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AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT CENTRES IN MASIPHUMELELE, CAPE TOWN

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PLAGIARISM DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature:_____   Date:_____

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ABSTRACT

This study explored parent involvement in Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres in Masiphumelele, Cape Town. The researcher aimed to gain an understanding of the following; how parents are involved in Early Childhood Development centres, factors that enhance parent involvement in ECD centres, factors that hinder parent involvement in ECD centres and challenges faced by parents in getting involved in ECD centres.

This research study adopted a qualitative, exploratory approach using a semi-structured interview schedule. The researcher used non-probability, purposive sampling to select the participants. Nineteen participants were interviewed using an interview schedule as a guide. The data collected was analyzed using Tesch's (1990) method of analysis.

The research findings revealed that even though there are parents who participate in activities taking place at ECD centres, there is still lack of parent involvement in ECD centres. The thesis affirms that unity among parents, take-home activities, hosting general parent meetings, effective communication between parents and ECD staff especially teachers, parent days, hosting parent workshops, adopting a positive attitude towards parents, parent class visits and adequate physical space are factors that enhance parent involvement in ECD centres.

Evidence from the research study show that lack of time, single parenthood, lack of interest, lack of education, poverty and unemployment are factors that inhibit parent involvement in ECD centres. According to the research findings, challenges that parents face in getting involved are; coping, trust issues, participation in education activities, provision of basic needs and payment of ECD centre fees. The study recommends that ECD centres should initiate parent involvement programmes so that parents gain skills and self-confidence. Parents are then more likely to be involved in their children's education.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Early childhood development is becoming a policy priority in many countries because it provides a broad range of social and economic benefits and better learning outcomes and this is a foundation for lifelong learning (Taguma, Litjens and Makowiecki, 2012). Children's learning and development takes place in a range of contexts and this includes ECD centres and at home with family. Parents have an important contribution to make in all kinds of settings (Kernan, 2012). Parent involvement in their children's education has been shown to be important variable that has a positive influence on children's education (Ondieki, 2012). This study investigates parent involvement in ECD centres in Masiphumelele, Cape Town. This chapter explains the background to the problem, the rationale and significance of the study, the research topic, the main research questions, the research objectives and the main research assumptions. It includes clarification of concepts, an outline of the research report, key ethical considerations, reflexivity and a summary.

1.1 **Background to the problem**

South Africa currently has achieved twenty-one (21) years of democracy since the first democratic elections took place in April 1994. There has been progress generally but there are still many challenges in South Africa. This includes the fact that there is "… a long way to go before the care and education of young children are based on a shared sense of purpose, mutual respect and real dialogue between parents and professionals" (Bridgemohan, 2001:1). Parents, ECD educators, government, donors and social service providers are important role-players in addressing the needs of young children. It should be noted that government policy is that the primary responsibility for children lies within families, specifically parents. A child's development and stimulation at the early stage of life depends on the parents' support,

commitment and involvement in the child's life. The above mentioned is indeed crucial for a child's growth, development and well-being (Bridgemohan, 2001).

The Department of Social Development (2012) developed a Green Paper on Families and this particular paper highlighted the issue that families in South Africa have been undermined for many centuries by forces emanating from economic and political arenas that contributed to marginalization and family erosion. The Green Paper discussed that some families are not able to play their fundamental role of nurturing, socializing and caring efficiently and this is partly because of family disintegration. This is a cause of concern because the early years are indeed a bedrock on which future growth, learning and development depends. Mothers, fathers, children and ECD teachers have a role to play in early learning, and attention therefore needs to be paid to parent-child relationships and parent teacher relationships. Parents and ECD teachers need support in order to make learning partnerships, and the same applies to families that are going through stressful circumstances such as unemployment, poverty and family breakdown (Kernan, 2012).

Atmore, Van Niekerk and Ashley-Cooper (2012) discussed the national audit of early childhood development which was commissioned by the Department of Education. The audit revealed that there are twenty-three thousand four hundred and eighty-two (23,482) ECD sites in South Africa and one million and thirty thousand four hundred and seventy-three (1,030,473) learners were enrolled in the sites mentioned above. Atmore et al.(2012: 10) argued that eleven thousand four hundred and twenty (11,420) of these sites lacked electricity, water and toilets and that forty percent (40%) of ECD services were in rural areas and sixty percent (60%) in urban areas. In the light of everything that has been discussed in this paper, parents in rural areas and townships are more likely to face various challenges due to lack of resources and this can hinder parent involvement due to feelings of hopelessness.

1.2 Location of the problem

Lack of parent involvement in ECD centres is an issue found in many geographical areas in South Africa including the City of Cape Town. Atmore et al. (2012) reported that the three provinces with the most poor quality ECD services are; KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo and Eastern Cape. The author of this paper believes that there is more likely to be an issue of lack of parent involvement in the above mentioned provinces. According to the researcher's analysis, Western Cape Province is one of the South African provinces with better ECD services however this does not imply that all ECD centres have quality ECD services especially in poor communities.

Masiphumelele is one of the poorer communities in Cape Town, in the Western Cape Province. Education is a key priority for organizations such as the Chaeli Campaign, Valley Development Project (VDP), Masiphumelele Corporation and Trust (MasiCorp) and other organizations that focus on education in Masiphumelele community (Bohannon, 2011). The above mentioned organizations offer parent programmes and training and enhance standards of ECD centres in this community. Many ECD centres in Masiphumelele operate in poor conditions and face the following challenges; severe lack of space, poor physical conditions, lack of appropriate staff training and absence of financial sustainability (Bohannon, 2011).

History of Masiphumelele

Masiphumelele is a Xhosa word which means "we will prosper" and it is one of the smaller townships in the Western Cape Province. In the early 1980s a group of people started the first informal settlement alongside where Masiphumelele is today (Bohannon, 2011). During the Apartheid era these particular families were chased away and were forced to reside in a township called Khayelitsha which is located forty (40) kilometres outside of Cape Town (Bohannon, 2011).After Apartheid legislation had ended, "…a group of people from Khayelitsha, joined by a few thousand people from the Eastern Cape who hoped to find work in the area, moved onto what was then known as "Site 5". This newly formed community built their shacks and simple

homes and started to set up their community" (Bohannon, 2011:20). 'Site 5' was then renamed Masiphumelele by the community. Bohannon (2011) stated that this community was incorporated as part of Ward sixty nine (69) and that the municipality has now provided it with basic services including electricity, health clinic and water. Approximately thirty eight thousand (38 000) people currently live in Masiphumelele and poverty is a major issue that is experienced by many individuals. More than fifty (50) percent still live in shacks and are facing economic, social and health issues (Bohannon, 2011:21).

1.3 **Rationale for the study**

The main rationale for this research study is to gain a better understanding of parent involvement in ECD centres. Parents are children's first and usually enduring educators therefore parent involvement in early childhood development centres is critical. International bodies such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) depict parent involvement in young children's education as an essential obligation and as a right. Parenting behaviours and attitudes have a powerful effect on a child's learning (Kernan, 2012). When parents and teachers communicate properly and work in partnership there is no doubt that children benefit and it is important to note that partnership involves responsibility on both sides. Therefore respectful listening and sharing of information between parents and ECD teachers has a positive impact on children learning and development (Kernan, 2012). The National Development Plan (Republic of South Africa, 2012) recommends two years of ECD provision prior to entering grade one. Furthermore, the rationale for this study is to uncover strategies and approaches that can increase parent involvement in ECD centres.

1.4 **Significance of study**

Parent involvement has an important role in helping young children to experience later school success and is directly linked with academic achievement and social competence (Jeffries, 2012).

This study will add to the body of knowledge and as previously mentioned, will provide ways to increase parent involvement during the preschool years especially for low-income families. This study can assist organizations in planning and developing effective parent involvement programmes based on the study's findings, conclusions and recommendations. The research findings are also significant for ECD teachers facilitating parent education programmes particularly in poor communities. Enhancing parent programmes will benefit parents and children.

1.5 **Main research questions**

To shed light on the research problem, the following research questions were developed;

- Are parents involved in the ECD Centre?

- How are parents involved in the ECD Centre?

- Which factors enhance parent involvement in ECD centres?

- Which factors inhibit parent involvement in ECD centres?

- What are the challenges that parents face in getting involved in ECD centres?

1.6 **Research Objectives**

The overall aim of the study was to collect valid and reliable data on the involvement of parents in ECD centres. The research study has a number of specific objectives as follows;

- To explore whether parents are involved in their children's ECD centres.

- To explore how parents are involved in ECD centres.

- To identify factors that enhance parent involvement in ECD centres.

- To identify factors that inhibit parent involvement in ECD centres.

- To investigate the challenges that parents face in getting involved in ECD centres.

1.7 Research Assumptions

Based on the literature review and the researcher's observations, four primary assumptions were made regarding this study. They are as follows;

- Parents are children's primary educators and they have the responsibility to be involved in their child's education and care.

- The transition to primary school becomes less challenging when parents are involved in ECD centres.

- Parents who are involved in their children's early education create a connection between home and the ECD centre. At home they are able to replicate and extend activities that their child experiences.

- The assessment of parent involvement in ECD centres can influence policy and planning and this can benefit children especially those from poor families.

1.8 Clarification of Concepts

For the purpose of this study, the following terms are explained as they are significant to the research question; early childhood, early childhood development, parent, Grade Rand parent involvement in ECD.

- **Early childhood**

Early childhood is the period between birth to six years old (Ige, 2011).

- **Early childhood development (ECD)**

Early childhood development 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 (Department of Education, 2001: 9).

- **Parent**

In this study, the term 'parent' is used broadly and refers to the persons who have care, custody and control over and concern for the child (Bridgemohan, 2001:7).

- **Grade R**

In South Africa Grade R refers to the year before grade one (Atmore et al., 2012).

- **Parent involvement in ECD**

Parent involvement in ECD refers to parents' participation in early childhood development centres that their children attend (Kernan, 2012).

1.9 **Key ethical considerations**

All social research includes ethical issues. In this research study ethics refers to a set of moral principles that are suggested by an individual or a group and this includes rules about most appropriate conduct towards respondents (De Vos et al., 2005). The main ethical issues that were taken into consideration in this study are found in Punch (2005), Babbie (2007) and De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2011) and they are as follows:

- *Informed Consent*- This refers to the functional strategy implemented to ensure voluntary participation and avoidance of harm to participants in a formalized manner (Babbie, 2007:64). The individuals that the researcher interviewed had full information (See Appendix A- Letter of introduction) about the study and furthermore signed an informed consent form (See Appendix B) as evidence that they freely agreed to participate in the research.

- *Harm and Risk* **-** It is important for researchers that their studies do not harm participants either emotionally or physically. The research that was done did not harm respondents and the researcher was sensitive throughout the interview. Participants were informed that they were not obliged to respond to questions that they did not wish to answer. The researcher

informed the participants that they could withdraw from the study at any point if they wished to.

- *Honesty and Trust* -Honesty and trust between the respondent and the researcher is critical. There was honesty and trust between the respondents and the researcher. The participants were well-informed about the purpose of the research. I informed them that the research study is a partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Social Science in Social Development. The researcher answered all the questions that the participants raised concerning the study and they all agreed to participate and signed a consent form.

- *Privacy and confidentiality*- Every participant has the right to privacy. Pseudonyms were used in this research study to protect the identity of respondents. At the beginning of interviews, participants each signed a consent form containing assurance of confidentiality. I assured participants that the information shared would only be accessible to the researcher, her academic supervisor and the external examiners. The participants were assured that the information that they shared was not going to affect them negatively.

- *Research integrity and quality* - The researcher was obligated to ensure that she was knowledgeable and adequately skilled to undertake the study. The researcher conducted the research carefully, thoughtfully and correctly according to a reasonable set of standards.

- *Debriefing of respondents* - Debriefing of respondents is fundamental because it helps them to work through their experience of the research and minimize any possible harm during the interview (Strydom in De Vos et al., 2011). Participants had an opportunity to ask questions

during and at the end of the interview and comment on their experience of the interview. This gave them the opportunity to debrief and have closure in their participation in the research.

- *Reporting of findings*- The researcher has an obligation to report the research findings scientifically without manipulating the data (Strydom in De Vos et al., 2011). The researcher will provide feedback of the research study to the ECD principals who participated in the research.

1.10 **Reflexivity**

Reflexivity refers to the procedure of watching how our thoughts and behaviour influence what we see or hear (Punch, 2005). Biases and feelings can impact on a research study. I kept a journal of my personal responses during the research that was conducted. At the beginning of the first interview I was anxious, and, as I continued conducting the interviews the anxiety decreased and I gained more confidence. Reading on the research topic can make a researcher influence what respondents say during interviews. The researcher gave respondents the opportunity to respond to the research questions without interrupting and influencing their responses. At times the researcher probed the responses of participants without putting words in their mouths. During the interviews, most participants were not pleased with the degree of involvement by parents at the ECD centre. I refrained from taking sides and focused on the interview.

Culture and language are some of the issues that the researcher took into consideration before conducting the research as that could have impacted the research process. During the interview the researcher repeated the participants' responses for clarity's sake and all the interviews were properly recorded. The culture of the researcher takes courtesy towards elders very seriously and young individuals rarely look into elders' eyes when speaking to them and it is a sign of respect, other people prefer maintaining eye contact as it is usually considered as a sign of honesty and paying attention. The researcher paid attention to all respondents and maintained eye contact.

1.11 **Outline of the research report**

This thesis is divided into five chapters and it is organized along the lines presented below;

Chapter One   - Introduction

Chapter one is the introduction chapter. The researcher introduces the content of the chapter. The key components of this section are; background to the problem, location of the problem, rationale for the study and significance of the study, main research questions, research objectives, research assumptions, clarification of concepts, key ethical considerations, outline of the research report, reflexivity and a summary.

Chapter Two - Literature Review

Chapter two focuses on the theoretical models/conceptual framework for the research and ECD policies and legislation in South Africa. This chapter furthermore presents relevant studies by other researchers on parent involvement. The following is discussed; parent involvement in ECD, challenges faced by parents as they promote their children's development and ECD programmes available for parents and other caregivers.

Chapter Three - Research Design and Methodology

Chapter three outlines the research design and methodology as well as the sample and sampling procedure, data collection approach, data collection tool, data collection apparatus, data analysis, data verification and limitations of the research study.

Chapter Four - Results and Discussion of Findings

In chapter four the data collected is analyzed and presented. A table reflecting the profile of respondents and status of the ECD centres in Masiphumelele and the framework for discussing findings is found in this section.

Chapter Five - Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions and recommendations regarding parent involvement in Masiphumelele are presented here. This chapter sums up the major findings of the study.

1.12 **Summary**

This research report consists of five chapters namely; introduction, literature review, research design and methodology, results and discussion of findings, and conclusions and recommendations. This chapter described the background to the problem and it has been stated that there is a long way to go before we can say that there is significant parent involvement in ECD centres in South Africa and this includes the Masiphumelele community. The rational and significance of the study has been included in this part of the research report. Parents are primary caregivers therefore a child's well-being depends on the parents' support and involvement in the child's development. The main research questions, research assumptions, clarification of concepts, key ethical considerations and reflexivity have been discussed in this section. Chapter two is a literature review and explores the relevant ECD policies, legislation and theoretical models/conceptual framework for the research study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter discusses theoretical models that are relevant to this research study as well as policies and legislation pertaining to the research study. Theoretical models presented in this thesis provide a conceptual understanding for this study. This chapter gathers and gives a review of prior studies' findings that relate to the topic under study. The chapter discusses literature around parent involvement, challenges faced by parents in getting involved and ECD programmes that are available for parents and other caregivers. The sources that were consulted as part of literature review include journals, scholarly articles, academic theses/dissertations, e-books, government publications and hard copy books.

2.1 Theoretical models/Conceptual framework for the research

2.1.1 Parenting styles

O'Connor and Scott (2007) stated that the dominant model in research on parent-child relations is connected to Diana Baumrind's work and has been expanded by other individuals including Maccoby and Martin (1983). Baumrind discussed essential dimensions of parenting in her study of interactions between parents and young children (O'Connor and Scott, 2007). These include warmth (as opposed to neglect and conflict) and control strategies. According to O'Connor and Scott (2007:7), Baumrind explained that parenting typologies were created from a cross of warmth, conflict and control, and the four parenting typologies discussed in this paper are, "…'authoritative' (high warmth, positive/assertive control...), 'authoritarian' (low warmth, high conflict and coercive, punitive control attempts), 'permissive' (high warmth coupled with low control attempts) and 'neglect/disengaged' (low warmth and low control)." The above mentioned typologies have been associated with child outcomes, children whose parents are authoritative are usually described as socially and academically competent and children whose parents are described as authoritarian depict worse outcomes (O'Connor and Scott, 2007).

2.1.2 **Epstein's typology of parent involvement**

Joyce Epstein developed a framework for defining six different types of parent involvement. This framework helps educators in developing family and school partnership programmes (Epstein, n.d). Each type of involvement includes various practices of partnership and has particular challenges that must be met in order to involve all families. Each type leads to different results for students, families and teachers (Epstein, n.d). The following are the six types of parent involvement discussed by Epstein; parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making and collaborating with community.

Parenting helps families to establish home environments in order to support children as students and the sample practices included assisting families with parenting and child rearing skills, making provision of family support programmes on nutrition, health as well as services and suggestions for home conditions that promote learning at each stage level. Communicating focuses on effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about children's development and school programmes. The sample practices include weekly or monthly folders of student work sent home for appraisal and comments (Epstein, n.d). Volunteering includes recruiting and organizing parent help and support to assist teachers, students, administrators and parents. Learning at home involves providing information and ideas to families about how to assist students with homework, school activities and decisions, for instance providing information on homework policies and how to monitor school work at home (Epstein, n.d).

Decision making focuses on including parents in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives (Epstein, n.d). It is also vital for schools to have advisory councils, or committees for parent leadership and participation. Establishment of individual advocacy groups to work for school reforms and committees for family and community involvement is crucial. Schools

should set up networks to link all families with representatives and provide information about school. Community refers to the neighbourhood where the learners' homes and schools are situated and any neighbourhood that has an influence on a child's learning and development (Epstein, n.d). Collaborating with community includes identifying and integrating resources and services to strengthen family practices, school programs and student learning and growth. Sample practices of collaborating with community include information for students and families on community health, recreational, social support and other programmes (Epstein, n.d).

2.1.3 **The theory of overlapping spheres of influence**

The following focuses on theory of overlapping spheres of influence which was discussed by Epstein (1996 cited in Bridgemohan, 2001:17 and 18). Epstein (1996 cited in Bridgemohan, 2001:17) stated that, "The concept was based on the need for a social organizational perspective that posits that the most effective families and schools…" have mutual goals and missions concerning children and conduct work jointly. The model of overlapping spheres of influence has internal and external structures (Bridgemohan, 2001).

There are three main forces that can push or pull apart the external structure and they are as follows; time, to account for changes in the ages and grade levels of students and the influence of a historic period, the philosophies, policies and practices of the family and the philosophies, policies and practices of the school (Epstein, 1996 cited in Bridgemohan, 2001:18). The forces mentioned above create opportunities for shared activities of families, schools and communities. They furthermore determine the kinds of overlap that occur at any particular time and the forces have an impact on the interactions among members of these institutions. In the model of overlapping spheres of influence there are practices that family, communities and schools have to carry out independently and those that they conduct together in order to influence children's education and development (Epstein 1996 cited in Bridgemohan, 2001:18).

The internal structure of the interaction of three spheres of influence illustrates where and how complex and fundamental interpersonal associations and patterns of influence take place between individuals at the institutional and individual level. Individual level interactions include one student, parent or a member of community, and institutional level interactions include members within families, schools and communities. The Epstein model depicts that schools, families and communities can work together and create educational environments that are caring (Epstein, 1996 cited in Bridgemohan, 2001:18).

2.2 ECD policies and legislation

2.2.1 The Constitution of Republic of South Africa, No 108 of 1996

The Constitution of South Africa includes the Bill of Rights and this is found in chapter two of the Constitution. This particular chapter discusses all the rights of people in South Africa and this includes children. According to the Constitution, every child has a right to basic education, family care or parental care, basic nutrition, shelter, basic health care services and social services. Children also have a right to be protected from maltreatment and neglect, and it is stated that "A child's best interests are of paramount importance in every matter concerning child … [and] the state, through reasonable measures must make [basic education] progressively available and accessible" (The Constitution of Republic of South Africa, 1996:10). In light of what has been stated above regarding our sound constitution, children in South Africa are still facing various adversities and this includes lack of access to education, health care and social services and there is need of parent involvement in all areas of a child's life including parent participation in ECD centres (Atmore et al., 2012).

2.2.2 The Children's Act, No 38 of 2005

The Children's Act (2005) describes ECD services and ECD programmes, and the legal requirements that ECD centres need to meet and the services the government is obliged to fund.

The Children's Act (2005) is significant because it provides a legal framework and guides anyone involved in the care, development and protection of children. The Children's Act (2005:25) furthermore stated the parental responsibilities and rights that a parent may have in respect of a child and this includes the responsibility and the right;

- to care for the child;

- to maintain contact with the child;

- to act as a guardian of the child;

- to contribute to the maintenance of the child.

This particular Act makes it clear that mothers and fathers have responsibilities and rights in respect of the child, therefore parent involvement in children's learning and education should be regarded as an obligation and taken seriously.

- **Children's Amendment Act, 2007**

The purpose of this Act is to amend the Children's Act 2005, so as to include certain definitions, to make provision of care for children, to provide for early childhood development, to provide further protection of children, to make provision regarding prevention and early intervention. The Children's Amendment Act (2007) discussed partial care and it is provided when an individual takes care of more than six children, on behalf of their parents or care-givers, during the day or night for specific hours by agreement between parents or the care-givers and the service provider.

The Department of Social Development funds partial care facilities and services, however the partial care facility should be registered and meet certain norms and standards in order to receive assistance. In the Children's Amendment Act (2007), it was stated that funding of partial care

facilities must be prioritized in communities where families lack the means to provide proper shelter, food and other basic necessities for their children.

The Children's Amendment Act (2007:28) defines early childhood development as, "the process of emotional, cognitive, sensory, spiritual, moral, physical, social and communication development of children from birth to school-going age." The Department of Social Development must maintain a record of ECD programmes that are registered in the province. A person or an organization providing an early childhood development programme must register the programme with the Department of Social Development in the province.

2.2.3 Education White Paper 5 on Early Childhood Development (2001)

The Department of Education (2001) stated that nearly forty (40) percent of young children in South Africa are raised in conditions of poverty and neglect. The White Paper explained that children who are raised in poor families are at risk of the following; infant death, poor growth, poor adjustment to school and school dropout.

The challenge for the South African government is to help break the poverty cycle by increasing access to ECD programmes, especially for disadvantaged children and to enhance the quality of these programmes (Department of Education, 2001:5). Based on an analysis of the current nature, context and status of ECD provision in South Africa, the following are the five key areas that require attention; the extent of ECD provision, inequality in existing ECD provision, inequality of access to ECD services, variable quality of ECD services and an incomplete, fragmented, legislative and policy framework for ECD that results in service delivery that is not coordinated (Department of Education, 2001:5).

The ECD policy priority addressed in this White Paper was the establishment of a national system of provision of the Reception Year (Grade R) for children who are five years old. To achieve the above mentioned goal, a particular approach, called a poverty-targeted approach was

chosen and it makes use of grants to help primary schools and subsidies to selected community-based sites. The Department of Education (2001: 6) stated that, "In response to the challenge of ECD for children younger than four years, the Department of Education will, within the ECD priority group of the Government's National Programme of Action for Children prioritize the development of a strategic plan for inter-sectorial collaboration."

2.2.4 **White Paper for Social Welfare (1997)**

This White Paper for Social Welfare (1997) was developed with the full participation of the stakeholders in the welfare field and it addresses past inequalities and fragmentation of the institutional framework in the welfare services delivery in South Africa. Chapter seven of the White Paper for Social Welfare (1997) specifically discussed social security. Social security incorporates a wide range of public and private measures that make provision of cash or in-kind benefits, or both, "first, in event of an individual's earning power permanently ceasing, being interrupted, never developing, or being exercised only at unacceptable social cost and such person being unable to avoid poverty and secondly, in order to maintain children" (Department of Welfare, 1997:49). The domains of social security are as follows; poverty prevention, poverty alleviation, social compensation and income distribution.

Social security in South Africa has four major elements namely; social assistance, social relief, social insurance and private savings. Social assistance is an income tested benefit provided by the state to people with disabilities, elderly people, and unsupported parents and children who are not able to provide for their basic needs (Department of Welfare, 1997). The social assistance provided by the state enable some parents to buy basic needs required at their children's ECD centres.

2.3 **Parent involvement in Early Childhood Development**

In spite of parent involvement being an important variable that has a positive influence on children' education, parents are still not involved in their children's education (Wanke, 2008). Parent involvement enhances components of children's education including daily attendance, cognitive and social skills, behaviour and attitude, confidence and motivation. According to the Harvard Family Research Project (2006), parent involvement takes various forms and this includes good parenting at home, providing secure and stable environment, intellectual stimulation and contact with ECD centres.

The Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP, 2006) discussed that child-rearing is the family involvement process which includes the values, attitudes and practices of parents in raising young children. Participation of parents in child-centred activities, especially play is essential for social and emotional development of children. Parents' participation in arts and crafts, and other similar activities with their children is linked to children's literacy development. HFRP (2006) mentioned that social and cultural contexts have an influence on parenting styles. Parent participation in ECD centre-based activities and frequent communication between parents and teachers is linked to young children's academic outcomes. Examples of parent participation practices include attending parent-teacher conferences, assisting with class activities and partaking in extended class visits. The kind of participation stated above is associated with social, motor and basic school skills (HFRP, 2006).

The Scottish Executive Education Department (2006) discussed benefits for children when parents are involved as follows; it is easier for children to learn when they are encouraged by parents, children achieve more when their parents are involved, children get access to more activities when there are adults to assist them, children's concerns can be sorted out quicker when there is a positive relationship between parents and teachers, children are cheerful when

their parents enjoy events in the school. Benefits for parents when they are involved in their children's education include that they are able to assist and encourage their children, they acquire more information about their children's education and parents build confidence and skills (The Scottish Executive Education Department, 2006). The following are benefits for the school when parents are involved; parents bring skills which complement skills and expertise of educators, parents contribute their time, therefore teachers and parents can do more activities with children and parents can share ideas with teachers on how to reach other parents (The Scottish Executive Education Department, 2006).

Kernan (2012) discussed parent involvement in early learning in the Netherlands. Kernan (2012) explained that harmonization between child-rearing and education at home and in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) is lacking and there is need to enhance the communication between parents and ECD educators. Family's social class, parents' level of education, health, single parent status influence the degree and form of parent engagement in early learning. Factors that strain relations between parents and practitioners include; lack of confidence, different understandings and expectations, and differences in views between parents and practitioners (Kernan, 2012).

Mwirichia (2013) discussed the influence of parent involvement on academic performance of preschool children in Kangeta division in Kenya. Mwirichia (2013) concurred that parents face many challenges that inhibit them from playing an active role in their children's life and development. The challenges that were mentioned in this paper include insufficient time, job type, rules at home, level of education, order of priority, view on voluntary work, home environment, time taken to attend to school activities, purchasing instructional materials, attending parent meetings, conferences, sports, discussing the child's performance and academic

clinic day. Turning a blind eye to these needs has a negative impact on the child's performance and development (Mwirichia, 2013).

Mwirichia's (2013) study addressed the following objectives; to find out whether parent-school communication has an influence on academic performance of preschool learners, to find out whether parents' participation in educational activities at school has an influence on children' academic performance, to investigate whether parents' participation in educational activities at home has an influence on children's academic performance and to investigate whether home environment has an influence on children's academic performance. Mwirichia's (2013) research findings are as follows; home environment was found to have negative and positive influence on children's academic performance, parent participation in educational activities at school had an indirect influence whilst participation in educational activities at home had a direct influence and parent-school communication had an influence on children's academic performance to some extent (Mwirichia, 2013).

Miedel and Reynolds (1999) discussed parent involvement in early intervention for disadvantaged children. Key drivers of parent involvement that were mentioned include parent's sense of empowerment, parent's attitude towards involvement and parent's level of education. In terms of the research study conducted by Miedel and Reynolds (1999), teachers were asked to describe how parents are involved and they listed the following; playing with the child, involving the child in other activities outside of school, attending meetings and awareness of the child's development needs. Strategies and techniques that increase parent involvement that were identified by Miedel and Reynolds' (1999) are; being accessible to parents, frequent phone calls, active use of newsletters for communication, home visits as well as developing positive relationship with parents.

Miksic (2015) gave examples of traditional understandings of parent involvement and the following were mentioned; attending parent-teacher conferences, supervising fieldtrips, volunteering in classroom and supervising children's work. Hanni and Phippen (2010) discussed parent involvement in the classroom. In this paper, it was stated that teachers and staff need to have positive attitude in order for parents to feel welcomed and wanted in classrooms. Hanni and Phippen (2010) also stated that single parents with full time jobs barely have time for their children's education.

Jeffries (2012) explained that parent involvement during preschool has been associated with stronger pre-literacy skills, mathematical skills acquisition, well-developed skills as well positive attitude towards school. Jeffries (2012) reported a research study on parent involvement and the purpose of this study was to measure the impact of parents' active involvement in a parent-directed early literacy intervention on parent home-based involvement, school-based involvement, and home-school conferencing among head start parents and their preschoolers. Jeffries (2012:4)explained that school-based involvement include, "behaviours and activities in which parents engage at school, such as volunteering in the classroom, attending class trips, and facilitating the planning of events or fundraisers." Parent participation in activities was regarded as moderate.

KidsMatter (n.d) discussed building partnerships between parents and early childhood staff. KidsMatter (n.d:1) stated that, " partnerships start with positive relationship and involve; everyone being equal and contributing in different ways, … listening and talking to each other, making an effort to understand and trust other people's points of view…" Children succeed when adults caring for them work together, when children observe that there is positive communication between parents and staff, they learn that it is important to build healthy relationships. Benefits of interaction between parents and staff include benefit from resources and ideas that others

provide, parents develop strong connection with children and parents have more opportunities to discuss the child's development (KidsMatter, n.d).

Ondieki (2012) discussed the role of parent involvement in preschoolers' education in Nairobi. The main objectives of the study were to investigate the relationship between parent participation in preschool activities and preschoolers' performance, and influence of home-tutoring on performance. According to the research results, frequency of involvement in ECD activities was different for each activity. The least participated activities that were discussed include meeting attendance, volunteering and attendance at events. Ondieki (2012) explained that communication between parents and the ECD centre occurred through phone calls, short visits to the ECD centre and exchange of written notes between parents and teachers.

According to the research results reported by Ondieki (2012), parents who participated in various preschool activities such as meetings, communication with the school and volunteering had an influence on the academic performance of a preschooler. The research concluded that home tutoring activities such as encouraging children and helping children had a positive impact on the performance of preschoolers (Ondieki, 2012).

Ondieki (2012) furthermore mentioned that parents can support their children's learning by attending school functions and parent-teacher conferences. Ondieki (2012) explained that parents can serve as advocates for the preschool, they can volunteer to assist with school activities or work in the classroom and furthermore take an active role in decision-making process necessary for planning, developing and providing quality education to children. Parent involvement in children's education is related to improved performance (Ondieki, 2012).

Larocque, Kleiman and Darling (2011) argued that the value of parent involvement is acknowledged however participation is difficult to promote and maintain. Larocque et al. (2011) stated that teachers lack information or training on how to effectively work with parents.

Larocque et al. (2011) discussed strategies to address challenges that affect parent involvement in preschools. Parent involvement can be demonstrated through participating in the following activities; volunteering at preschools, helping children with their homework, attending school functions, visiting the child's classroom and taking on leadership roles and participating in the decision making process (Larocque et al.,2011). It is important for schools to address emotional barriers, physical barriers and cultural differences in order to increase parent involvement in ECD centres.

Larocque et al., (2011) explained that there are parents who feel excluded from the education system especially if they have not been successful academically. In this paper, it was mentioned that there are parents who have trust issues with the education system and that teachers can play a role in bringing back the trust of these parents. Larocque et al., (2011) stated that parents with lack of education can feel inadequate to the task of supporting their children and that teachers need to encourage such parents and this include assuring parents that they can play role through non-academic tasks such as communicating with the teacher if the child is experiencing difficulties with homework. Physical barriers can be addressed by having parent-teacher conferences and meetings, and language barriers can be addressed by having translators in learning environments and parents who speak the same language can be of assistance (Larocque et al., 2011).

Barnes, Mitchell, Forsyth and Adams (2005) discussed effects of parent trust on perceived influence and school involvement. Based on trust theory and previous findings, the above mentioned authors used a path model to investigate whether parental trust of the school and principal, and their involvement in their children's education at home, predict parent school involvement. According to the research findings, parental trust of the school and parent

involvement in home learning promote engagement in the school. Barnes et al. (2005) furthermore highlighted the importance of trust between parents and school staff.

Eakin (2006) discussed parent/family involvement in early childhood development, the importance and benefit of it and what parents can do to promote parent involvement. Eakin (2006) furthermore explained barriers that may hinder parent involvement in early childhood development. Eakin (2006) stated that there are many benefits of parent involvement in early childhood development. The benefits include that the child, the parent and professionals adopt a positive attitude and behaviour. Parents who are involved in their children's lives gain confidence in themselves and in their capabilities to assist the child. Parents who participate in their children's ECD centres gain an understanding of and become interested in their children's education (Eakin, 2006).

Eakin (2006) explained that parents can become involved in their children's learning by volunteering at their child's preschools, they can be part of the preschool committee and furthermore be involved in a support group. Professionals can support parent involvement by educating parents, by providing information/training about child development and empowering parents. It is crucial for parents and professionals to work together and share ideas, knowledge, skills and resources (Eakin, 2006).

Crosbie (2006) discussed the reasons for involving parents, barriers to parent involvement, methods of involvement and the importance of involving fathers in children's education. Crosbie (2006) supports some of the researchers' findings that have been discussed in this thesis thus far. Crosbie (2006) argued that the main reasons to involve parents in their children's learning include that parents are identified as the primary educators by many states and when parents work closely with their child's childcare setting, the child is more likely to have better performance. When home-school and parent-educator relations are characterized by respect and

an approach that is constructive, children will have a more positive attitude to learning (Crosbie, 2006).

Crosbie (2006) explained that benefits of parent involvement can be understood by using ABCs; Achievement and attendance, behaviour of children and climate of the setting. Crosbie (2006) argued that when parents work together in the best interest of the child, the child develops a positive interest in reaching out his or her potential. Provision of a rich learning environment at home with activities complementing those at the ECD centre is fundamental and children who develop skills and are likely to be self-controlled and co-operative. Parents are more likely to be involved if the climate of the ECD setting is one that makes parents feel welcomed, trusted, respected and needed (Crosbie, 2006).

In terms of the South African context, in 2009, it was estimated that thirty-eight percent (38%) of the country's population were children (Atmore et al., 2012). Atmore et al. (2012) mentioned that in provinces such as Limpopo, Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal there is a greater proportion of children and there are various challenges that families are facing. Biersteker and Hendricks (2013) discussed parent involvement in ECD centres in Kagisano and Ratlou Districts of North West Province. The type of parent involvement that was mentioned in this paper include fund raising, assisting with repairs, making equipment, donating equipment, helping with food preparation, assisting in classroom, attending meetings about children's education and progress and helping children learn at home. According to Biersteker and Hendricks (2013), parents mostly attended meetings about children's education and progress, parent involvement was described as moderate however it was furthermore stated that there is room for improvement in terms of parent involvement.

Bridgemohan, van Wyk and van Staden (2005) argued that close contact and regular communication between the home and the school in ECD programmes enhance the way parents

and educators work toward the goal of child development. Bridgemohan et al. (2005) explained that communication plays an essential role in all parent involvement programmes. Bridgemohan et al. (2005) reported a qualitative study which was conducted in the Reception Year (Grade R) of three primary schools in different socioeconomic communities in South Africa. The purpose of the study was to find out the type and extend of school-home and home-to-school communication in the Early Childhood Development phase.

Bridgemohan's et al. (2005) findings highlighted that the most communication was school-directed, although communication concerning a child also took place. The findings also suggested that few opportunities are offered to parents to initiate communication (Bridgemohan et al., (2005). Formal meetings were considered to be an important means of communicating with parents. Bridgemohan et al. (2005) mentioned that principals and teachers of schools who participated in the research complained about poor attendance at most of the meetings.

2.4 **Challenges faced by parents as they promote their children's development**
In this research report it has been mentioned that there are various obstacles that hinder parent involvement and that ultimately have a negative impact on children's education and development. These challenges are discussed comprehensively in this section.

The Department of Social Development (2012) explained that urbanization has changed family patterns in South Africa and furthermore led to the increase of poverty especially among the African individuals. Some parents are not able to play essential roles such as nurturing, caring, protecting and socializing in an effective manner. Many children in South Africa lack access to an education programme at an early age because parents cannot afford the early education programmes (Allie, 2011).

Atmore et al. (2012) discussed the issue of unemployment and that it hampers many parents from providing for their children. The South African government provides a Child Support Grant

to children who are eligible and this helps mothers who are too poor so that they meet their children's basic needs, for instance food (Atmore et al., 2012). Parents who have low levels of education experience difficulties especially when it comes to assisting their children with school work. Atmore et al. (2012) mentioned that South Africa has the highest number of individuals living with HIV and that some children are infected prior to and during the birth process. Health issues can limit parents from being actively involved in their children's development. Harmful environments as a result of lack of access to adequate sanitation are some of the challenges faced by some parents and this can limit them from partaking in outdoor activities.

Maluleke (2014) investigated whether parents in Vhembe District, Limpopo were involved in the education of their children. According to the research findings, parents did not attend school meetings and it was mainly because of lack of communication. The following are barriers to parent involvement that were discussed by Maluleke (2014); parents' limited education, economic status, lack of school policy, poor communication and teachers' attitude towards parents. Maluleke (2014) explained that a programme must be introduced to encourage parent involvement. In some of the literature mentioned in this research report, it was also highlighted that parents should be empowered with skills in order for them to gain self-confidence.

Patrikakou (2008) discussed the power of parent involvement explaining that parents, teachers, and policy makers have a mutual understanding that parent involvement is imperative especially with regards to children's education. Three major barriers that were stated by Patrikakou (2008) that prevent parents from getting involved are; time and life demands, lack of knowledge and the school environment. Patrikakou (2008) explained that single-parent households have been increasing and that the change in the labour force with mothers entering in the work force has made time to be a valuable commodity for some parents. Patrikakou (2008) argued that children may experience hardships in a variety of settings, for examples poverty, and insufficient

resources in the family, school or community. Patrikakou (2008) furthermore mentioned that parents of these particular children lack education and have negative experiences with the education system, and are often scared of the school environment.

Savacool (2011) explained that researchers have depicted positive effects of parent involvement in children's education, however there is little research that has been conducted to understand why some parents are not involved in their children's education. Savacool (2011) reported a research study on barriers to parent involvement in the pre-kindergarten classroom. Social economic background, parental involvement, school attendance, school influences, individual and family influences and teacher/parent communication are factors that contribute to parent/school relationships (Savacool, 2011).

The research findings reported by Savacool (2011) depicted that parents and teachers lack time to build strong relationships as result of work commitments, family commitments and other commitments. In this paper, it was mentioned that there is need of strong communication between parents and teachers and that ECD teachers should lend an ear to parents when they voice their concerns (Savacool, 2011). Savacool (2011) explained that educators and parents acknowledged that it is crucial for parents to participate in classroom activities.

The Scottish Executive Education Department (2006) stated some of the barriers to parent involvement in the school and this includes the following; time (parents are busy working either full time or part-time, some parents are raising children on their own), family circumstances and lack of confidence (there are parents who are not comfortable with school surroundings because of various reasons and this includes parents' lack of knowledge or skills).

Horvatin (2011) discussed perceived barriers to parent involvement in schools and these are; language barriers, cultural understanding conflicts, financial and work related constrains, an atmosphere that is not welcoming, inconvenient scheduling, judgmental attitudes and lack of

resources. Horvatin (2011) highlighted that teachers who are informed about the perceived barriers can assist parents who are not involved in the school.

Ozturk (2013) discussed barriers to parent involvement for diverse families in early childhood education. Ozturk (2013) stated that when parents and teachers are from different backgrounds, there are few challenges. Some of the challenges that were discussed in Ozturk's (2013) paper are; lack of confidence, lack of understanding of the home and school partnerships, work interference, negative past experiences with the school, lack of language skills and holding the school fully responsible for their child's education and lack of interest in matters concerning school (Ozturk, 2013).

Eakin (2006) mentioned that it can be time consuming for parents with other priorities in their lives, for instance financial commitments, which require them to work. Eakin (2006) affirmed that parents who cannot speak English can have difficulties in engaging with the ECD centre's staff. Miksic (2015) discussed barriers to parent involvement and stated that participation of parents from low-income and disadvantaged backgrounds compared to their counterparts was low. In this paper, it was argued that low levels of English language proficiency can limit parent involvement as well as clashing schedules and commitments. Crosbie (2006) highlighted that the main barriers to participation were lack of time, lack of opportunity to participate, having the fear of being judged and lack of knowledge.

Wanke (2008) stated that barriers to parent involvement in children's education include socioeconomic status. Based on a research study, Wanke (2008) reported that low income parents feel that schools do not encourage them and that they believe stereotypes of poor parents as inadequate care givers. Wanke (2008) explained that children from low income families benefit the most when parents are involved. Language was also considered as a barrier, lack of English proficiency prevented proper communication between parents and teachers (Wanke,

2008). Wanke (2008) discovered that working parents and parent literacy limit parent involvement in their children's education. Parents who are illiterate face challenges in helping their children with homework. Negative attitude of staff made parents to be less involved and some parents had two or three jobs therefore they had less time to be involved in their children's education (Wanke, 2008).

According to Bridgemohan's et al. (2005) research study, barriers to effective communication between the school and home are as follows; distance between home and school, negative perceptions of parents (according to the findings, educators and principals felt that some parents were not interested in their children's education because parents viewed preschool as crèche, where they just leave their children), dual career and female-headed families (parents did not have time for their children because of work), parents' fear and negative perceptions of school (according to teachers' responses, parents were not involved mainly because they were afraid of the academic environment) and grandparents as care givers (even though grandparents were willing to help and support their grandchildren, their age prevented them from playing a more active role (Bridgemohan et al., 2005).

Baker (2014) discussed challenges faced by parents and these were grouped into the following categories; parent-related challenges, child-related challenges and community-related challenges. In terms of the parent-related challenges, the following was mentioned; lack of knowledge, lack of understanding, poor motivation, poor relationships, lack of fulfilling basic needs and lack of time. Baker (2014) mentioned that challenges experienced by parents are usually linked to their lack of skills or knowledge. With regards to lack of knowledge the following was stated; some parents do not know how to identify their child's problems, others lack information about parenting, child-rearing and development, and they are some parents who lack education and this limits their involvement in their children's education.

Baker (2014) explained that children's basic needs are not being met by some parents, and financial stress and unemployment are the contributing factors that were stated. Based on the research study reported by Baker (2014), the following are the child-related challenges that were pointed out; school/homework challenges, poor discipline, poor listening and child misbehaviour. Baker (2014) also explained that if a child is a bully or being bullied this can be a challenge for some parents (Baker, 2014). Baker (2014) highlighted that there are parents who lack skills and information on how to discipline children. Drugs and alcohol abuse are community related challenges that were stated by Baker (2014) and that substance abuse by parents affects children's education.

2.5 ECD programmes available for parents and other caregivers

The ECD sector offers ECD programme options so that the needs of children and caregivers can be met and this is fundamental considering the diverse social, economic and historical backgrounds and settings that children are brought up in South Africa (Atmore et al., 2012). According to the Department of Social Development (2012), there are various programmes available in South Africa that can educate, equip and empower parents to play an active role in their children's education. The Integrated Parenting Framework of the Department of Social Development focused on encouraging the empowerment of parents with the following; understanding the development process of a child, positive parenting skills and the importance of the parent's role in the child's development process.

The Department of Social Development (2012) stated that there are non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in South Africa which facilitate programmes to support parents with children at ECD level and this furthermore includes educating parents on their role as positive parents. In South Africa, UNICEF jointly with the Department of Social Development developed a parental/primary caregiver capacity building training package which focuses on parents with zero to five year (0 to 5 year) old children (Department of Social Development (2012).

Ondieki (2012) explained the importance of attending parent training and parent teacher conferences. Ondieki (2012) discussed teachers' techniques for involving parents in their children's learning and this includes five broad categories namely; reading activities, learning through discussion, suggestions for home activities, contracts between parents and teachers (concerning rewards and punishment) and techniques to improve parents' tutoring skills (Ondieki, 2012).

Kreider (2002) reported a research study on early childhood programmes and mentioned that parent programmes shape parent involvement in ECD centres. Research findings confirmed the author's initial hypothesis and the following was reported; parents who attend their child care setting read a lot more to their children, parents are more likely to visit their child's classroom and parents network more with other school parents when they are involved. Kreider (2002) argued that programmes and schools can support parent involvement processes and the following was suggested; hosting a wide range of special events at the ECD centre, making use of routine meetings and materials such as parent-teacher conference, creating portfolio, memory books and other collections to document children's strength and weaknesses, encouraging peer networking among parents, creating opportunities for parents to meet other parents and offering reassurance to parents regarding their parenting abilities.

Mendez (2010) reported a study on the Head Start preschool programme in which two hundred eighty-eight parents participated in the research study. While parent satisfaction with the programme was considered to be high however there was less engagement in the programme. Despite low levels of participation, the programme was found to be effective (Mendez, 2010). Parents who participated in this programme were more involved in their children's education than parents who did not participate in this programme. Parents who were involved improved the

frequency of reading to their children and the quality of parent-teacher relationship was associated with parent participation on the programme (Mendez, 2010).

Crosbie (2006) discussed methods to promote the involvement of fathers in ECD centres and these include the following; offering activities for both parents, emphasizing that parent means fathers as well as mothers, welcoming fathers in spite of whether they are separated or not, scheduling activities after work hours or at weekends and including activities that support fathers to help their children to learn. Crosbie (2006) explained that introducing pictures of fathers and children at the ECD centres reinforces the significance of fatherhood.

Baker (2014) highlighted that there are different methods of programme delivery for parenting programmes and this includes individually administered programmes, group-based programmes and community-based programmes. Baker (2014) furthermore explained that in community or group programmes, the method of conveying the education content to the parents is an important factor that determines the success of the programme.

Baker (2014) explained that some of the teaching methods and materials used in parenting programmes include the following; using visual and learning aids, group discussion, role-playing, storytelling, games and play, written exercises, homework, internet and technology (Baker, 2014). Pictures, posters, artwork and videotaped introductions model skills and they make a group discussion to be interesting (Baker, 2014). Board games, crafts, play activities and puppets can be utilized to show concepts, this promotes continuity, parents can replicate their learning at home (Baker, 2014).

Smith, Robbins and Mathur (2013) focused on parent-involvement interventions designed to serve various groups of low-income children from preschool through grade three. Smith et al. (2013) mentioned a Head Start programme that helped African-American parents and their children. Companion Curriculum (TCC) programme provided monthly teacher-led workshop, in

this programme parents observed a teacher demonstration of early learning activities and then practiced the activities with their children.

Smith et al. (2013) stated the following activities; play and conversation to promote children's social competence, story-telling and reading to promote language skills, and math activities such as counting, sorting and adding. Parents were encouraged to bring other children and family members to the workshops and there was provision of transport and food. However in spite of assistance provided and parent ratings depicting satisfaction, only forty percent (40%) attended two or more meetings (Smith et al., 2013).

The Family Mathematics Curriculum programme was mentioned by Smith's et al. (2013). This programme was implemented with a group of African-American Head Start families and Latino Head Start Families, parents had to attend eight Saturday classes with their child for four months. The parent-child pairs were given materials for a mathematical activity and parents were encouraged to take materials kits from the lending library in order to use at home (Smith et al., 2013). Parents and children who participated gained mathematical skills.

The Getting Ready Intervention was aimed to help parents increase their sensitive engagement with children and become aware of their child's strength, and understand early development. Teachers were also trained to utilize these strategies when engaging with parents (Smith et al., 2013). The Incredible Years Parent Programme (IYPP) was intended to promote children's social-emotional competences and reduce challenging behaviours that get in the way of learning. Smith et al. (2013) explained that parents who participated in IYPP reported that children had less behaviour problems and they were better at managing their emotions and behaviour.

Berry, Biersteker, Dawes, Lake and Smith (2013) write that parenting programmes have shown to be effective in improving parenting skills and improving parent knowledge about care giving, and parent involvement enhances the child outcomes. Berry et al. (2013: 63) stated that parenting

programmes must have several elements including the following; "a clear defined target population, a programme design and delivery system that is tailored to the needs and cultural background of participating parents … well-trained staff and well-supervised staff, rigorous monitoring and evaluation process to ensure that the programme is executed as intended."

Atmore et al. (2012) explained that the range of ECD programme options available in South Africa include non-traditional ECD provisioning. The non-traditional ECD provision includes various programme options which are usually provided by community members trained by service providers including ECD Non-profit Organizations (NPOs). Family outreach and play groups are the two main programmes discussed in the above mentioned paper. The family outreach programmes involve providing ECD services within a home, the family outreach workers educate caregivers on health, nutrition, safety and other fundamental topics, these programmes empower parents and other caregivers (Atmore et al., 2012).

2.6 **Summary**

The key points that were dealt with in this chapter include the ECD policies and legislation, and theoretical models/ conceptual framework for the research study. This chapter presented the following policies and legislation; Constitution of Republic of South Africa, No 108 of 1996, the Children's Act, No 38 of 2005, Children's Amendment Act, 2007, Education White Paper 5 on ECD 2001 and White Paper for Social Welfare (1997). The following theories were discussed; parenting styles, Epstein's typology of parent involvement and the theory of overlapping spheres of influence. This chapter discussed parent involvement in ECD, focusing on the international context, regional context and the local context, challenges faced by parents as they promote their children's development and the ECD programmes available for parents and caregivers. The literature review section has depicted that there are important benefits that parents, teachers and children derive from parents' participation in activities at the ECD centre including parent programmes. The benefits include healthy communication between parents and teachers,

generation of enthusiasm and furthermore development of positive self esteem and confidence.

The following chapter (chapter three) focuses on the research design and methodology.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

Introduction

This chapter discusses the research design, methodology, data collection approach, data collection tool, data collection apparatus, data analysis method, data verification and limitations of the research study concerning parent involvement in ECD centres in Masiphumelele. Research methodology refers to methods that are used to conduct a research study and concentrates on the tools and procedures that are used in a research (Babbie and Mouton, 2001).

3.1 Research design

Research design can be defined as a plan of how an individual intends to carry out the research study and furthermore focuses on the outcome of the research (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). In terms of the research that was conducted on parent involvement in Early Childhood Development centres in Masiphumelele, the research design included qualitative methods. For Babbie and Mouton, the primary purpose of using a qualitative approach is to be able to describe and understand rather than explaining human behaviour (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). This particular study was an exploratory research study. Punch (2005) refers to an exploratory study as investigation of a new interest by a researcher.

3.2 Research Methodology

The research methodology provided the researcher with procedures regarding how to approach the study. This section discusses how the researcher gained entry to the community where the sampling was done, the sampling procedure, the steps in the process of securing the sample, data collection approach, data collection apparatus, data analysis method, data verification and limitations of the research.

3.2.1 Gaining entry to the context where sampling was done

Sampling is important in research. It includes knowing which people to interview and which events to observe. Gaining entry to the context where sampling was done was not difficult

because the researcher had previously worked at various ECD centres in Masiphumelele. In 2014, the researcher conducted a study on ECD in this particular community for the Masiphumelele NGO Forum. The researcher obtained a list of the ECD centres in Masiphumelele from the Valley Development Project and Work for Love organizations. Principals of the ECD centres in Masiphumelele gave me permission to interview them and I was given a proper welcome on the day of each and every interview.

3.2.2 **Sampling procedure**

Purposive sampling is usually used in qualitative research and was used in this research study. Purposive sampling means "sampling in a deliberate way, with some purpose or focus in mind" (Punch, 2005:187). The reason for using purposive sampling is because the researcher is familiar with the Masiphumelele community, the community members and has access to the ECD centres in this township. The researcher is familiar with the community and principals from ECD centres in Masiphumelele. A sample of nineteen ECD principals was constructed.

3.2.2.1 **The steps in the process of securing the sample**

The following steps show how the researcher secured her sample;

- The researcher had a list of thirty-three (33) ECD centres in Masiphumelele community obtained from the Valley Development Project and Work for Love organizations which work in Masiphumelele.

- The researcher then purposively selected and contacted nineteen ECD centres and requested to interview the principal.

- The researcher selected those ECD centres which had been in existence for a year or more, were the principals had been trained on a recognized national qualification framework ECD programme and were the ECD centre was supported by a Non-Profit ECD training provider in the community.

3.3 Data Collection Approach

Data collection refers to all the activities that are aimed at collecting sufficient information to answer the research questions (De Vos et al., 2005). In-depth interviews is one of the main data collection approaches in qualitative research. Babbie and Mouton (2001:291) defined in-depth interview as "…a process where the researcher is not all that interested in the content of conversation, but rather in the process by which the content of the conversation has come into being."

Interviewing individuals is an appropriate way of accessing people's views, meaning of situations and their own construction of reality. This study made use of in-depth, face-to-face interviews and the researcher conducted nineteen in-depth, face to face interviews. The researcher was given permission by the interviewees to record the interviews and all the necessary information was recorded. The researcher paid attention to every detail that was mentioned by the respondents and valued their views. This provided an understanding of parent involvement in ECD centres in Masiphumelele.

3.4 Data collection instrument

This study made use of a semi-structured interview schedule. The semi-structured interview schedule was developed by the researcher. Interviews are important in terms of achieving the active involvement of respondents in formation of data about their lives (Punch, 2005). De Vos et al. (2005:296) stated that semi-structured interviews are, "… suitable where one is particularly interested in complexity or process, or where an issue is controversial or personal…In this relationship, the participant can be perceived as the expert on the subject and should be allowed maximum opportunity to tell his or her story." The semi-structured interview schedule allowed the researcher to explore the topic more openly and participants were able to express their views in their own words.

3.5 **Data collection apparatus**

A recording device was used to record all the interviews. Before each interview, the researcher requested permission from participants to record the interview and permission was granted by all the respondents. Data collection apparatus such as a recording device is very useful because it records the interviewee's exact words. The recording device allowed me to concentrate on exploring the topic, and to be more attentive during the interview process.

3.6 **Data analysis**

De Vos et al. (2005: 333) defined data analysis as "the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data". The data that was collected during the research was analyzed using Tesch's approach (Tesch, 1990 in De Vos et al., 1998:343-344). The steps are as follows;

- The process involved transcribing all the interviews and analyzing each transcript.

- During the analysis, labels were accorded to various texts in an effort to understand the underlying meanings in relation to the objectives of the study.

- The text was coded according to main themes, categories and sub-categories.

- Further refinement of this coding was done in order to arrive at a coding framework, which made sense of the data.

- The findings were written up using the coding framework as a guideline.

- Actual quotes were used to illustrate the themes/categories/sub-categories and these quotes were linked to various authors in the literature review.

- The researcher added her critical commentary in the discussion. This was done by comparing and contrasting the research findings with other studies in order to provide critical understanding as to why it is similar or different.

3.7 **Data verification**

Data verification involves taking into consideration issues of neutrality, consistency and applicability (De Vos et al., 2005). Four components of data verification are; *credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.* Among the four mentioned components credibility and confirmability are important with regards to qualitative research. The following focuses on the four terms in detail;

- **Credibility**

Babbie& Mouton (2001:277) explains that credibility makes researchers question themselves about the findings, if the findings ring true and if there is "...compatibility between the constructed realities that exist in the minds of the respondents and those that are attributed to them..." Credibility was accomplished through the following procedures; prolonged engagement, persistent observation, recording accurately, checks and debriefing (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). The researcher recorded all the interviews accurately using a recording device and transcribed accurately all that was recorded (Babbie and Mouton, 2001).

- **Transferability**

Transferability can be defined as the degree to which the results can be applied in other contexts. The findings of this research study are specific to a small number of individuals in one community and it is difficult to demonstrate that the research findings are applicable to other populations and environments (Babbie and Mouton, 2001).

- **Dependability**

Babbie and Mouton (2001:278) explained that dependability is where by a research study is able to "provide its audience with evidence that if it were to be repeated with the same or similar respondents in the same context, its findings would be similar." This research report has

discussed the research design and methodology comprehensively so replication with similar results should be achievable.

- **Confirmability**

Confirmability can be defined as "…the degree to which the findings are the product of the focus of inquiry and not of the biases of the researcher" (Babbie and Mouton, 2001:278). The researcher reviewed six classes of data stated by Babbie and Mouton (2001) and these are; raw data (recorded voices, written field notes and transcripts), data reduction and analysis products (write-ups of notes), data reconstruction and synthesis products (themes were developed, findings and conclusions are presented), material relating to intentions and dispositions (this included personal notes and expectations), and instrument development information (such as forms and preliminary schedules).

3.8 Limitations of the research study

Babbie and Mouton (2001) discuss limitations that pertain to the research methodology that is used in qualitative research. In this research study, sample size was the only limitation identified by the researcher. The sample size pertaining to the research was limited to nineteen respondents and it was restricted to one geographical area. The findings should be interpreted in the context of this specific sampled population. The collected data cannot be generalized to the greater population in South Africa because the sample size is small. Despite the limitations, the study was completed and the research objectives were met.

3.9 Summary

Chapter three discussed the research design and methodology. This research study is qualitative in approach. Sampling procedures, data collection strategies and analysis strategies are set out and discussed. The researcher did not have any difficulties gaining access to the ECD centres in Masiphumelele because she was familiar with the community. A complete list of all the ECD

centres in Masiphumelele was used in purposively selecting the sample for the study. Chapter four which follows presents a profile of respondents and presents the results and findings of the study.

Chapter 4: Results and Discussion of Findings

Introduction

Chapter four presents the findings of the research study on parent involvement in Masiphumelele. The section outlines a profile of respondents involved in this study and the status of ECD Centres in this community. This chapter presents a framework for discussing the findings, four relevant themes and the subcategories. Verbatim quotes from participants are included to support the researcher's findings.

4.1 Profile of respondents and status of the ECD Centre

Table I shows the profile of study respondents and the registration status of ECD centres in Masiphumelele in order to gain an understanding of the participants of this research study. Table I indicates that nineteen ECD centres participated in this research study. From this table we can see that of the nineteen ECD centres that participated in this study, fourteen were not registered and five were registered with the provincial social development authority. The registered ECD centres receive a subsidy from the provincial government and four of them have been functioning for more than ten (10) years.

Table I: Profile of respondents

Respondent	Position at ECD centre	ECD Centre name	Year ECD centre started	Registered	Children registered for	Receives ECD subsidy
One	Principal	Sinothando	2005	No	20	No
Two	Principal	Siyakhulisa 2	2013	No	26	No
Three	Principal	Rainbow Preschool	2008	No	55	No
Four	Principal	Baby Daycare	2009	No	34	No
Five	Principal	Kiddies Corner	2007	No	37	No
Six	Principal	Ukhanyo	2010	Yes	60	Yes
Seven	Principal	Masibambane	2013	No	8	No
Eight	Principal	Masincedisane	2007	No	55	No
Nine	Principal	Khulus Corner	2011	No	15	No
Ten	Principal	Siyanesa	2011	No	21	No
Eleven	Principal	PresbyterianPhumlani	2001	Yes	60	Yes
Twelve	Principal	Siyakhula	2008	No	46	No
Thirteen	Principal	Malwande Ukhanyiso	2014	No	12	No
Fourteen	Principal	Siyanqoba	2011	No	60	No
Fifteen	Principal	Home of Love	2007	No	32	No
Sixteen	Principal	Little Stars	2013	No	18	No
Seventeen	Principal	Ikhaya Labantwana	2000	Yes	70	Yes
Eighteen	Principal	Masakhane Educare	1993	Yes	153	Yes
Nineteen	Principal	God's Little Angel	2003	Yes	25	Yes

4.2 Framework for analysis

The main research questions and data collected during the interviews were used to develop the framework for analysis. Table II shows the relevant themes and categories developed by the researcher and they will be used to discuss the research findings.

Table II: Framework for analysis

Themes	Categories
Parent involvement in ECD centres	Parent workshops and/or training
	Parent attendance at workshops and/or training
	Parent participation in playroom activities
	Parent participation in planning ECD centre trips
	Parent attendance at school trips
	Parent engagement with teachers regarding child's learning and behaviour
	Voluntary work by parents in playrooms
	Parent participation in fundraising activities
Factors that enhance parent involvement in ECD centres	Unity among parents
	Take-home activities
	Hosting general parent meetings
	Effective communication between parents and ECD staff
	Parent Days
	Hosting parent workshops
	Adopting positive attitude towards parents
	Parent class visits
	Providing adequate physical space for parents
Factors that inhibit parent involvement in ECD centres	Lack of time
	Single parenthood
	Lack of interest
	Lack of education
	Poverty

	Unemployment
Challenges that parents face in getting involved in ECD centres	Coping

Trusting other parents

Participation in education activities

Provision of basic needs

Payment of ECD centre fees |

4.3 Presentation and discussion of findings

The findings from this study are presented using the main themes/categories as headings.

4.3.1 Parent involvement in ECD Centres

This section discusses parent involvement in ECD centres and includes all the categories presented in the framework for analysis. In some cases, the researcher makes a comparison between parent involvement in registered ECD centres and non-registered centres. In terms of the research conducted in Masiphumelele, most principals at non-registered ECD centres stated that there is lack of parent involvement at ECD centres. Participants at registered ECD centres reported that some parents are involved in their children's learning and development. Wanke (2008) supports the researcher's findings by stating that although parent involvement is an important variable that has a positive influence on children's education, there is still lack of parent involvement in children's education. Kernan (2012) argued that there is lack of harmonization between child-rearing and education at home and in early childhood education and care (ECEC), and that there is need to enhance communication between parents and ECD teachers.

Fund raising, assisting with repairs, making equipment, donating equipment, helping with food preparation, assisting in classroom, attending meetings about children's education and progress and helping children learn at home are some of the types of involvement mentioned by Biersteker and Hendricks (2013). According to the participants' responses, there are parents who participate in some of the activities mentioned above however there is still lack of parent participation in activities taking place at most ECD centres in Masiphumelele. Larocque et al. (2011) concurs with my finding by stating that there is recognition of the importance of parent involvement in children's education however there is lack of parent participation in education activities. The following was reported by three ECD principals (Respondent Six, Respondent Eleven and Respondent Eighteen respectively) at registered centres when they were asked about parent involvement in the ECD centre;

> *"When we have graduation they do help us with cleaning and at the beginning of the term they provide us with books…When it comes to volunteering most of them do not come because they are working but if there is an event happening they do come."*

> *"Parents help us, for example with cleaning and when we need help. They are also involved in workshops and sometimes we do have special meetings and they attend and we advise each other."*

> *"I can say yes, because they are attending meetings, and when we call them for meetings, especially meetings, they do come... But there are parents that do not attend."*

The following quotes are from ECD principals (Respondent Two, Respondent Four, Respondent Eight and Respondent Sixteen respectively) at non-registered centres when they were asked about parent involvement in the ECD centre;

> *"Parents are not helping us, l provide most of the things that are needed at this [ECD centre], parents are not really involved… And it is difficult for some parents to even pay [ECD centre fees] in time…"*

> *"No…parents leave everything to us and they want everything from us… Parents do not help us… They expect us to do everything, what they do is to complain."*

"No…No …We don't see how they [parents] help because they don't help us at all and we would like them to help us… now it is cold and we do not have any blankets and we do not have any heater for children."

"The only thing that parents are doing is paying school fees… Parents do not help, they just say the [ECD centre fees] is up…sometimes they cannot manage to pay [ECD centre fees] but they want their children to attend…"

The findings depict that to a certain extent, parents with children who attend registered ECD centres are more actively involved in activities taking place at the ECD centre compared to parents with children who attend non-registered ECD centres.

Parent workshops and/or training

Principals at non-registered ECD centres stated that they do not offer parent workshops and/or training while some ECD principals at registered centres indicated that they offer parent workshops and training. ECD centre principals who did not offer parent workshops at their ECD centres reported that there are organizations in Masiphumelele that provided parent workshops/training such as the Valley Development Project (VDP), the Chaeli Campaign, Wordworks and Nal'ibali. These principals explained that they only have general meetings and that is their opportunity to address any issues, or support parents about care-giving.

The Harvard Family Research Project (2006) argued that parent participation in ECD centre-based activities and frequent communication between parents and teachers is connected to the outcomes of young children and examples of parent participation practices that were mentioned include parent workshops as well as parent-teacher conferences. Berry et al. (2013) also explained that parent workshops and training is an effective strategy to improve parenting.

Ondieki (2012) highlighted the importance of attending parent training and parent teacher conferences. Bakers (2014:57) argued that, "addressing the lack of effective parenting skills and management of parenting programmes could improve child-rearing practices in South Africa."

The ECD non-profit training organizations in Masiphumelele are making a positive difference by offering parent workshops. ECD centres could adopt their approach of offering parent workshops and training in order to increase parent involvement in ECD centres. The following are participants' responses (Respondent Three, Respondent Five, Respondent Six, Respondent Eight and Respondent Eleven respectively) when they were asked if they offer parent workshops or training;

> *"I have never tried workshops … we are willing to do that but there are people who come like Rosemary from Chaeli Campaign who is a speech therapist, and Wordworks has placed an appointment to come and interview me [about] workshops."*

> *"Yes, we do, at Masakhane there is Linda Lamb who organizes all training and teachers can go … Linda Lamb offers training including training for parents.*

> *"… we do have workshops for parents and they can come if they are free, it's three days for three weeks… Some parents are interested in workshops and some parents don't see the importance of early education."*

> *"There are workshops [for] parents … These parent workshops are offered by Linda… Linda also provides food to unemployed parents… Linda is a lady from Ocean View and she is part of the Masakhane Educare and the Valley Development Project."*

> *"Most of the workshops are for parents to help their children at home … And to tell them stories, and we have a programme from Nal'ibali, they give us stories to read to children and we give them to parents to read for children…And there is a lady called Rosemary and she helps children who are facing various barriers, so sometimes we have workshops with parents, Eva … Rosemary, me and my staff so that they[parents] know that they are part of their children's development."*

According to the research findings, registered ECD centres that did not offer parent workshops did encourage parents to participate in parent programmes offered by organizations in Masiphumelele.

Parent attendance at workshops and/or training

The research findings show that parent attendance at workshops and/or training offered by the previously mentioned non-profit ECD organizations and few ECD centres is poor. Mendez (2010) explored a study on the Head Start preschool programme and two hundred eighty-eight (288) parents participated in the study. Parents were satisfied with the programme, however the engagement of parents in the programme was reported as low. The programme was found to be effective despite low levels of involvement (Mendez, 2010).

Lack of parent attendance at workshops or training is a finding substantiated by Smith et al. (2013) who discussed a Head Start programme that helped African-American parents and their children. The Companion Curriculum (TCC) programme provided monthly teacher-led workshop and parents were asked to observe a teacher demonstration of early learning activities. Parents practiced the activities with their children and the learning activities included story-telling and reading to promote language skills, play and conversation to promote children's social competence, and math activities such as counting, sorting and adding. Regardless of the fact that parents received food and free transport, and the parents ratings for the programme showing satisfaction, only forty percent (40%) attended two or more meetings (Smith et al., 2013).

Ondieki (2012) discussed parent attendance at workshops and that it is crucial for parents to attend parent training and parent teacher conferences, and that it is an opportunity to enhance teaching skills. However according to the research findings there was room for improvement. The following is what Respondent Five, Respondent Eleven, Respondent Twelve and Respondent Sixteen respectively reported, with regards to parent attendance at workshops or training;

> *"Most of them are usually busy so few parents do attend… Those who are unemployed or who will be free to attend usually do so, otherwise the rest will be at work."*

> *"Most of parents who attend are the ones who have children in Grade R… we focus on them [Grade R learners] because they are about to go to Grade one…"*

> *"Very few of them [parents] attend… I mean out of the forty-six parents… you will find that it is five [parents] that come for workshops."*

> *"We no longer offer parent workshops, we have meetings because we used to invite parents for training but they would say they are busy or working."*

According to my analysis of the research findings, parents with children who attend at registered ECD centres had better attendance at workshops and/or training compared to parents whose children attend non-registered ECD centres.

Parent participation in playroom activities

Parent participation practices include assisting teachers with playroom activities and partaking in extended class visits (Harvard Family Research Report, 2006). The research findings indicate that there is lack of participation in playroom activities. Parents participate in playroom activities infrequently because of various reasons including lack of time as a result of many priorities or demands and lack of education. It is also noted that nearly all principals at registered ECD centres mentioned that there are some parents who participate in playroom activities.

Biersteker and Hendricks (2013) discussed parent involvement in Kagisano and Ratlou Districts of North West Province. The findings depicted that there is a lack of parent participation in classroom activities and that there is potential for further involvement. Crosbie (2006) explained that there are benefits of parent involvement and that they can be understood by using ABCs; Achievement and attendance, behaviour of children and climate of the setting. Crosbie (2006) stated that when parents are involved the child develops a positive interest in reaching out his or her capability.

According to a research study reported by Biersteker and Hendricks (2013), parents assisted in playrooms and parent involvement was described as moderate. The following are responses of principals (Respondent Four, Respondent Five Respondent Seven and Respondent Thirteen

respectively) at non-registered ECD centres when they were asked whether parents participate in classroom activities. The quotes depict that there is lack of parent participation in playroom activities;

> *"No parents don't help us, as I have mentioned before, they leave everything to us, and they don't help us with playroom activities."*

> *"When we ask them, they do help us... especially parents who are not working... We usually ask two parents to come and help us if there is a teacher who is not feeling well or when we are short of staff, that is how they help us."*

> *"No, parents do not help us with playroom activities, however there is one parent who helps me if she is free, there she is (she points a lady who came into the room)."*

> *"No, parents do not participate in playroom activities. Parents think that they lack teaching skills, there are many activities that they can help us with."*

Below are the responses of principals at registered ECD centres when they were asked about parent participation in classroom activities (Respondent Six, Respondent Seventeen and Respondent Eighteen respectively);

> *"Yes, with telling stories and some wearing clothes that represent their culture and children will then learn about cultures ... may be two or three parents [participate in classroom activities]."*

> *"Yes sometimes parents do help us with play room activities, sometimes they do come and play with children."*

> *"There are parents who come and help us [ECD teachers] at the centre and if they are busy to help us they ask how children are doing in class…"*

Parent participation in planning ECD centre trips

Few participants reported that parents do participate in planning ECD centre trips and many principals mentioned that parents were not involved in this regard. Ondieke (2012) explained that parents can take an active role by participating in planning activities at their children's preschools and this also includes planning school trips. Eakin (2006) argued that it is crucial for parents and professionals to work together and share ideas, however the findings depict that there

is a need for a strong partnership between parents and ECD teachers, and this includes sharing field trip ideas. When Respondent Four, Respondent Thirteen, Respondent Fourteen and Respondent Fifteen respectively were asked about parents' participation in planning school trips they stated the following;

> "It is difficult for us to even have those trips because l have to do everything… So far we have not had any trips this year, normally when it is close to December, when it starts to [get] hot we have two or three outings."

> "Yes some parents do participate in planning ECD centre trips and they make sure that when we go out their children are wearing warm clothes and proper shoes, parents also prepare food for them."

> "Parents are always busy, they are not available… And those that will be having a day off they tell us that they do not have time because of so many other commitments that they have."

> "Parents do not plan but as a preschool we bring up suggestions…we [ECD staff] bring up suggestions…And if they like our suggestions we go to those places."

Parent attendance at ECD centre trips

According to the Harvard Family Research Report (2006), parent involvement takes various forms and this includes attendance at ECD centre trips. The research findings show that there are parents who attend ECD centre trips when they are informed by ECD centre staff. Some parents are unable to attend trips due to lack of time or limited number of parents needed for the trip. Patrikakou (2008) stated that time and life demands can limit parent involvement. The following quotes were reported by Respondent Six, Respondent Twelve, Respondent Fourteen, Respondent Fifteen and Respondent Eighteen respectively, when they were asked about parent attendance at school trips;

> "Yes and parents also want to see places, if we plan any trip we give parents consent forms to sign…Parents do come and we need three parents to join us on the trips and two parents will remain behind and prepare special food for the children."

> "…we write letters to parents informing them when we are having the trips and where. They [parents] go with us and help us to take care of children."

"This year we have not gone out but last year we went to Imhofu farm and we went to Aquarium, when the time to go comes, parents will be busy but they help us with entrance fee and transport fee and that is how parents support us."

"...we go to places like Kirstenbosch, Wynberg Gardens or Wynberg Park ... Last week Friday we went to Aquarium with older children…When we go out we usually ask one of the parents to be a volunteer."

"Yes if we ask them, if there are parents who are interested to go with us on trips they go with us."

Parent engagement with teachers regarding child's learning and behaviour

Participants were asked whether parents talk to teachers about their children's learning and behaviour. ECD centre principals indicated that there are parents who engage with teachers in this regard, however few parents do so. Bridgemohan et al. (2005) reported a research study that was conducted in the Reception Year (Grade R) of three primary schools in different socioeconomic communities in South Africa to investigate the type and extent of school-home and home-to-school communication in the early childhood development phase. Bridgemohan's et al. (2005) findings show that there are few parents who discuss their children's learning and behaviour with teachers. When principals were asked to comment on parent engagement regarding the child's learning and behaviour, they responded as follows (Respondent Four, Respondent Eight, Respondent Eleven, Respondent Sixteen and Respondent Seventeen respectively);

"Not all of them [parents], most of the time they respond to what we ask them, for instance, we ask them if Luntu [name of a child] does this and then they say yes he does."

"Yes there are parents who do that [engaging with teachers regarding the child's learning],it is important for parents to come and talk to us ..."

"Not always… When we see that the child is not behaving, we write letters inviting the parents… That is when we talk to parents because this is a three legged thing, that is; teacher, parent and child."

"Yes, yes because we assess them, we observe them and when we see where the child is lacking we invite the parents and sit down with them…"

> *"They do not ask about their children's performance. Only few children say that our parents teach us or look at our work at home, very few."*

The research findings also depict that there are parents who hardly engage with teachers or ask about their children's performance and well-being and this has a negative impact on their children's education. Crosbie (2006) stated that when parents work closely with their child's childcare setting, the child is more likely to have better performance.

Voluntary work by parents in playrooms

Epstein (n.d) explained that volunteering includes recruiting and organizing parent assistance and one of the sample practices is a playroom volunteer programme to assist teachers. Participants were asked whether parents volunteer in playrooms and most principals stated that there is lack of voluntary work by parents. Ondieki (2012) discussed parent involvement in preschoolers' education in Nairobi, Kenya and reported that parents can serve as advocates for the ECD centre, they can volunteer to help with ECD centre activities or work in the playroom and also play an active role in decision-making processes necessary for planning, developing and providing quality education to children.

Ondieki (2012) reported that volunteering was one of the least participated activities by parents. Hanni and Phippen (2010) also discussed parent involvement in the playroom and it was mentioned that teachers and staff should have a positive attitude so that parents feel welcomed and wanted in classrooms. The following quotes were stated by Respondent One, Respondent Seven, Respondent Nine, Respondent Eleven and Respondent Eighteen respectively;

> *"I think it is because they are busy working so they do not have time and some parents come late from work, parents are usually tired to even think about volunteering at the ECD centre."*

> *"No, parents do not volunteer at the ECD centre, however there is one parent who assists us when she is not working."*

"Uhmm, no because they are usually busy, parents are very busy to volunteer, work takes most of their time and some are busy with household chores."

"Not always ... we have volunteers... If any parents want to volunteer they are welcome to come to do so… Yes, parents must not be scared to come because we are not always using English, we also use our home language."

"Not really, few parents help us in playrooms, parents don't really volunteer at the ECD centre, most parents will be at work."

The first three responses are from principals at non-registered ECD centres and the last two quotes are from principals at non-registered ECD centres. The research findings indicate that there is a lack of voluntary work at ECD centres regardless of whether the ECD centre is registered or not.

Parent participation in fundraising activities

Fundraising activities are really helpful and fundamental because funds raised can enhance the programme and conditions at ECD centres. At the time the research study was conducted, non-registered ECD centres either did not have fundraising activities or they lacked parent participation in fundraising activities. Nearly all the registered ECD centres had fundraising activities and parent participation was considered to be moderate. The various fundraising activities that were discussed by principals include contribution of money by parents, having events and paying an entrance fee, and selling food and art work.

Patrikakou (2008) explained that having insufficient resources can limit parent participation in ECD activities and this includes their participation in fundraising activities. Biersteker and Hendricks (2013) reported research findings regarding parent participation in fundraising activities, concluding that few parents participated in fundraising activities. Below are responses from principals at registered ECD centres in Masiphumelele (Respondent Six, Respondent Eleven and Respondent Eighteen respectively) when they were asked about parent participation in fundraising;

"They [parents] do, like on Valentine's Day we do have activities happening and parents and children contribute money... we then save the money for graduation."

"Yes, lovely, they[parents] participate in fundraising activities, not all of them but most of them. Parents are even welcome to suggest fundraising activities and tell us to change some of the current fundraising activities ... We have the funny day on Friday and birthday celebrations and parents contribute money. On funny day, parents contribute R5 ... And if that is not enough we invite parents and ask them to add R50 instead of R5 to meet certain target."

"...we sell boervors, sausages (buying sausage and selling it), some parents contribute towards that when we ask them to contribute or when we ask them to bring something, they do contribute..."

The following responses were from principals at non-registered ECD centres (Respondent Four, Respondent Fifteen and Respondent Sixteen respectively) when they were asked whether parents participate in fundraising activities;

"We have not done any fundraising at this ECD centre, I don't want to lie to you. We only rely on ECD centre fees paid by parents, they cannot afford to contribute financially and some parents struggle to even pay [ECD centre fees]."

"No because we don't do fundraising ... And actually the whole Masiphumelele does not ...there are no fundraising activities... Hahaha, yes even when I [attend] High School or Primary School meetings l have never had any of them saying that they do fundraising."

"Some parents do help but some of them struggle to contribute... we do fundraising on Fridays, like we do our planning from Monday to Thursday and then Friday we sell cakes for R40 and then we buy stationery with the money, especially those children who do not have stationery because some children have families that are poor and have financial problems."

Some participants at non-registered ECD centres highlighted that there are parents who are sceptical of the ECD centres' reasons for having fundraising activities. Principals reported that some parents question their purpose for raising funds. Principals stated that these particular parents think that their contribution might be misused.

4.3.2 Factors that enhance parent involvement in ECD centres

The Scottish Executive Education Department (2006) discussed the benefits of parent involvement at the ECD centre and this includes that parents bring skills which complement educators' skills and expertise, parents contribute their time, therefore teachers and parents can

do more activities with children. Parents can also share ideas with teachers on how to reach other parents. This section discusses factors that enable parents to be involved in their children's education and in the ECD centre.

Unity among parents

Participants reported that unity among parents enhance parent involvement in the ECD centre. ECD centre principals highlighted that there are few parents who support one another. KidsMatter (n.d) explained that parents and staff can be in different stages of building partnership. KidsMatter (n.d:1) furthermore stated that "Building partnerships takes time and ongoing process effort and everyone needs to keep working at it; taking small steps works best." The following responses are from Respondent Nine, Respondent Eleven, Respondent Twelve, Respondent Fourteen and Respondent Sixteen respectively;

> *"Few parents help each other…there are few parents who assist other parents with their children's clothes if they are too small. Parents should learn to support one another."*
>
> *"Yes, when we tell parents that they are children suffering they sometimes help us with clothes and then we give children that need clothes. Parents thank each other and start to talk to one another more often…"*
>
> *"Parents do not support each other. We would love to see parents helping other parents. Parents should share ideas and encourage each other and not discourage one another."*
>
> *"It is important for parents to support one another because parents get to know each other and help each other. For example, if people do not talk to one another, you will not know where they need help so it is important to communicate with other parents."*
>
> *"Parents do not support each other, may be they do it at their homes, at the ECD centre they don't, they are not united. Parents should learn to care for each other and help each other…"*

The above stated responses indicate that most parents are not really united, they do not work together. KidsMatter (n.d:1) explained that parents and staff who build partnerships interact well with each other, and a positive environment promotes children's mental health as well as their wellbeing.

Take-home activities

Ondieki (2012) explained that preschool home activities are important and improve child's learning and they encourage parent participation. According to the research findings, participants reported that there are few parents who help their children with learning activities assigned by ECD teachers. Grade R learners are usually given activities to do at home. Epstein (n.d) argued that learning at home is fundamental and it involves providing information and ideas to families on how to assist learners with educational activities at home. Here the findings depict that there is lack of parent involvement. When principals were asked whether parents help their children with learning activities at home, the following were their responses (Respondent Six, Respondent Eleven and Respondent Fifteen respectively);

> *"Parents do not help children with their learning activities the way we ask them … sometimes it is because they do not know how to help them … And usually some of the parents do not attend parent workshops... parents can simply teach their children when they are doing laundry, for example they can ask for a certain number of pegs and the child will count the pegs…Parents should support children with their learning and get help from teachers or other parents."*

> *"I even tell parents that they can participate by telling their children the weather each and every morning by watching SABC 1 or 2 and write down the minimum and maximum temperature for the day, and also tell them if the weather is cold or hot … And children come and tell us that their parents told them if the weather is hot or cold."*

> *"There are parents who help their children with learning activities at home and at the ECD centre and some parents don't. Some will say what is the point of bringing children at ECD centre if we expect them to teach children at home and then we have to explain the importance of teaching children at home and some parents then start to assist their children."*

Atmore et al. (2012) discussed the issue of illiteracy. Parents with low levels of education experience difficulties especially when it comes to helping children with their education. However attending parent workshops can be beneficial as parents are likely to gain information on how to help their children with learning activities at home and at the ECD centre.

Hosting general parent meetings

According to the research findings, conducting meetings and sharing ideas with parents can improve parent involvement in ECD centres. Bridgemohan et al. (2005) reported a research study on parent involvement in ECD centres, and meetings were considered to be an essential means of communicating with parents. Biersteker and Hendricks (2013) focused their research on parent involvement in children's education. It was found that parents mostly attended meetings about children's education and progress, and their involvement was described as moderate. In spite of the research findings depicting that there is inadequate attendance at meetings by parents in most of the Masiphumelele ECD centres, participants mentioned that conducting meetings is an opportunity to address issues that parents and teachers experience.

Eakin (2006) explained that parents who are involved in their children's ECD centres, gain an understanding of and become interested in their children's education and this includes attending meetings and communicating with ECD teachers. Kreider (2002) discussed strategies that schools can use to encourage parent involvement and meetings were suggested. Principals also explained that parents should engage with teachers and this can improve their involvement at the ECD centre. The following quotes were stated by principals and they are with regards to conducting meetings at the ECD centre (Respondent Two, Respondent Six and Respondent Fifteen respectively);

> *"…l think if we have meetings, they [parents] can be involved. Parents and ECD staff can share ideas, and issues that parents face at the ECD centre can be addressed."*

> *"Parents are usually busy, but having meetings with them enhance their involvement. And our meetings do not take long because parents don't have time for some of the activities happening at the ECD centre."*

> *"Uhmm, l would say meetings, inviting parents for meetings and have discussions with them and address issues that we are both facing and this will benefit children."*

Effective communication between parents and ECD staff

Two participants stated that effective communication with parents enhance parent involvement in the ECD centre. Mwirichia (2013) highlighted that parent-school communication has a positive influence on children's education. According to KidsMatter (n.d:1), building partnerships between parents and early childhood staff has positive effects on children's education and development. KidsMatter (n.d) stated that children flourish when adults caring for them are united and children imitate what they see. Respondent Two and Respondent Seventeen (respectively) said the following;

> *"I think the only way is to invite them [parents] and we can have a discussion with them and get their views on how they can get involved."*

> *"...Parents should engage with us and ask us about their children's performance not only leaving their children and picking them up after work."*

Parent days

There are participants who reported that parent days or special days for parents to discuss their children's work and behaviour with teachers at the ECD centre improve parent involvement. Miksic (2015) explained that parent involvement has many dimensions and this includes parent-teacher contact and parent days promote parent-teacher contact. Jeffries (2012) acknowledged that school-based involvement include activities in which parents are involved at the ECD centre such as functions. The following are participants' responses with regards to parent days (Respondent Five, Respondent Eleven and Respondent Sixteen respectively);

> *"... if you ask parents to come and look at their children's work they get so excited ... Parents look at their children's work and we discuss their children's performance, where they are lacking and where they are doing well."*

> *"... we focus on them [Grade R learners] because they about to go to Grade one ... firstly we give parents their children's files and see where they can help them ..."*

> *"... we give parents an opportunity to come to the ECD centre and look at their children's work because we have got their personal files, their work files, then they can see the work of their child and we also give reports and parents can see their children's performance."*

Few ECD centres have parent days especially the ones with children who are zero to four years and the researcher's analysis of research findings, some principals consider the age cohort to be too young to have this particular day.

Hosting parent workshops

Two participants stated that hosting parent workshops improved parent involvement in ECD centres. Mendez (2010) mentioned that parents who participate in a parent programme at ECD centres are more involved in their children's education compared to parents who are passive. Berry et al. (2013) explained that parenting programmes are effective in enhancing parenting skills and improving parents' knowledge about care giving and this is more likely to improve child outcomes. Maluleke (2014) stated that ECD centres should introduce developmental programmes in order to encourage parent intervention.

Smith et al. (2013) explained that parents benefit from parent programmes. Smith et al. (2013) reported positive results for an intervention that served African-American parents and their children in the Head Start programme. The Department of Social Development (2012) highlighted that there are non-governmental organizations that facilitate programmes in South Africa to support parents with children at ECD level and this includes educating parents on their role as positive parents. Respondent Ten and Respondent Eighteen mentioned that workshops can improve parent involvement in ECD centre, they said the following;

> *"And also workshops, parents need to attend workshops, they can learn a lot, they can get information and be able to help their children."*

> *"I think …if we have workshops with them [parents] and explain more, … and then probably they will be involved but we are working with parents that are very busy, because they come and go in the morning and come late, we don't blame them for that… but they are some[parents] that are really interested …"*

Adopting a positive attitude towards parents

A positive attitude of ECD staff towards parents can increase the involvement of parents in activities that take place at the ECD centre. There are two participants who stated that it is crucial to have energetic teachers at the ECD centre. Hanni and Phippen (2010) argued that it is imperative for teachers and other ECD staff to have a positive attitude in order for parents to feel welcomed and wanted at the ECD centre. Crosbie (2006) highlighted that parent involvement can increase if the climate of the ECD setting is one that makes parents feel welcomed, respected and needed. Wanke (2008) mentioned that negative attitude of staff can make parents to be less involved. The following quotes were reported by Respondent One and Respondent Eleven;

> *"It is important for the ECD staff to be bubbly and friendly to parents and our ECD teachers are cheerful people."*
>
> *"If you are talkative, smile, talk to the parents and give them advice, and tell them this can help the child, school and staff, if you are free and talk to parents they get involved, for example there is a parent who came to me and said, 'how can we make tracksuits' because they saw other children wearing tracksuits with the name of the school on the [tracksuits]."*

According to the research findings, most participants mentioned that the attitude of their staff was a positive one and that parents are too busy to be involved.

Parent class visits

Two participants stated that parent class visits increases parent involvement at the ECD centre. This ECD principal reported that parent class visits is an opportunity for parents to observe activities done in classrooms and implement their learning at home. Eakin (2006) highlighted that ECD teachers can support parent involvement by educating parents, providing information about child development and empowering parents. Eakin (2006) argued that when parents and teachers work together ideas, resources, knowledge and skills are shared. Respondent Two and Respondent Twelve stated the following;

> *"Parents need to help us at the ECD centre, they can help us in [playrooms] and also practice what they see in [playrooms] when they are at home."*

> *"... parents should come and observe how we teach children in playrooms, like those who are not working they should come and see what we are doing... [parents] take ECD as daycare, and that we just look after the children, they do not understand that we are really teaching them."*

Providing adequate physical space for parents

Research findings depict that ECD centres in Masiphumelele lack physical space and this limits parent involvement and parent participation in outdoor activities. There are two participants who indicated that adequate space can immensely improve parent involvement in ECD centres. The following responses were reported by Respondent Seven and Respondent Nine respectively;

> *"Ey at the moment l don't have space so it is difficult for them [parents] to be involved, we need space. As you can see this is a small room and it cannot accommodate all the parents."*

> *"May be if we can have a bigger space for our ECD centre may be they [parents] can get involved... Yes, maybe parents can help us, if there is space."*

4.3.3   **Factors that inhibit parent involvement in ECD centres**

The following are the factors that hinder parent involvement in the ECD centre;

Lack of time

Principals pointed out that lack of time due to commitments especially work commitments made it difficult for parents to be involved. This finding regarding lack of time is supported by Baker (2014) who stated that lack of time inhibits parent involvement in children's education. The findings link with what was stated by Wanke (2008), that lack of time hinders parent involvement in ECD centres. Patrikakou (2008) concurs with my findings by highlighting that time is a barrier that prevents parent involvement. The Scottish Executive Education Department (2006) discussed barriers to parent involvement and time was highlighted, it was mentioned that parents are busy working.

According to a research study conducted by Savacool (2011), it was concluded that parents and teachers lack time to build strong relationships as a result of work and family commitments. Eakin (2006) highlighted that parents have other priorities such as work commitments and lack of time was pointed out as a factor that inhibits parent involvement in ECD centres. The following comments were made by participants when they were asked about factors that inhibit parent engagement at the ECD centre (Respondent Four, Respondent Sixteen and Respondent Seventeen respectively);

> *"Some [parents] are busy with work, some parents just lack enthusiasm ... And at times you can tell that a particular child does not get love from parents."*

> *"The main thing if we want to have a meeting, they [parents] always say that they are going to work so we can't go to their homes and see that this parent did not go to work ... Hahahaha, yes so they always say they do not have time or say that they come late from work."*

> *"Most of the parents are working...... they[parents] should also have time for their children even if it's short time or ten minutes ... usually parents do not have time for their children."*

These comments show that work commitments take up parents' time. Participants however indicated that parents should do their best to have time for their children and assist them with their learning, and be passionately involved in educational activities carried out at their children's ECD centres.

Single parenthood

Consistency and stability of caregiver's presence is fundamental especially presence of both parents in a child's life. Single parenthood is a factor that was highlighted by respondents. Patrikakou (2008) stated that there has been an increase of single-parent households and that changes in the work force has made some parents to be very busy in order to make ends meet. According to a research study reported by Bridgemohan et al. (2005), it was evident that as a result of dual careers, parents had limited time and that there was lack of parent involvement in

female-headed families. Respondent Fifteen and Respondent Eighteen respectively said the following;

> *"I think we have to bear in mind that most parents are single parents ... And other parents have two jobs or three jobs so for them to be available all the time it is difficult, after work they have to cook unlike where by [both] parents come early from work and help each other with household chores ... And for example, you find that a parent has three children and she has to cook and prepare food for children, what can she do? Nothing, she cannot leave her children and come here, she might even come with the children but she will be busy thinking A, B and C."*

> *"I think it's because they are busy at work and ... you know that we are living in a busy society, and we are working with single parents and everything depends on them. There must be a mother, there must be a dad in a family, l think that must be one of the problems, most of the parents are single, there are few parents that are married, ... it is also the problem, they[single parents] are busy and they are tired."*

Lack of interest

The research findings indicate that some parents lack interest in ECD and these parents do not participate in activities at the ECD centre. In Bridgemohan's et al. (2005) study, it was stated that educators and principals feel that most parents are not interested in their young children's education because parents see the ECD centre as a facility where they just leave their children and do not get involved. Ozturk (2013) supports the research findings by stating that there are parents who hold the school fully responsible for their child's education and who lack interest in matters concerning school. The following responses were made by participants and they show that lack of interest is a factor that makes it difficult for parents to be involved (Respondent Three, Respondent Four and Respondent Nineteen respectively);

> *"Some parents are not busy, it is only that they are very lazy, when it comes to ECD they usually think that it is about just leaving their children in care of someone else ... ECD is no longer about napkins and feeding, it's about the physical development, all these learning areas, so l think if we can have workshops to teach them about the importance of ECD, but we have always told them that it is no longer about napkins and feeding, we do teach the children in a way they can never understand ... They usually don't go to the Pink House, Chaeli Campaign is there to educate you on how to help your child so that you can meet the teacher half way. They [parents] do not attend."*

"I think it is because they lack interest in ECD, they just wait for us to do everything and give them free things .... Some are busy with work but some lack enthusiasm... And at times you can tell that a particular child does get love from parents."

"...parents lack interest...they don't take crèche as important, they take primary schools' meetings as important but not preschools' meetings."

Lack of education

Lack of education was stated by principals as a factor that inhibits parent involvement. ECD

centre principals highlighted that some parents who are uneducated do not value early education.

These parents do not see the importance of assisting children with learning activities at the ECD

centre and at home. In a study conducted by Maluleke (2014), it was evident that lack of

education was a factor that inhibits parent in involvement in ECD centres. Miksic (2015) argued

that low English proficiency makes it difficult for parents to be involved in ECD centres and this

was also reported by one of the participants. Participants (Respondent Six, Respondent Eleven

and Respondent Nineteen respectively) said the following;

"Generally, parents are lazy to come and be involved in the ECD centre ... Lack of education or not understanding the importance of ECD is an issue for some parents."

"Some [parents] are scared to come and spend time with the principal... Some parents say l cannot speak English, some parents lack education and some parents are working."

"Yes, education is very important, a person who is not educated is more likely not to know the importance of early childhood [development] ... Preschool is very important and ... it is the foundation... there are parents who lack education who do not see the importance of [ECD centre activities], they think [an ECD centre] is a place to leave a child and pick him or her up after work."

Poverty

According to the research findings, poverty is one of the factors that hinders parent involvement

in the ECD centre activities. Richter et al. (2012) stated that poverty has pervasive effects on the

healthy development of children and that parents who are poor are usually unavailable

emotionally because of long working hours and stress. Atmore et al, (2012) explained that

children in South Africa have been affected by social and economic inequalities especially black children. Poor parents are usually unable to support their children's education because of their own lack of education and economic stresses. The following responses were stated by ECD centre principals and they are with regards to poverty (Respondent Nine, Respondent Thirteen and Respondent Sixteen respectively);

> *"... most of them [parents] live in shacks so when it is raining they face many challenges including making sure that the shacks are not leaking. That makes them to come late to the ECD centre to even pick up their children."*
>
> *"Yes being poor can make it difficult to be involved and it makes you to think a lot so it really affects."*
>
> *"In Masiphumelele there are so many children from poor families and parents sometimes cannot afford some basic needs and stationery and some [children] come hungry. So sometimes we cook porridge and oats and ... sometimes they[children] only bring two slices of bread for the whole day so if we have bread we give them, at times we even share our lunch with these children."*

According to the research findings, parents with low socioeconomic status have less access to resources to promote and support their children's development. They are unable to provide quality care, toys and books to encourage children with learning activities. The Masiphumelele community has individuals who are struggling and many parents depend on state grants, poverty is thus a challenge.

Unemployment

Unemployment is an issue that was pointed out by participants as a significant factor that inhibits parent involvement at the ECD centre. Unemployed parents in poor communities usually lack resources and at times they cannot provide for their children. South Africa makes provision for the caregivers of children who are unable to provide basic needs, through the Children Support Grant (CSG) every month to cover the basic needs of a child (Atmore et al., 2012). Baker (2014) stated that the issue of unemployment makes it difficult for parents to provide for children's basic needs. Participants explained that unemployment is a factor that inhibits parent

involvement and the following are their responses (Respondent Two, Respondent Four and Respondent Fifteen respectively);

> "...some parents are facing many challenges including not being able to get a job, so some [parents] do not have money to buy the needs of the family, so this can hold parents back in terms of getting involved."

> "We also have parents who are unemployed and they cannot provide for their children and they cannot contribute financially at the ECD centre. Some parents lose their part-time jobs and they have to look for other jobs and they say that it takes time to find another job."

> "... there are parents who are still struggling to pay [ECD centre fees] and others lose their jobs and be unemployed. MasiCorp helps struggling parents to pay school fees."

4.3.4 Challenges that parents face in getting involved in ECD centres

Allie (2011) highlighted that some parents are unable to play essential roles such as nurturing, caring, protecting and socializing in an effective manner because of various challenges that they face. In terms of the research study conducted in Masiphumelele, there are different responses that principals stated with regards to the challenges that parents face in getting involved. There are participants who indicated the challenges faced by parents in getting involved and some ECD centre principals reported that involved parents did not really have challenges. The following responses were stated by participants who mentioned that parents did not really face challenges at the ECD centre(Respondent Five, Respondent Seven, Respondent Nine and Respondent Ten respectively);

> "They [parents] do not really face many challenges because we show them everything and how they are supposed to teach and usually children know what they want."

> "Parents are happy even the parents that assists us, l can't really say they face challenges."

> "They don't really have challenges, there will be so many people at the park and they [parents] just have to make sure that children do not hurt themselves." (Respondent Nine was referring to few parents who go out to parks with ECD teachers and principals.)

> "The ones that help us are used to playing with children and other parents usually thank them and buy drinks for us."

Coping

Participants reported that when parents volunteer at the ECD centre or go on ECD centre trips with children and the ECD centre staff, they struggle to cope with managing children. Principals explained that there are times when parents do not know how to deal with children who misbehave at the ECD centre and that parents get frustrated by such behaviour. Baker (2014) discussed child-related challenges and these include poor discipline, poor listening and child misbehaviour, and the research findings also depict that some parents lack skills and knowledge on how to deal with children. The following are participants' responses regarding coping challenges faced by parents at the ECD centre (Respondent Nine, Respondent Eleven, Respondent Thirteen and Respondent Fifteen);

> *"When we go out with parents we do enjoy but they do realize that it is not easy to take care of many children. They realize that we are doing a difficult job, they even tell us that they will not be able to take care of many children the whole day."*

> *"... they [parents] shout at children if they are not listening and we tell them not to shout but talk to children. We even tell them not to beat them when they see that they cannot cope with children."*

> *"They [parents] do face challenges, they say that they can't cope, it's difficult to take care of many children and they wonder how we cope."*

> *"Others [other parents] are honest and tell us that they can't cope especially when children are making noise and not listening ... Some parents get annoyed when children keep on calling them, one after the other ... But the ones we recently went out with, some [parents] could cope and some could not."*

These comments indicate that it is imperative for parents to have training on how to discipline children and how to take care of many children.

Trusting other parents

Participants explained that there are parents who have trust issues. They do not trust other parents and this affects their involvement at the ECD centre. Crosbie (2006) stated that the main challenges to participation for parents include lack of trust among parents and having a fear of being judged because of lack of knowledge. Barnes et al. (2005) argued that it is important to

build trust in schools and this promotes engagement. Participants (Respondent Six, Respondent Eight and Respondent Twelve) stated the following;

> *"...the main challenge that parents face is that they sometimes discourage each other or they don't trust each other. Some parents look down upon other parents or they compete with one another instead of helping each other."*

> *"For example, we have a festival that is coming soon and we are preparing lanterns and parents are supposed to come in the evenings but because some parents do not trust each other or they do not get along, they cannot come together and help at the ECD centre in the evenings."*

> *"Parents should learn to trust other parents because they can learn a lot from each other. When a parent needs help they should learn to help each other and encourage one another."*

Participation in education activities

There are participants who stated that participation in education activities is a challenge for some parents and this is mainly because of parents' low levels of education. The findings concur with Larocque et al., (2011) who found that parents who are not educated can feel inadequate to the task of being involved in their children's education and that educators need to support such parents. Baker (2014) also explained that challenges faced by parents in getting involved are usually associated with their lack of skills or knowledge.

In terms of lack of knowledge, Baker (2014) reported the following; some parents do not know how to identify problems faced by their children, others have inadequate information about parenting skills, child-rearing and development and that there are parents who face the issue of lack education. The research findings are also supported by Patrikakou (2008) and Crosbie (2006) who stated that lack of education is a challenge for some parents. The following responses were made by Respondent One, Respondent Eleven and Respondent Thirteen (respectively);

> *"...And some parents are not educated and they do not know how to help their children, what they do is to bring their children here at the ECD or take them to the library, when they get home they do not know what to do…"*

"Sometimes parents are scared to participate because they are not educated… Parents should feel free to participate, where they need help they should inform us and they should not be embarrassed or ashamed that they are not educated because they can help us in so many ways."

"...most of these children's parents dropped out of school and they struggle to help their children with their learning. They are not working and they depend on social grants from the government."

There are ECD centre principals who said that parents would like to participate in activities taking place at ECD centres and engage with principals and teachers, however they hesitate to do so because they assume that English is the main language that is used to communicate at the ECD centre. Participants explained that even though English is used at ECD centres, other home languages are used and parents should not be reluctant to participate in various activities. The research findings indicate that education is fundamental and being able to read and write can make parents to be more involved and furthermore make positive difference in their children's education.

Provision of basic needs

ECD principals stated that parents face many challenges including the inability to provide their children with basic needs required at the ECD centre. Wanke (2008) explained that low-income parents do not feel encouraged by ECD teachers to participate in various activities at the ECD centre. Baker (2014) argued that usually children's basic needs are not being met by parents because of lack of financial stress. Horvatin (2011) discussed perceived barriers to parent involvement in schools and lack of resources was pointed out.

Patrikakou (2008) supported the above reported findings by stating that parents face various adversities and this includes lack of resources and this can furthermore limit parents in participating in activities taking place at their children's ECD centres. The following responses were reported by participants (Respondent Two, Respondent Three and Respondent Ten respectively);

"...some parents cannot afford to buy some basic needs of their children and this can make them not to be more involved at the ECD centre. I am dealing with parents who are really suffering ... And it is really hard for parents to be able to pay [ECD centre] fees in time... Some parents call me to say that they do not have napkins or food, 'can you please help me', you see ... There are many challenges."

"When we have trips parents should not worry about food. They should choose volunteers and contribute money and if they cannot afford we can help them and then buy food and prepare the food then we are ready for the trip."

"...and usually I inform parents to prepare food for their children even if it is pap, they must not bring their children with nothing. Parents should talk to us... we have recently bought vegetables from the shop because there are many children without food... Children usually like butternut."

In the light of the above comments and what has been discussed thus far, it is clear that lack of basic needs is a challenge faced by parents and hinders parent involvement in ECD centres.

Payment of ECD centre fees

Participants indicated that some parents cannot afford to pay ECD centre fees and this puts learners at risk of being excluded from the ECD centre. ECD centre principals reported that some parents change ECD centres if they owe ECD centre fees and some parents relocate and do not pay ECD centre fees. Allie (2011) explains that there are children in South Africa who lack access to an education programme at an early age mainly because parents cannot afford the early education programme. The following was stated by respondents (Respondent Eleven, Respondent Sixteen and Respondent Eighteen) and it is with regards to payment of ECD centre fees;

"And sometimes parents take children to Eastern Cape without notifying us and they would be owing us [ECD centre] fees and then come back later. These are some of the challenges we are facing. Parents should be honest when they cannot afford to pay [ECD centre] fees not to just leave."

"We have a problem with that[payment of ECD centre fees] because parents are paying [ECD centre fees] but not all of them...We have this book (she takes out a book), can you see it is only four who have managed to pay [ECD centre] fees in time, the rest are behind."

"Some parents think they do not have any responsibility and what they do if they are owing [ECD centre] fees is that they go to another preschool and say the child is coming from Eastern Cape…"

Summary

Chapter four focused on a presentation of the findings of this research study. The main themes that have been discussed in this section are; parent involvement in the ECD centre, factors that enhance parent involvement in ECD centres, factors that make it difficult for parents to be involved in ECD centres and challenges that parents face in getting involved at the ECD centre. Categories that are linked to the above mentioned themes have been discussed. Direct comments made by the nineteen respondents have been provided to support the findings made in each case. The following chapter (chapter five) focuses on conclusions and recommendations arising from this research study.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

Chapter five covers the main conclusions which are drawn from this study. Recommendations that relate to what the researcher feels should be done based on the findings are also presented in this section. This chapter also includes recommendations to ECD principals and teachers, parents, Non-Profit Organizations and recommendations for further research, and a conclusion that brings the research report to a close.

5.1 Main conclusions of this study

5.1.1 Parent involvement in the ECD centre

The following main conclusions emanate from the research findings and are with regards to parent involvement in ECD centres in Masiphumelele;

- In the light of what has been found in this research study, the frequency of engagement with parents in the various ECD centre activities is different for each activity. Overall, however it is evident that there is a lack of parent involvement in ECD centres.

- Very few ECD centres in Masiphumelele offer their own parent workshops and/ or training. Organizations such as the Valley Development Project (VDP), Wordworks, Nal'ibali and the Chaeli Campaign offer parent programmes in Masiphumelele. All the ECD centres and parents in Masiphumelele are welcome to participate in these parent-focused activities. Parents who attended and are active in workshops and/ or training are more likely to know how to assist their children and this has a positive impact on the child's performance.

- Few parents attended parent-focused activities because of time constraints due to various commitments including work commitments. There is room for substantial improvement with regards to parents' participation at workshops and/ or training.

- Parents' participation in playroom activities is poor. Some parents are reluctant to participate due to various reasons and this includes lack of education and skills to do so. Other parents did not have time to be involved because of many other commitments. With the high unemployment rate in areas such as Masiphumelele, some parents expect to receive payment for participating, so they end up not volunteering.

- Few parents participated in planning ECD centre trips. While parents would like to attend ECD centre trips, there is usually a limited number of parents who are needed by principals and teachers.

- Parents do engage with ECD teachers and principals about their children's learning and behaviour but this number is very low.

- Parents often do not trust ECD centre reasons for raising funds and are thus reluctant to make a contribution.

- Parents do not support each other for various reasons. Some parents have issues of trust. Few parents help each other and share ideas.

5.1.2 Factors that enhance parent involvement in ECD centres

The main conclusions regarding factors that enhance parent involvement are;

- General parent meetings and effective communication between parents and ECD staff, especially teachers improves parent involvement in ECD centres.

- Regular parent days can motivate parents to be more involved in activities at the ECD centre. Currently few ECD centres in Masiphumelele have such occasions which provide an opportunity for parents to meet with teachers.

- Adequate physical space for parent events can enhance parent involvement. Lack of physical space makes it difficult to have activities at the ECD centre that parents can participate in.

- ECD centre staff should adopt a more positive attitude towards parents and parent involvement. This will increase parent participation in activities at the ECD centre.

- Parent involvement in the playroom enhances parent involvement in their children's education and is an opportunity for parents to observe how children learn. This would furthermore encourage parents to provide learning activities at home for their children.

5.1.3 Factors that inhibit parent involvement in ECD centres

The main conclusions concerning factors that inhibit parent involvement are;

- As a result of many other commitments, especially work commitments many parents do not have sufficient time to be actively involved at the ECD centre.

- Single parenting often makes it difficult for parents to participate in ECD centres. Since women are most often the ones raising children because of a lack of involvement from fathers, mothers end up being stressed because of various challenges that they face.

- Parent involvement is hindered by parent lack of knowledge about the importance of early childhood development and the benefits thereof for their children. Parents therefore need to engage with teachers to increase involvement in the ECD centre.

- Poverty inhibits parent involvement. Parents who cannot provide their children with basic needs, for instance food, are not likely to be involved in parent activities at the ECD centre.

- Unemployment limits parent involvement and parents who rely on state grants are not able to make financial contributions at the ECD centre.

5.1.4 Challenges that parents face in getting involved at ECD centres

Based on the research findings, the conclusions concerning the challenges that parents face in getting involved at the ECD centre are as follows;

- When parents assist at the ECD centre, some are not able to cope with the number of children at the ECD centre.

- Parents have trust issues and this becomes a challenge in working with other parents at the ECD centre.

- Participation in education activities is a challenge for some parents because of lack of basic education, literacy and numeracy. This affects parent involvement and has a negative impact on parent ability to assist children with their learning.

- Some parents are unable to provide necessities requested by teachers at the ECD centre. Some parents cannot afford to pay ECD centre fees and this puts their children at risk of being excluded.

5.2 Recommendations

This section presents recommendations to ECD principals and teachers, recommendations to parents, recommendations to Non-Profit Organizations and recommendations for further research.

5.2.1 Recommendations to ECD principals and teachers

The recommendations to ECD principals and teachers are;

- ECD principals and teachers must develop strategies that enhance parent involvement at ECD centres. The researcher proposes that inviting guest speakers can increase parent attendance at meetings. Guest speakers should encourage parents to maintain communication with the ECD centre, to help children at home with learning activities, to attend ECD centre events, to volunteer at the ECD centre, and to participate in fundraising activities.

- Communication between the ECD centre and parents must be improved. This could be done by publishing a newsletter for parents, establishing a parent committee and regular face-to-face meeting with parents.

- Teachers should encourage parents to become more actively involved in the ECD centre especially during parent meetings at the ECD centre. This will enable parents to gain confidence and skills. Principals and teachers can request parents to assist them with outings, supervision of children and to volunteer in organizing activities for parents.

- ECD teachers should get parent feedback on meetings and events, enabling parents to communicate their concerns and needs to the ECD centre.

- The active involvement of fathers in their children's education at the ECD centre should be encouraged by ECD teachers. This can be achieved through having special days for fathers to visit the ECD centre and engage with ECD teachers especially with regards to their children's learning and development.

- ECD principals and teachers should understand the reality of single-parent families because they play a dual role in their children's lives.

5.2.2 **Recommendations to parents**

The recommendations to parents are;

- Parents should be actively involved in their children's learning and development at the ECD centre and at home. Parents can read stories to their children and teach them how to count numbers and draw.

- When parents are free, they should participate in activities at the ECD centre and this includes volunteering.

- Parents should find time to communicate with the ECD teachers about their child's learning and behaviour. Parents should talk to ECD teachers about their child's development when they drop or fetch the child at the ECD centre.

- Parents should learn to support one another by sharing ideas and parenting experiences during meetings at the ECD centre or when they meet at the ECD centre.

5.2.3 Recommendations to Non-Profit Organizations (NPOs)

The recommendations to NPOs are;

- NPOs should support parent involvement at ECD centres by training ECD teachers so that they are well informed on effective strategies to involve parents at the ECD centre.

- NPOs should educate parents themselves at ECD centres, particularly on the importance of ECD and participation in activities at the ECD centre.

- NPOs should provide ECD centres with ideas on how to raise funds in order to enhance conditions at the ECD centre.

5.2.4 Recommendations for further research

For further research I recommend the following;

Further research is necessary on parent involvement in ECD centres, especially focusing on the involvement of fathers in their children's early education. Extensive research exists on the significance of parent involvement in children's education, however few studies have examined the contributions that fathers make to their children's ECD activities. In this research study, participants pointed out that there are few fathers that are actively involved in their children's education, and that mothers are mostly involved. While mothers play an important role in their children's early education it is important to understand that fathers could play a fundamental role too. The following are some of the major questions that can be included in the proposed research study;

- How are fathers involved in ECD centres?

- Is fathers' involvement in their children's education linked to children's learning outcomes?

- Are there certain outcomes for which fathers' involvement appears to be especially important?

5.3 **Conclusion**

This research report has focused on parent involvement in ECD centres in Masiphumelele, Cape Town. This dissertation was divided into five chapters. Chapter one focused on the introduction to the research problem, chapter two completed a literature review including pertinent theoretical models and policies/legislation. Chapter three explained the research design and methodology and, chapter four presented and discussed the research findings. Chapter five focused on the conclusions of the study and recommendations.

The following four themes were discussed; parent involvement in ECD centres, factors that enhance parent involvement in ECD centres, factors that inhibit parent involvement in ECD centres and challenges that parents face in getting involved in ECD centres. In view of what has been discussed in this thesis, it is evident that the frequency of parent involvement in activities at ECD centres is limited. There is a significant lack of parent involvement in ECD centres.

According to the research findings and conclusions, factors that will enhance parent involvement include; unity among parents, take-home activities, hosting general parent meetings, effective communication between parents and ECD staff especially teachers, parent days, hosting parent workshops and training, a positive attitude from ECD centre staff towards parents, parent class visits and providing adequate physical space for parents. Participants explained factors that inhibit parent involvement in ECD centres to be lack of time, single parenthood, lack of interest in being involved, lack of education, poverty and unemployment. ECD principals stated that the challenges parents face in getting involved at ECD centres include coping, trust issues, participation in education activities, provision of basic needs and payment of ECD centre fees.

Lack of parent involvement in ECD centres is a concern because this has a negative impact on a child's education. Parent involvement in ECD centres must be prioritized and taken seriously. The recommendations made arise from this study and provide strategies and ideas on how to

increase parent involvement in ECD centres. Increasing parent involvement in ECD centres will

ultimately benefit young children, their families and their communities.

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Appendices

Appendix A- Letter of Introduction

Appendix B - Consent Form

Appendix C - Interview Schedule

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
IYUNIVESITHI YASEKAPA · UNIVERSITEIT VAN KAAPSTAD

Department of Social Development

Private Bag X3, Rondebosch 7701 RSA

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Fax No: 27-21-6892739

Email: dbxpri005@myuct.ac.za

May 2015

Dear Sir/Madam

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT YOUR ECD CENTRE

My name is Primrose Sikhanyiso Dube and I am a Masters student at UCT specializing in Social Development. I wish to conduct a research study which focuses on the topic: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT CENTRES IN MASIPHUMELELE, CAPE TOWN.

You have been selected and l would like to discuss parent involvement issues with you. For your perusal, l have attached the interview schedule which l will be using during the interview process and a copy of consent form that l will kindly ask you to sign before the interview.

Should you have any questions about the research, please do not hesitate to contact me at dbxpri005@myuct.ac.za. Alternatively you could also contact my academic supervisor, Adjunct Associate Professor Eric Atmore at Eric.Atmore@uct.ac.za.

Thank you in advance and l am looking forward to interviewing you.

Yours Sincerely

Primrose Sikhanyiso Dube

Appendix B - Consent Form

University of Cape Town

Department of Social Development

I have read the foregoing information, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study.

Print Name of Participant_____

Signature of Participant _____

Date _____

        Day/month/year

Statement by the researcher/person taking consent

I have accurately read out the information sheet to the potential participant, and to the best of my ability made sure that the participant understands all the information.

I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.

Print Name of Researcher/person taking the consent_____

Signature of Researcher /person taking the consent_____

Date _____

        Day/month/year

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
IYUNIVESITHI YASEKAPA · UNIVERSITEIT VAN KAAPSTAD

ECD RESEARCH PROJECT 2015 – INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

A. Introductory Questions

- Name?
- Position?
- Name of the ECD centre?
- When did the ECD centre start?
- Is the ECD centre registered?
- How many children is the ECD centre registered for?
- Do you get an ECD subsidy from the government?

B. Parent involvement in the ECD centre

Are parents involved in the ECD centre?

Do you offer parent workshops or training?   Yes [ ]   No [ ]

If yes, can you comment on parents' attendance to these workshops or training?

Do parents participate in planning classroom activities with the teacher? Yes [ ] No [ ]

Please explain.

Do parents participate in planning school trips for their children? Yes [ ] No [ ]

Please explain.

Do parents talk to teachers about their children's learning and behaviour?

Do they volunteer in their children's classrooms?

Do parents participate in fundraising activities for the ECD centre? Yes [ ] No [ ]

If yes, what kind of assistance is offered by parents during the fundraising period?

Do parents go on school trips with their children?

Do parents at your ECD centre support each other? Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, how?

Are there any activities that parents are involved in at this ECD centre that l have not mentioned?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, please mention the activities and how they are involved?

C. Factors that enhance parent involvement in ECD centres

Which factors enhance parent involvement at the ECD centre?

Are there any other factors that enable parents to be involved?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, what are the factors?

D. Factors that inhibit parent involvement in ECD centres

Which factors inhibit parent involvement in ECD centres?

E. What are some of the challenges that parents face in getting involved in ECD centres?