as Tok (2011), many teachers choose teaching because they like children and want to make a difference in children’s lives.
The responses to the open-ended questionnaires that were administrated and the semi-structured, face-to-face interviews that were conducted support the above mentioned statement. However, it seems that ECD practitioners also do not receive the admiration that used to be linked to the profession. Although teaching is a profession that guides minds and builds the character of learners for future, it is often said that teaching is a very noble job and although it might sometimes be very rewarding, it does require a level of commitment that most other jobs do not.

All children do not have access to formal ECD services and many of those who do have access are not necessarily placed in an ECD centre where effective teaching and learning takes place. In this regard ECD practitioners have a role to play. Even though ECD practitioners cannot change the fact that all children do not have access to ECD services they are able to make a difference in the lives of those who have access to their centres.

Participants in the above study suggested that more knowledge; improving on teaching skills; addressing professional development needs; the support of families; co-operation with other ECD centres; donations; and contributing basic teaching and learning materials could improve the situation in early childhood development centres.

The data obtained from this research is consistent with the arguments of Kartal (2007), Steyn et al. (2011) and Gradin (2013), namely that in a country with high levels of poverty, early childhood education can play a significant role towards school-readiness. The participants in this study need to improve their knowledge and skills in order to be able to provide higher quality education to their learners.

An enhanced culture and climate in which children experience early childhood development positively will expand a child’s growth and performance. It can be argued that everything happens within the context of a community. Therefore, a purposeful teaching and learning community should be created to deal with the challenges and opportunities of a child’s growth and achievement.
3.6 CONCLUSION

In the current chapter the findings of this research were interpreted and discussed. The findings were arranged into five main themes and evidence from all data sets was analysed. Finally this was followed by a discussion. From the findings presented in this chapter, it is clear that the professional development of ECD practitioners in Zamdela Township is in need of support. The participants in this research indicated that they are lacking professional development. Considering the data obtained from this research, it is evident that ECD practitioners need to be empowered with knowledge, skills and strategies for teaching pre-school children.

Community based ECD services is a key element in meeting the needs of young children. By addressing professional development needs and by implementing educational intervention programmes it will be possible to improve the well-being and education of children.

Through the findings from this research it became evident that professional needs of the ECD practitioners should be addressed in order to ensure quality foundational education. Finally, it is obvious that the participants have a realistic picture of the variety of their professional development needs that should be addressed as well as ways and means of overcoming these challenges.

In chapter four, an overview of the research and the findings will be summarised and final recommendations and conclusions for future research will be provided. It will also include critical reflection on the strengths and limitations of this research.
CHAPTER FOUR

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a conclusion and overview of the research in its entirety. This chapter summarises the procedures used in this research, as well as the findings that emanated from the research question “What are the professional development needs of ECD practitioners in the Zamdela Township?” Furthermore, recommendations based on the findings of this research as well as recommendations for further research are made. The limitations and strengths of this research are also discussed.

4.2 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

This study was conceptualized within Bronfenbrenner’s bio-ecological systems theory and has attempted to explore professional development needs of Early Childhood practitioners at Lerato Day Care Centre in Zamdela Township. This was in order to identify professional development needs of the ECD practitioners.

The results were intended to assist practitioners, to look at the possible support strategies to support and to ensure quality education. Five ECD practitioners from a local Day Care centre participated in this research. Two data sets, namely an open-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interview were used in the analysis. Throughout this research, ethical procedures and measures of trustworthiness were strictly adhered to in order to ensure its rigor (Merriam, 2009).

Identifying professional development needs of ECD practitioners, particularly of those of low social-economic status makes this research relevant and timely. This research contributes to the knowledge on the professional development needs of ECD practitioners in township areas as well as an understanding of the potential guidelines for effective professional development of these ECD practitioners.

From the findings presented in chapter 3, it became evident that the professional development needs of ECD practitioners are linked to their well-being and their confidence, and should include a wide variety of professional development activities, specific teacher’s training and an overall increase of knowledge on child development. There was a strong need for
practitioners, parents and the community to gain more child development awareness and knowledge.

It is important that in planning ECD practitioners’ professional development programmes the Department of Education should take into consideration their personal development needs such as their life experiences and their perceived attitude toward life issues such as the ECD practitioners’ ages, gender, religion, culture, beliefs and life experiences. ECD practitioner increased knowledge on child development could be acquired through self-study on children related topics, initial in-service training and advance professional development activities.

Collaboration with the community is important in order to reduce stigma surrounding early childhood and to promote the importance of quality education. The Department of Education as well as the private sector should assist ECD practitioners by providing them with physical resources and by addressing professional development needs to assure quality education.

Lastly effective collaboration with stakeholders including the wider community is needed in order to address the professional needs of ECD practitioners in rural areas more effectively.

4.3 RECOMMENDATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH

In the light of the findings of this research, I will now suggest various recommendations. The following recommendations are aimed at assisting and supporting ECD practitioners in townships in the development of their professional needs.

- ECD practitioners should be recognised country wide for the work that they do. If not, it might result in a situation where they are disregarded because they do not meet the requirements to acquire a formal qualification.

- ECD practitioners need to be empowered to be able to provide quality education. In this regard society should demonstrate social responsibility by intervening in early childhood development as such interventions have the potential to break the cycle of poverty and inequality. The professional development needs and challenges of ECD practitioners in township areas should play a crucial role during the engagement between all the role players in the communities.

Knowledge and skills should not stay theoretical. It is vital to give feedback about the implementation; to support implementation; and to adapt the implementation in relation to the
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD PRACTITIONERS

specific context. Communities should never be used only as a means to achieve a researcher’s goals. Community engagement should be based on collaborative partnerships.

Society should not under-rate or under-value the capacities of ECD practitioners but should view professional development needs and opportunities through the eyes of the end-beneficiaries. The aim should be a two-way engagement, whereby knowledge, skills, expertise and resources required to develop and sustain a developing society is availed.

In order for pre-school learners to be successful, it is important that parents become more involved in the education of their children. Positive and effective lines of communication should be created between the ECD practitioners and parents.

4.4 LIMITATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH

- There are limitations to this research. During the content analysis process, it became apparent that other models may be a good addition to incorporate in the theoretical framework to predict growth and positive outcomes in professional development of ECD practitioners in the rural areas.
- Another limitation to the study was that the scope of the fieldwork was limited. By working in the Zamdela Township in the Free State Province only and by including a small sample size of five participants, there is a limit to the generalisability of the results.
- Finally, the language diversity of the participants is potentially a limiting factor of this research. All participants and I were from differing language background with the participants being Sesotho and me being English. The data collection was conducted in English, which is participants’ second or third language and this may have limited the richness of data obtained. However, English is sometimes spoken at the Day Care center by all five participants. Furthermore, the data obtained from this research was detailed and in-depth and did not appear to be significantly influenced by a language barrier. I must indicate that there were times during interview that I needed to clarify and to confirm my understanding and summarise what the participants were saying, as some of them had difficulties in expressing themselves. During interview sessions I needed to be careful in order to make sure that my summarising was not influencing participants’ answers.
However, the researcher would argue that the aim of this research, which was to explore professional development needs of ECD practitioners in the Zamdela Township to ensure quality foundational education that might offer the opportunity to empower ECD practitioners with knowledge and skills and offer opportunity to care, teach and develop society’s most vulnerable members, namely young children has to some extend been realised.

4.5 STRENGTHS AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF THIS RESEARCH

The strengths of this study include the nature of the qualitative design, which lead to rich description of the participants’ professional development needs. The combination of the open-ended questionnaires in conjunction with the semi-structured face-to-face interviews enabled the researcher to identify present needs.

The nature of the research allowed the participants to be open and authentic and provided an opportunity to identify their deepest concerns and hopes. Thus, a holistic view of participants’ professional development needs could be captured. The in-depth analysis of the practitioners’ professional development needs can provide useful information for possible ways to address existing gaps. The findings of this study indicate how important professional development is.

I hope to use the findings of this research to become actively involved in seeing professional development programmes and interventions being established and successfully implemented. Therefore, this study is valuable in informing the relevant parties of the urgency to focus more on the professional development of ECD practitioners, especially those who practice in the township areas.

Any challenges that hinder the effective professional development of ECD practitioners should be identified and addressed.

4.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Based on the findings discussed in chapter 3 in conjunction with the insights and interpretations provided, the following investigations are recommended:

- Future research could include ECD practitioners from more township ECD centres in the province and around country.
- Future research could be a comparative study, which may include ECD practitioners from different areas and different social, economic and cultural backgrounds and levels.

- Further research that focus on the implementation and evaluation of the programmes addressing professional needs of ECD practitioners would add value and depth to these findings. Furthermore, an impact study on the effectiveness of professional development programmes offered to ECD practitioners both by GDE and by private service providers should be probed.

- Future research could be an international comparative study.

4.7 CONCLUSION

The aim of the research project was to explore the professional development needs of ECD practitioners in Zamdela township. In order to achieve this goal, this researcher conducted a content data analysis to present the findings related to the research question. The main research question focused on finding out what ECD practitioners professional development needs are.

This chapter has provided a summary of this research, including a discussion of the need for such research as well as a brief overview of the research findings. Recommendations based on the findings of this research have been made, with a focus on the potential practical professional guidance interventions that could be informed by this research. The limitations of this research have been acknowledged and discussed along with its strengths and contributions. Finally, recommendations for future research have been made.

Interventions aimed at providing guidelines for effective professional development could escalate school attendance numbers and the pass rates of learners in primary and secondary schools. In a country with high levels of poverty, pre-school education can play an abundant role in getting children school-ready (Kartal, 2007; Steyn, et al. 2011; Fourie, 2014).

The researcher hopes and believes that by identifying professional development needs and by providing possible guidelines some positive changes will follow.

ECD practitioners are key figures in constructing a creative teaching and learning environment and they do need support. The findings of the research emphasised the lack of professional development. Based on the above discussion it becomes evident that in order to
improve the teaching and learning environment, there is also a need to identify limitations in possible professional development at ECD centres.

When we started the ECD project in Zamdela six years ago, we decided to call it Mapheo, which means wings in SeSotho. Zamdela practitioners wanted to fly and together we can give them wings and make their dreams become reality. Every time we meet we strive to live our special motto:

Happy Children → Happy Parents → Happy Community → Happy Country!

Let’s support Mapheo’s motto and Nelson Mandela’s vision.

“We can change the world and make it a better place. It is in your hands to make the difference.”
LIST OF REFERENCES


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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD PRACTITIONERS


PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD PRACTITIONERS


Motlanthe, K. (2011). Teachers are the key! *Naptosa Insight, 5* (2): 6

Motshekga, A. (2011). Teachers are the key! *Naptosa Insight, 5* (2): 6


PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD PRACTITIONERS


PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD PRACTITIONERS


APPENDIX A1

ETHICAL CLEARANCE- UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG

NHREC Registration Number REC-110013-016

ETHICS CLEARANCE

Dear A Andaryan-van Pletzen

Ethical Clearance Number: 2016-670

Professional development needs of Early Childhood Development (ECD) practitioners

Ethical clearance for this study is granted subject to the following conditions:

- If there are major revisions to the research proposal based on recommendations from the Faculty Higher Degrees Committee, a new application for ethical clearance must be submitted.
- If the research question changes significantly so as to alter the nature of the study, it remains the duty of the student to submit a new application.
- It remains the student's responsibility to ensure that all ethical forms and documents related to the research are kept in a safe and secure facility and are available on demand.
- Please quote the reference number above in all future communications and documents.

The Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee has decided to

☐ Grant ethical clearance for the proposed research.
☐ Provisionally grant ethical clearance for the proposed research
☐ Recommend revision and resubmission of the ethical clearance documents

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Prof Geoffrey Lautenbach
Chair: FACULTY OF EDUCATION RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
27 October 2016
25 January 2010

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I hereby certify that I have edited the language of the minor-dissertation of Anzhela Andrasyan-Van Pietzen, submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Magister Educatiinis in Educational Psychology at the University of Johannesburg, entitled: "The professional development needs of early childhood practitioners".

My qualifications are:

BA (languages)
BA (ions (International Politics)
Magister Artium (History)
Post Graduate Diploma in Education

I am also the publisher at Corals Publishers.

[Signature]

UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG
ECD PRACTITIONER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear ECD practitioner

As a Master student involved in the research project on the professional development needs of ECD practitioners, I would appreciate if you can complete the following questionnaire on your professional development as an ECD practitioner.

This questionnaire is an opportunity for you to provide information about your professional experiences as an ECD practitioner. The results from this questionnaire will be used to look for possible guidelines in the professional development of ECD practitioners.

The information you provide will be seen only by the research team (researcher and supervisors); ECD center and ECD practitioners will not be identifiable in the research report. The questionnaire is divided into three sections namely: general information; incomplete sentence questionnaire and professional development. Completing this questionnaire requires approximately 20 - 30 minutes.

INCOMPLETE SENTENCE QUESTIONNAIRE

I am interested in your interpretation and experience of your professional development as an ECD practitioner. There are therefore no correct or incorrect responses. The information will be treated as confidential and anonymity is ensured.

1. For me professional development means

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

2. My role in the ECD center is

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

3. Teaching pre-school children will be easier if

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________
4. As an ECD practitioner, I enjoy
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

5. To teach effectively pre-school children I need
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

6. As an ECD practitioner I am faced with challenges such as
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

7. As an ECD practitioner, I pleasantly surprised myself when
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

8. Those who know me as an ECD practitioner, will say that
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

9. The qualities I need as an ECD practitioner are
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
10. Professional development programmes aimed at ECD practitioners should

THANK YOU FOR THE TIME YOU HAVE INVESTED IN Completing this questionnaire
**Professional Development Needs Semi-Structured Interview Protocol**

Name: Participant 1  
Date: 15 November 2016

Hello, welcome and thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to interview you.  
May I respectfully ask you how old are you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>20 – 30</th>
<th>31 – 40</th>
<th>41 – 50</th>
<th>51+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

What is your home language?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Pedi</th>
<th>Zulu</th>
<th>Tswana</th>
<th>Sotho</th>
<th>Xhosa</th>
<th>Ndebele</th>
<th>Swati</th>
<th>Tsonga</th>
<th>Vhenda</th>
<th>Other:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

What language do you mostly use at work with your colleagues and children?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Pedi</th>
<th>Zulu</th>
<th>Tswana</th>
<th>Sotho</th>
<th>Xhosa</th>
<th>Ndebele</th>
<th>Swati</th>
<th>Tsonga</th>
<th>Vhenda</th>
<th>Other:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

What is your religious denomination?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Christian</th>
<th>Judaism</th>
<th>Islam</th>
<th>Hinduism</th>
<th>Buddhism</th>
<th>Other: specify</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

What is your highest educational level? Please, clarify

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Matric</th>
<th>Certificate</th>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Other:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

For how long you’ve been working as a n ECD practitioner?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of experience</th>
<th>2 -5</th>
<th>6 -10</th>
<th>11 – 15</th>
<th>16 +</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Questions asked will now be based on the incomplete sentences you complete before.

1. What areas/tasks do you enjoy most within your profession?
2. Which tasks do you not enjoy doing as much?

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

3. What are your Professional Development needs?

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

4. What additional experience and/or training do you need?

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

5. Do you have any preferences for how you would like to improve on your Professional Development? What will be the best way to help you to improve your teaching?

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

Is there anything else you would like to add?

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

Thank you very much for your time and patience.