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PARENTS AND PERSONNEL'S PARTNERSHIP IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROVISIONING IN THE EAST LONDON EDUCATION DISTRICT

By

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at the

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Promoter: DR. IRENE ROY

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this study titled: **Parents and personnel's partnership in early childhood education provisioning in the East London education district** is my own work. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other University and all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as references.

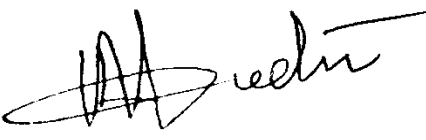**Lilymore Mudziwapasi**

Signed: ⟨signature⟩   **Date: 14 February 2022**

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I, **Lilymore Mudziwapasi,** student number **200706070**, hereby declare that I am fully aware of the University of Fort Hare's Policy on Plagiarism and I have taken every possible precaution to comply with the regulations pertaining to this policy

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ABSTRACT

Early childhood development is fundamental to human development and success in later life. Several stakeholders influence that development. Developmental policies are advocating for formal education provision at that early childhood age. Therefore, relationships and interactions of these stakeholders are of paramount importance in ensuring effective early childhood education provisioning – especially between parents and practitioners. Yet it has been reported that sharing of information concerning children's educational development is not happening between parents and ECD practitioners. ECD centres are said to face many problems such as poor teaching and learning which may result in weak childhood educational development. Some of these challenges can be addressed through enhancing the partnership between parents and the ECD practitioners. The purpose of this study was therefore to explore the parents and practitioners' partnership in early childhood education provisioning in ECD centres in the East London district. This study used the mixed method approach in the sampling, data collection and data analysis processes. The study focused on the partnership between parents and ECD practitioners, on how they work together, their views, how they communicate, on decision making and the strategies to enhance the partnership of parents and practitioners. Research questions in this study required both qualitative and quantitative data and analysis techniques. Quantitative data was collected from the ECD practitioners and principals by using questionnaires and qualitative data was collected through interviews with the parents. Quantitative data was analysed using SPSS and qualitative data was analysed using the thematic approach. The findings indicated that both parents and practitioners are working together in supporting learning and development. Parents are said to provide resources for use at the centre. Parents and practitioners are using different modes of communication for the learning and development of the children, including technology-based WhatsApp and emails. Practitioners are said to include parents in some decision making. The results indicated that even though some parents are working together with practitioners, while other parents are still showing ignorance and lack of knowledge on how they can partner for the educational development of the children.

Key words: Parents, practitioners, ECD, partnership, education development.

DEDICATION

This doctoral study is dedicated to my two children, Anopaishe Mishi and Matipaishe Mishi, and my husband, Syden Mishi, whom I love with all my heart. They always stand by me and encourage me to follow my dreams. The thesis is also dedicated to my parents, Mr Lovemore and Mrs Prisca Mudziwapasi, whom I love and cherish very much.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBRIVIATIONS

DoBE	Department of Basic Education
Doe	Department of Education
ECD	early childhood development
HIV/AIDS	Human Immune Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency
Max	maximum
Min	minimum
N	number
NAEYC	National Association for the Education of Young Children
Obs	observations
P1	parent number 1
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
PPP	Positive Parenting Programs
QUAL	qualitative
QUAN	qualitative
RSAC	Republic of South Africa Constitution
SA	South Africa
SADSD	South African Department of Social Development
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SGB	School Governing Body
SMS	short messages service
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
Std	standard
TBC	Technical Based Communication
UFH	University of Fort Hare
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Funds
UREC	University Research Ethics Committee

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1. THE IMPORTANCE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Development of children is a fundamental issue that is recognised worldwide as the basis for wellbeing as it determines the success of individuals and the economy at large (Wu, 2011). The United Nations International Children Education Fund (UNICEF) (2014) asserts that Early Childhood Development (ECD) is very important for the life of the children and also for a country as a whole.

On the other hand, the African Union's Agenda is to aim for universal early childhood education, arguing rightly that it is a vital stage of a human's development throughout their entire life (African Union, 2014). According to the African Union (2014), good educational development encompasses the health of the body and how the child socialises with others. For these to be achieved, there is need for effective childhood care and education (African Union, 2014). As a result, strategies for ensuring development of children should not be left to later stages in life, but rather be focused on from birth. Early childhood education is said to be more important (Mbarathi, Mthembu & Diga, 2016). This is supported by most people in communities, despite their financial status. According to Mbarathi, Mthembu and Diga (2016), the early years of a child are very important. That's where the child begins to develop and lead to advancement. It does not matter whether the parents are educated or not, it is important to have the knowledge concerning implementing growth and development and to put education of the child first.

It is indicated that the educational development of the children does not start when the children are at high school. Early childhood education introduces children to be organised and able to listen to instructions outside the family context. The children who attend ECD centres are said to have higher educational attainment than the ones who do not. Children who attended ECD centres are said to perform better in schools and there are higher rates of completing higher education (Vandenbroeck, Lenaerts & Beblavy, 2018).

The early years of a child are the foundation for the future development, which helps to ensure a strong base for learning and other abilities including cognitive and social development (Atmore, 2013).

There are developments within the ECD sector that signifies how different stakeholders value the contribution of ECD education. Such developments include the requirement that all practitioners have a formal qualification which will improve the quality of services rendered. In addition, department of social development is lobbying for a standard curriculum for the sector. The developments will shape the perspective of stakeholders and thus has got an influence on partnership.

1.2. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Given the importance of parents and practitioner partnership, as highlighted in the introduction, it is imperative to understand how the partnership evolves. In addition, the views of parents and practitioners on how they work together for provision of resources as well as their communication and decision-making process are of paramount importance. This understanding will assist in formulating a framework to promote partnership in early childhood educational provisioning. South Africa is at a stage where it is working towards development of an ECD curricula framework and a review of legislation and the role of government in supporting this sector. It is therefore an ideal time to generate knowledge in this regard.

Various authors argued that there are benefits that accrue from parent and practitioner partnerships, which unfortunately are observed to be lacking in the ECD sector in South Africa. The benefits which are lacking include, among other things, safety and health practices, food and nutrition practices, monitoring and regulation on the qualifications of practitioners, practices and the environment (South Africa Department of Social Development, 2014; Pitt, Lugar, Bullen, Phillips & Geiger, 2013). There is need for society to escalate the sector's level of educational development. This can only be successful if parents start to be involved.

The South African Department of Social Development (SADSD) (2014) noted that the challenges of partnership between parents and practitioners are not the same across the country. There are good practices in some provinces, whilst in other provinces parents and practitioners have problems in the partnering process. There is a need to understand the parent and practitioner partnership at a local level in the East London Education district. Results from such localised research allow digging deeper to obtain data for clearer understanding of the problem and allow the prescription of solutions that will work effectively. If success cases are found, these can be used as case

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studies in other regions and allow promotion of good practices to the rest of the country and beyond. Good examples from the South African Department of Social Development (2014) do exist but unfortunately reliable documentation is not available.

The South African Department of Social Development (2014) pointed out that the sharing of important knowledge about the ECD children's educational development is not taking place between parents and the ECD practitioners (South Africa Department of Social Development, 2014). As a result, the ECD sector in SA is reported to be facing many challenges ranging from too many informal centres, and poor teaching and learning practices resulting in weak childhood educational development (South Africa Department of Social Development, 2014; Kernan, 2012).

Petrogiannis and Penderi (2014) explained that parents and ECD practitioners in Greece do not share information or have time to talk to each other about the development of the children. The authors indicated that they only talk when parents take the children to the centre or when they finish work and come to pick up the children. Furthermore, parents and practitioners only communicate when some activities take place at the centre. It was reported that ECD centres do not favour parents' participation, but that the relationship between parents and ECD practitioners seemed to be positive albeit superficial. The more positive the parents' views of their partnership with the ECD practitioners, the more highly ECD practitioners appreciate their connection with parents in their ECD centres. Furthermore, parents felt that if their partnership with the ECD practitioners is constructive it would have some encouraging effects in the relationship between the ECD practitioners and the children (Petrogians & Penderi, 2014).

It is believed that the more experienced the ECD practitioner is, the more they are able to partner with parents. ECD practitioners who have fewer years working at the centre find it difficult to partner with parents (Addi- Raccah & Ainhoren, 2009; Petrogians & Penderi, 2014).

Findings from a study by Yulianti, Droop and Denessen (2018) supported Petrogians and Penderi's results (2014) that parents who are always involved and supportive in their child's ECD centre shape a good relationship between their children and the ECD practitioners. Moreover, the partnership between parents and practitioners is built on trust and open communication about the development of the child and matters related

to the centre in general. When parents show concern and desire to be involved in the activities of the centre, practitioners often open up and build a relationship with those parents with benefits accruing for the child through dedicated care and regular updates on how the child has spent the day (Galini & Efthymia, 2010; Yulianti Droop & Denessen, 2018). Petrogians and Penderi (2014) confirmed the notion that educational development for the children is linked to the parents and practitioners jointly. Furthermore, partnership between parents and practitioners exists as an informal social contract that brings positive developmental outcomes for a child.

However, Galini and Efthymia's (2010) study observed that parent and practitioner communication sometimes appears to be challenging. It is further explained that parents' involvement at ECD centres was restricted to parents when attending an organised activity, whereas the communication with practitioners was limited to short conversations when they drop off their children at the ECD centre or picked them at day end. Practitioners criticised the parents' unresponsiveness while parents believed that the practitioners did not need the parents' involvement at the ECD centre. Both parents and practitioners articulated an eagerness for a good partnership. Communication was said to be the only challenge between parents and practitioners. This raises the question of who is to initiate communication and drive partnership as both parents and practitioners have a vested interest for the betterment of the child's development (Petrogians & Penderi, 2014).

Even though the parents showed eagerness to take part and collaborate in most of what would be taking place at the centre, they faced challenges on how to solve some of the conflicts that were arising, for example a problem with the child (Galini & Efthymia, 2010). It was a challenge for the practitioners to have a partnership with the parents of the child. ECD practitioners felt that being open to the parent is a sign of being weak and they were afraid to be judged by the parents (Galini & Efthymia, 2010; Petrogians & Penderi, 2014).

Ellis, Lock and Lummis (2015) revealed that parents are generally content in the manner and the degree to which practitioners cooperate with them. Parent and practitioner partnership was the least reported on. The researchers reported that parents communicate with practitioners about the child's behaviour at the centre. ECD practitioners, however, only communicate with parents to provide information about

the programmes taking place at the ECD centre and to request for their help (Papandreou, Birbili & Martidou, 2009).

Rentzou and Ekine (2017) conducted a comparative study on parents' parental commitment plans in Greece and Nigeria. When comparing these two, the results revealed that in both Nigeria and Greece, the parents and the ECD practitioners have different roles, and parent and practitioner relations are still far from being a good partnership. Different cultures, beliefs and norms that are specific to countries, the regions or even localities can shape partnerships between parents and practitioners.

Wanders, Mendez and Downer (2007) defined parents and practitioners' partnership as parents' involvement in the educational development of their children's behaviours. Wanders et al. (2007) also identified the factors that impede the partnership between parents and practitioners. Such factors included financial pressure, community wellbeing, and related negatively to the parents' involvement. Some parents entered into partnership because of the knowledge concerning education and also their level of professionalism. These kinds of parents also understand the importance of parental involvement at an ECD centre. On the other hand, those parents with lower paying jobs, face a challenge in partnering with practitioners. They do not normally get the opportunity to go to the ECD centre and speak with practitioners. Most of the time their children are transported by a taxi or a bus from home and back home. It is emphasised that if parents or guardians show involvement in their children's early childhood educational development, the children are associated with greater gains in their development (Wanders et al. 2007).

In Australia, Rouse (2012) observed that parents lack trust and respect for the practitioners. Practitioners reported they felt undermined by parents. Practitioners felt both their professional expertise and knowledge of early childhood development are not being recognised. Ozturk (2013) indicated that in Turkey the barriers that inhibit parent and practitioner partnership are the result of the difference in culture and race. This impacted negatively on the communication and relationship between parents and practitioners who come from different backgrounds.

According to Mawere, Thomas and Nyaruwata (2015), the majority of the parents in Zimbabwe were at times lacking in information on the educational values and the understanding of the different phases of a child's development. This lack of knowledge

deterred some parents from establishing partnerships with practitioners. One of the parents who participated in the study indicated that practitioners invite parents when the parent is busy at work and they do not have time to meet with practitioners.

Another parent indicated that the parents and practitioners' meetings normally take the form of speeches on problems, which they are already aware of. Parents are not consulted on the matters beforehand (Mawere, et al, 2015). Some parents undermine the knowledge of the ECD practitioners and see no use in attending consultation days. Similar to what Petrogians and Penderi (2014) found in Greece, ECD centres did not favour parental participation. These comments indicate that there is a strained relationship between the practitioners and parents concerning the education of children. Parental role in early childhood development involves parents helping teachers to set the stage for children's learning. Mawere et al. (2015) recommended that it is therefore important that ECD practitioners strive to establish this reciprocal partnership with parents in order to expose children to quality ECD programmes (Mawere, Thomas & Nyaruwata, 2015).

In Nigeria, Fagbeminiyi (2011) confirmed Wanders et al.'s (2007) finding that due to economic pressure parents from a lower socio-economic background find it difficult or are unable to partner with practitioners. Parents are said to face obstacles such as lack of leave days at work or the tight time schedules, transportation and financial difficulties that result in their not being able to attend information sharing sessions. Mwai Kimu (2012) observed that in Kenya, parents and practitioners' partnership in education is restricted to meetings only about monetary aids.

Those parents who take full responsibility of their children's education provide a constructive impact on the children's performance and development. However, involvement may be hampered by strained partnership between the parents and the ECD practitioners. The nature of a parent and practitioner relationship is argued to influence the development of a child through the relationship between child and practitioner. Mawere et al. (2015) explained that for there to be a productive ECD centre, with better educational development, parents should work hand in hand with practitioners. Parents and practitioners are supposed to meet each other half way for the educational development of the children with each group doing their part.

A study conducted in Gautang, South Africa, by Meier and Lemmer (2015) to investigate what parents want, found that for a school to function well there is need for two-way communication, both from parents to the practitioners and from practitioners to parents. Results showed that parents are willing to do two-way communication with practitioners. Despite the need for two-way communication, parents and practitioners sometimes find it difficult to come together and form a partnership. The involvement of parents is said to be poor; some parents apparently only go to an ECD centre when there is need to pay school fees (Kruger & Michalek, 2011). It is recommended that communicating with practitioners more often is crucial. Practitioners should maybe record ways in which they can consult parents or make them communicate. This communication between parents and practitioners should not be from one side, for example from practitioners only, as parents are supposed to be open up to their children's teachers (Daniel, 2015). Practitioners are said to more often see themselves as more important than the parents (Daniel, 2015).

Furthermore, Pirchio, Passiatore, Tritrni and Taeschner (2015) observed that there are different views of the title role occupied by parents, practitioners and principals in the development and educational wellbeing of the children. Such different views result in non-partnering as practitioners and principals do not know how to involve parents while parents fail to understand how to engage the ECD centres. The South African Department of Social Development (2014) highlighted many shortcomings by ECD centres in involving parents in the provisioning of the programme. ECD centres failed to conduct parents' consultations, and they did not have children's portfolios nor did they provide children's reports to parents.

In a study by Prinsloo and Reid (2015), they emphasised that parental participation is crucial for the early educational development of the child. If the foundation of the child is set well there is no doubt the future of that child will be a successful one

Childrearing in Heidedal, Bloemfontein South Africa is said to be lacking (Prinsloo & Reid, 2015). Those parents who are taking part in their children's educational development are likely to see positive relations between the children and the ECD practitioners. Children with supporting parents are positive about education and this boosts their social and educational development (Sapungan & Sapungan, 2014).

Based on what was discussed above, partnership therefore involves responsibility on both the side of the parent and the that of ECD practitioners. It is against this background that this study sought to assess the partnership between parents and practitioners during early childhood educational provisioning in the early childhood development centres in the East London educational district. Given the importance of partnerships outlined before, it is imperative to assess the partnership, if any, that exists between parents and practitioners at ECD centres. The study thus assessed the role played by such partnership and its drivers.

1.3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

As already specified in the background of this research study, the sharing of information concerning children's educational development is not happening between parents and ECD practitioners (South Africa Department of Social Development, 2014; Kernan, 2012). The ECD sector in SA are said to face various problems such as many informal centres and poor teaching and learning, which results in a weak childhood educational development. Some of these challenges can be addressed through assessing the cooperation between parents and the ECD practitioners.

The South African Department of Social Development (2014) indicated that the problems being encountered by ECD practitioners and parents are not the same and that the challenges differ in each province of the country. In some provinces, the parents and practitioners are collaborating for the educational development of children, whilst in some provinces they are facing challenges in partnering. Therefore, the need exists to assess parents and practitioners' partnership in East London so that there will be no generalisation. According to the South African Department of Social Development (2014), the situation in the East London region is not known, there is no proof of the situation, nor is reliable documentation available, and therefore the need to assess the parent-practitioner partnership there.

There are some important gains if parents and practitioners work together for the educational development of the children. These include a good environment in which to learn at the centres, safe as well as good health practice, among other benefits (South Africa Department of Social Development, 2014; Pitt, Lugar, Bullen, Phillips & Geiger, 2013). The level of the community involved in the educational development of children needs to be increased and this can start with parents knowing what is

happening at the ECD centre. For a centre to have high standards it needs the effort of ECD practitioners, parents and the community to come together and create a great learning environment for children (Machen, Wilson & Notar, 2005). Parent and ECD centre connections can thus be enhanced through a good parent-practitioner partnership. Practitioners are the main connection for parents with the ECD centre, and the practitioner and parent relationship is important for pupils' success. It is against this backdrop that the assessment of the partnership becomes critical.

1.4. MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION

How do parents and practitioners partner in early childhood education provisioning in ECD centres in the East London district?

1.4.1. Sub-research questions

1. In what ways do parents and practitioners work together in supporting learning and development in early childhood education provisioning?
2. How do parents and practitioners view the way they work together on provision of resources in early childhood education provisioning?
3. How do parents and practitioners communicate in early childhood education provisioning?
4. How do parents and practitioners work together in decision making in early childhood education provisioning?
5. What are the strategies to enhance parents and practitioners' information sharing in early childhood education provisioning?
6. What operation framework could be suggested to enhance the parents and practitioners' partnership in early childhood education provisioning?

1.5. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to explore the parents and practitioners' partnership in early childhood education provisioning in ECD centres in the East London district.

1.6. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The following were the objectives of this study:

1. To assess the ways in which parents and practitioners work together in supporting learning and development in early childhood education provisioning

2. To determine how parents and practitioners view the way they work together on provision of resources in early childhood education provisioning

3. To ascertain how parents and practitioners communicate in early childhood education provisioning

4. To ascertain how parents and practitioners work together in important decision making in early childhood education provisioning

5. To identify the strategies to enhance parents and practitioners' information sharing in early childhood education provisioning

6. To develop an operation framework that could be suggested to enhance parents and practitioners' partnership in early childhood education provisioning.

1.7. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Strategies for effective ECD Educational Development are still not well understood, especially by the parents and ECD practitioners (South Africa Department of Social Development, 2014). This study contributes to the development and understanding of approaches for effective ECD provisioning in a specific context. The study may benefit ECD centres in terms of how to enhance parents' involvement for the improvement of centres' operations and ECD provisioning in effective ways. On the other hand, parents might benefit from the study in terms of how they can be involved in the development of their children. Furthermore, policy makers might benefit by proving an improved understanding of how parents and practitioners' partnerships are evolving within ECD centres and how best practices can be set to ensure best ECD provisioning. ECD practitioners and their trainers might benefit in terms of what skills are needed to ensure partnership happen between parents and practitioners to the benefit of the children. The study might contribute towards empowering all stakeholders involved in ECD provisioning (Abdu, 2014). The findings of this research study can be of use to recommend relevant approaches which, if implemented, would help improve the parent-practitioner partnership in ECD centres. This study may empower parents in order to understand and support their children's educational development needs at home and thereby complement work done by practitioners at the ECD centres (Pitt, Lugger, Bullen, Phillips & Geiger, 2013).

The most important strategy the ECD practitioner can foster is a positive relationship between themselves and the parents of the children in their care. This study will provide evidence and practitioners can benefit from the knowledge and apply strategies proposed to strengthen their partnerships with parents for the good of the children. Establishing and maintaining a noble partnership with the children's parents/guardians is very important as it is a component in supporting a child dealing with barriers to education and educational growth. However, it is imperative to note that this may become a problem for busy ECD practitioners and the parents.

1.8. RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The rationale for this study was to assess the partnership between parents and personnel in ECD centres. It is indicated that some parents and personnel are failing to partner for the better of the children in their ECD. It is important for parents and personnel to work together to help each other with the educational development of the child. There is limited research on how they should partner; therefore, the results of this study reveal the challenges faced by parents and ECD personnel and the study recommends possible strategies to improve the situation. If parents and personnel communicate and are able to share information about the child, there will be positive results in the educational development of the child – the practitioner will know how to assist the child and parents will know what is expected to assist in the educational development of the child (Kernan, 2012).

1.9. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK GUIDING THIS STUDY

Philosophy in this research study was informed by the Bronfenbrenner (1979) theory of human development ecology and the Epstein theory of parental involvement (Epstein, 2011). As a pragmatism paradigm informed research, analysis seeks to test theory and how it relates to reality. This is known as the deductive approach, where theory guides the investigation of the research problem (Creswell, 2014). In that regard, such studies move from theory to data analyses guided by theory. To better explain theory there is an embedded inductive approach where data is generated and analysed with findings linked back to theory. This is the component of qualitative data generated from interviews with parents and open-ended questions in the questionnaire for this study.

The Epstein theory supports that parent should be involved in what is happening in the children's educational development. That is, parents and ECD practitioners are supposed to communicate, parents must be included as decision makers at the ECD centre and get involved with helping the child. Epstein (2011) indicated that the partnership between parents and ECD practitioners should show that there is a shared responsibility. More so, Bronfenbrenner (1979) illustrated the systems of child development and the factors that contribute to the wellbeing of the child. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems were proposed to be able to elucidate how children develop in the context of their world. The theorist pronounced five systems that impact the development, namely the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and the chronosystem. Further it is explained that the individual's biology contributes to this structure. Both environmental and biological issues shape the development and outcomes of the child. These two theoretical frameworks guided this study to assess if there is partnership between parents and practitioners in the ECD centres in East London.

1.10. DELIMITATION

This study was conducted only in early childhood development centres in the East London district in the Eastern Cape Province in South Africa. The researcher collected data from parents and early childhood development practitioners. The focus of the data gathering process was on how parents and practitioners partner in the educational development of the children. Focusing on this area enabled a better understanding of the issues under discussion in a similar or related context. Within a small community there are shared norms and values, meaning not many cultural and social differences exist which may be confounding factors when diverse communities are included.

1.11. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The research focused on the partnership between parents and practitioners in the early childhood development educational provisioning. The researcher would like to acknowledge that this examination of parental involvement using a mixed method approach was subject to some limitations. One of the limitations of the study was the sample size – the respondents were from a limited area, namely parents and ECD practitioners from the East London education district ECD centres. In addition, a longer

questionnaire for the ECD practitioners may have been a limitation as a number of practitioners complained that there were too many questions. This study was limited to the partnership between parents and ECD practitioners in the East London district and therefore it would not be fair to generalise the results to other parents and practitioners in other parts of the country, especially those in the rural areas.

1.12. DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following terms are used in this thesis:

1.12.1. Parents

Parents refer to people who are accountable for a child's wellbeing (Kim, 2012). For the purpose of this study, parents are those family members who have children at an ECD centre.

1.12.2. Personnel/Practitioners

Personnel means people employed in an organization. In this study the researcher prefers to use practitioners which include staff who work with the children between the ages of birth and seven years (National Department of Social Development, 2015). In this study it refers to all staff who work directly with children at ECD centres (teachers and principals).

1.12.3. Partnership

Partnership in this study is the relationship that exists between parents and ECD practitioners (Brink, 2016; Mawere et al. 2015). This partnership entails actions and efforts made by any of the parties.

1.12.4. Early childhood development

ECD is an approach to strategies and to the programmes for children from zero to seven years, with the involvement of their parents/guardians and the ECD practitioners (Mawere, Thomas & Nyaruwata, 2015; Brink, 2016). In this study, ECD refers to the programmes for the children at a day centre with the participation of the parents and the practitioners.

1.12.5. Parental involvement

Parental involvement can be explained as the participation by parents in a reliable, organised and expressive way in consultation, preparation, and evaluation of programmes and activities that help their child's development (Mawere et al. 2015). In this research study, parental involvement refers to the participation of parents sharing responsibilities for the education of their children.

1.13. ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

Chapter 1

The researcher explains the issue under investigation and provides the background to the study by explaining what the international, African and the South African opinions are on parents and practitioners' partnership in early childhood development education provisioning. This chapter also emphasises the statement of the problem, pointing out the existence of a problem which caused the researcher to undertake this study. The research questions are also outlined that assisted to answer the main research question. The purpose of this study is explained, the research objectives are outlined, the significance of the study is explained, a brief outline of methodology is given, delimitations are explained and the definitions of the key terms are provided.

Chapter 2

This chapter explains the theoretical framework that was used for this study. The focus is on literature that is linked to this study regarding parents and practitioners' partnership in early childhood education provisioning in ECD centres.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 presents the justification of the research methodology used for this study. In addition, the chapter explains how data was collected, providing the reasons for the paradigm, approach, design, research instrumentation, and data collection procedures that are used.

Chapter 4

Chapter Four presents an analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data and a discussion of the findings.

Chapter 5

This chapter summarises the study, presents conclusions and makes recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented an introduction to the study, discussed the background to the study from the international, regional (African) as well as the South African perspectives. A statement of problem was outlined as well as the specification of the main research question, sub-research questions, as well as research objectives and purpose of study. Chapter One also outlined the possible significance the work may have. In addition, an overview of the research methodology was given, as well as the delimitation, definitions of key terms and lastly the chapter outline.

This chapter explains the theoretical framework that guided this study, its importance in the research study and how it informed this study. A second major component of the chapter is a review of literature relevant to this study – under themes aligned to the sub-research questions.

2.1.1. The role players in early childhood education

It is imperative to note that the support during this early age range comes from a number of key participants including parents and practitioners (African Union, 2014). Previously, childhood development was left to the family; however, it has been highly acknowledged that it is the responsibility of everyone in the society to see that the child is taken care of. This implies that all individuals, entities, groups, and systems that have the potential to interact with a child's life need to be considered. Even though it takes many people to take care of a child, the role of parents (in this study this includes guardians) is still significant as it acts as a mediator between children and practitioners, promoting their socialisation, which is important to children's development (Ceka & Murati, 2016). Education has become a fundamental service to be offered to children as part of development support and is considered a constitutional right in some countries like South Africa. For each livelihood scheme, the partnership of all parents and practitioners is also needed. The concentration of this research work was on how parents and practitioners are partnering in the educational development of children in the early childhood developmental stage.

Parents and practitioners are the immediate stakeholders interacting with a child on a daily basis and have specific roles and duties in the child's life.

It has been observed that early childhood education requires the joint effort between parents and practitioners. According to Mawere, Thomas and Nyaruwata (2015), if parents and practitioners work together, the outcome for the educational development of the child will be successful. If parents support their children at an early age, the children are likely to do well when they grow up and they will succeed in all spheres of life. It is anticipated that there will be a connection between parents and practitioners in the educational development of the child – if the parents become involved in the support of the child.

2.1.2. The context for the partnership in ECD centres

Early childhood development (ECD) comprises the policies and programmes guidelines for children from the age of 0 to 5 years of age with the support of their parents or guardians and support from ECD practitioners (herein practitioners) (South African Department of Social Development, 2013). The aim of the ECD centres is to make sure that children have all the support they need, and that their rights are being considered. This entails staying in a good environment, having good food, clothes, love and care as well as the right of a quality educational system at an early age (South African Department of Social Development, 2013). Parental involvement is said to be crucial for the educational development of children especially in the early years (Prinsloo & Reid, 2015).

Petrogiannis and Penderi (2014) emphasised that if parents are more involved in the educational development of their children, there is no doubt that the child's future will be bright. If parents are involved in the educational development of the child and have a good relationship with the practitioners at the centre, the child is likely to perform well academically (Kordi & Baharudin, 2014; Raya, Ruiz-Olivares, Pino, Herruzo, 2013 & Afolabi, 2014).

Moreover, Petrogiannis and Penderi (2014) explained that if parents and practitioners communicate well and support each other, the child will feel more loved and feel reciprocity and balance of power. It is acknowledged that collaboration between parents and ECD practitioners is very critical particularly during the early years of the

child because of the importance of children's adaptation from the home to an early childhood development centre setting. There are many reasons why parents and practitioners may have a negative relationship. Addi-Raccah and Ainhoren (2009) reported that negative relationships could be because of the parents viewing the centre as the place where they are not really appreciated. In addition, parents may feel threatened to communicate with practitioners. The fear of the parents to communicate with practitioners may be caused by the practitioners who do not have the professionalism in how to engage parents in a conversation. Furthermore, practitioners do not feel comfortable when parents are always at the centre to ask questions about their children (Addi-Raccah & Ainhoren, 2009). In this regard, this research sought to assess the nature of the partnership between parents and ECD practitioners in early childhood education provisioning in ECD centres in the East London education district. Even though literature is somewhat conclusive on the important effects of parents and practitioner partnership, there is a little evidence on the nature of the partnership, or worse still whether such a partnership exists or not. This study aimed to close these gaps for the given study area.

2.2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section focuses on defining the theoretical framework, arguing for its significance in research and two key theories that underpinned this study. The theories considered are Epstein's theory of parental involvement and Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of the child development as discussed in detail under sub-sections 2.2.2 and 2.2.3.

2.2.1. Theoretical framework and its importance in research

Grant and Osanloo (2014) regarded a theory as a significant aspect in a research study. A theory provides a structure which enables the researcher to set a base on literature and to a greater extent the methodology and analysis of inquiry in a study. In addition, Creswell (2014) supports Grant and Osanloo (2014) by illustrating that a theory enables one to classify, design and evaluate a problem to the extent that theory can be measured, verified, and extended to help as a director of research.

Furthermore, Imenda (2014) pointed out that a theory is made up of a group of interconnected concepts that representatively signify and bear a mental image of a

phenomenon. As the theory is presented and discussed, it starts to influence and shape thoughts around how the problem can better be investigated. This even extends to how the findings can be interpreted. A theory controls the concrete basis for the research. It also explains the relationship between variables, directs how data is analysed and the contextualising of results. When debating results, reference will be made to this chapter in order to position findings in theory and literature. In a deductive study as this one, the theoretical framework provides structure and parameters for the inquiry of interest.

Mwai Kimu (2012) emphasised the importance of identifying a theory for research to fully ground the study, giving the research process focus. Without a theory, the structure and the idea of a research is not clear. A theory allows the research to be powerful and well-structured with planned flow from the first to the last chapter. It is with this understanding and purpose that the theoretical frameworks underpinning this study are reviewed and discussed in this chapter.

A theory is considered as the outline of the thesis (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). Similarly, a well-versed theory will supply the reader with knowledge about the way the research was conceptualised and carried out. It also informs research questions and methodology and helps in the justification of the research problem. In this study, the critical components are the educational development of the child and the role of the parent-practitioner relationship in that educational development. As a result, the key theories identified speak to that and take the form of Epstein's theory of parental involvement and Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of child development.

Authors such as Abdu (2014) empirically emphasised that a theoretical framework should be suitable for the questions in the study. Similarly, Imenda (2014) emphasised that a theory should be able to express how the study is an extension of existing knowledge and how it contributes to the topic under investigation. The chosen theories that highlight what is known and identify any gap to be filled are articulated as justification of current study.

Grant and Osanloo (2014) indicated the importance of adding a theory underpinning a research study. Different disciplines indicate that explicit identification of a theory is important for a good study. Quality of research can be better by a theory. Theory connects the investigator to existing literature, suggesting expectations to guide the

research, serving the investigator to choose correct research questions in order for the research to prove to the reader the importance of the research questions, guiding choice of the research design, and directing the researcher to an appropriate research data gathering approaches (Grant & Osanloo, 2014).

This study focused on the ECD centres with the principals, parents and the ECD practitioners as the participants to this study, ideally the units of analysis. Therefore, the chosen theoretical framework that explains the partnership or collaborative efforts of the guardians and ECD teachers in ECD centres guided this study. As already mentioned, this research drew on Epstein's parental involvement theory and the ecological systems by Bronfenbrenner. The following section presents the main attributes of the theories in this study showing how these informed and shaped this study.

2.2.2. Epstein's theory of parental involvement

Epstein (2011) has contributed significantly to parent involvement theory in the development and education of children. Epstein has dimensions of parent participation, namely parenting, volunteering, communication, decision making collaborating and learning at home. It is suggested that these components define what should happen in the collaboration of parents and ECD practitioners. Epstein's model allows a researcher to look at partnerships using the dimensions as put forward. It provides the researcher with the explanations for what is observed or is not observed in the research on partnerships. Relevant components of parental involvement in the Epstein theory are discussed below with specific reference to this study. This study posits that communication is key and the overarching factor enabling achievement of all other components when it comes to partnership in ECD provisioning. All other components thrive on communication in one form or another. Epstein defined communication as a two-way channel between ECD centres and parents. The communication flow allows decision making, enables informed parenting (getting insights from school); informs parents of the opportunities for volunteering and enables them to express interest; enhances learning at home as parents get to know what their children must learn, and how this learning takes place; enables establishment and functioning of ECD centre-based organisations to aid decision making; and includes interacting with the broader community. Communication is therefore considered the

lifeblood of partnership between any centre and parents for effective ECD provisioning (Cano, Cape, Cardosa, Miot, Pitogo, Quinio and Merin, 2016).

2.2.2.1. Communication

Communication between ECD practitioners and parents is very important as it gives an effective platform for engagement of the parties about school programmes and educational growth of the children (Griffin & Steen, 2010). In order to include parents in the centre's activities, modes of communication such as meetings, calls, newsletters, among others, are very important. ECD programmes are supposed to be driven towards establishing regular and meaningful communication between parents and the ECD practitioners as that is what is fundamental in children's development. Furthermore, all parties involved in the life of a child need to cooperate. It is therefore of great importance to have partnerships between parents and ECD practitioners in order to enhance parental involvement, which is critical to children's educational development.

Parents feel empowered when ECD centres create welcoming outreach activities and programmes for parents (Epstein, 2011 cited in Abdu, 2014; Morrison, Storey & Zhang, 2015). This indicates that a partnership is beyond just communication between the two, but more of sharing strategies and approaches to effective teaching and learning as well as resource mobilisation. Communication is the enabling mechanism and contributes to all the possible partnership enhancing and fulfilment mechanisms.

Morrison et al. (2015) indicated that ECD centres are supposed to inform guardians about upcoming events at the centre, which evidently can be achieved through communiqué from parents to teachers or vice versa (Epstein, 2011; Symeou, Roussounidou & Michaelides, 2012). The announcement of messages is supposed to be done in a way that is constructive and clear to all parties involved. It is crucial for the ECD centre to send clear messages the parents clearly, and the documents they send to parents should be written in the popular language of the parents and children. Interpreters are also crucial for those parents who do not understand the language that is being used. If there is transparency in communication this will enable parents and practitioners to have a better understanding of their responsibilities at the centre and this will lead to the children being ready for academic development (Cano et al 2016).

Furthermore, communicating effectively, appropriately and having a two-way contact for the ECD events positively impacts upon the child to progress. This extends to positive communication to a child about the practitioner and the centre by either the parents or practitioners. Children can distinguish between bad talk and good talk, and will act in a way to reflect such talks. This implies that indirect communication between practitioner and parents, through telling a child to inform the other part about anything, needs to be done professionally. If parents communicate in a way that shows disrespect of ECD practitioners, the child will not listen attentively to the practitioner, because to the child, the practitioner is not a good person or is incompetent. This can create tension and become a learning barrier. The same applies to talks between adults in the presence of children about the ECD centre or about the parent of the child – all these conversations must be conducted in positive manner to create a conducive environment for learning for the child (Cano et al. 2016).

2.2.2.2. Parenting

Parenting activities at home, such as counting, reading, storytelling, and games that are played by the children at the ECD centre assist the parents with the skills to be able to take care of the children and to provide good settings that can allow the child's development (Epstein, 2011). ECD practitioners can introduce a range of activities that can assist parents to play significant roles in the development of the children. Epstein (2011) further showed that the quality of activities that take place in the home strongly correlates with children's academic and personal development. Practitioners are supposed to communicate with the parents of children attending the centre so that the parents are well versed in the educational development of their child and able to provide resources that are needed at the centre (Morrison, Storey & Zhang, 2015; Griffin & Steen, 2010; Cano et al, 2016).

2.2.2.3. Learning from home

Early childhood development practitioners are supposed to share information and thoughts with parents on how they can be of service to their children, assisting with after school work, school work related activities, assisting with decision making and planning. Information shared with parents should be the skills required by the ECD children. Parents need to be supplied with knowledge on policies and how they can go about monitoring and deliberating over school work at home as skills and abilities do differ. According to Epstein (2011), when ECD practitioners work together with

parents, the learners can succeed not only in the early development stage but also in every aspect of their lives. It is imperative to note that this only succeeds if communication is clear as discussed above.

Parents and teachers need specific information and training to foster constructive parent involvement in children's development (Epstein, 2011). In addition, the author stressed that if the children learn at home, this serves to reinforce learning activities in an environment different from a class. The method of learning at home boosts communication between parents and practitioners. They will be discussing how the homework should be tackled, hence there is room for collaboration between the two parties. Children understand the meaning of learning when practitioners and parents are promoting and reinforcing the same behaviours, resulting in learning becoming part of life of the child and is no longer alienated from everyday living. Epstein (2011) pointed out that ECD practitioners often do not tell the parents how they can assist their children with homework, and therefore parents experience challenges on how they can help their children. ECD practitioners are supposed to make education at home with parents possible by making information available to parents about the ECD such as homework procedures in order to assist parents to expand their children's learning activities (Morrison, et. al., 2015). That can all be achieved through effective communication between the two parties that are responsible for the greater portion of a child's time on any given day.

If children can be exposed to related learning activities at home and at the centre, this will help synthesise learning and reinforce learning. Children can easily adapt to good practices, particularly when the same are promoted at home and at the centre. The views and experiences of parents in this regard will be solicited during interviews. It will inform practitioners and principals on how parenting is taking place.

2.2.2.4. Decision making

To take in parents as partners in the ECD decision making and development process is a good idea, which is enabled through effective communication. Epstein (2011) also pointed out that good programmes can inspire parents to be more enthusiastically involved in the governance structure of the ECD centre. This involvement can help to grow positive cooperation between the parents and ECD practitioners, which will help with resource building and capacitation of the centres. The parents will have an

understanding of the needs, weaknesses and strengths of the centre and thus be able to identify more ways of involvement and thus partnering with practitioners. Epstein revealed that there are roles that parents can play and can contribute to the learning of the children – roles such as educators, supporters and also decision-makers. Epstein (2011) noted that some parents are unable to attend the workshops or meetings at the ECD centres due to matters such as taking care of other children at home, pressure at work or working outside town, or living many kilometres away from the ECD centre. Some parents may feel uninvited or terrified by the ECD centre environment and the fact that meetings may be conducted in some other languages different from English. Communication allows for the identification of these problems and brings solution to enable partnership in decision making for the better of the centre, and thus children development.

According to Epstein (2011), when parents are unable to attend the workshops or meetings it does not necessarily mean that they are not eager to attend to the educational needs of their children. Epstein (2011) explained that ECD practitioners should allow parents to freely express themselves or take a leading role in issues related to the centre (Epstein, 2011). If parents are given time to say something or contribute to the ECD centre, parental involvement will also improve. ECD centres should include parents as representatives and leaders on ECD committees (Morrison, et. al., 2015). This study has found how this is unfolding in East London ECD centres in the Eastern Cape Province South Africa, a community with many ethnic groups and therefore languages and other characteristics.

ECD practitioners are supposed to give the parents a chance to volunteer to give support to the centre (Morrison et al., 2015). An ECD centre with a volunteer programme which assists ECD practitioners, ECD children, and parents is of paramount importance. An annual survey to recognise all existing capacities, times, and places of volunteers is important to encourage the partnership between parents and ECD practitioners (Abdu, 2014, Morrison et al., 2015). These practices have been used successfully in other places, and such good practices can be adopted.

2.2.2.5. Volunteering

Epstein (2011) indicated that there are different ways in which parents can volunteer at an ECD centre. Many ECD centres encounter problems on how they can involve

parents when the parents have indicated they can help at the centre. To make parents feel comfortable to be involved in volunteering, the ECD centre should create policies which indicate in what ways they need help from parents (Cano et al. 2016). Parents themselves, through engaging with the centre, will identify where their involvement is needed and how their resources and expertise can address the situation and therefore should step up and volunteer (Cano et al. 2016; Morrison, Storey & Zhang, 2015).

In some instances, schools have fundraising activities which need the full support of parents. This involvement will show ownership of the centre by parents, and children will value education given the time and resources that parents devote to school activities. When a child sees practitioners and parents engaging even on weekends, it builds confidence around the ECD practitioner which leads to the child being able to open up to either side about experiences at home and or at the centre. This in turn will go a long way in fighting societal ills like child abuse.

2.2.2.6. Collaborating with community

Each centre is situated in a community and the practitioners and parents in a centre make up the centre community. It is good to collaborate as a community, directing resources and facilities from the community for parents of ECD children. It is important to share information with children and parents on community health, culture, social support, and other agendas or services. ECD practitioners are supposed to make available the information on community events that may link learning skills and talents, including seasonal curricula for the children (Epstein, 2011). Epstein (2011) identified the people in a community as the extra means that can play a part in ECD development. A community can be seen as a resource that gives parents support to raise their children. How to interlink and make use of this resource is part of decisions that parents should have. Morrison et al. (2015) also suggested that in bringing about change, ECD practitioners should take charge by forming solid relations with parents with the understanding that parents are the main teachers in the development of the children and have potentially great ideas.

From this section, it is clear that communication is a crucial component in the partnership between parents and practitioners which aids all the other components. All the types of involvement outlined above assist in giving structure and gaining parents' support in the educational development of their children. Furthermore, the

ECD practitioners are supposed to make decisions on which partnership will be the best for the needs of the ECD centre (Abdu 2014; Morrison, et. al., 2015). ECD centres that integrated this theory of parental involvement have shaped healthier communications at home, and the ECD centres have become strong corporations (Epistein, 2011; Abdu 2014; Morrison, Storey & Zhang, 2015). Morrison et al. (2015) indicated that there is need for parents and ECD practitioners to come together for the educational development of the children. This theory informs the study showing how parents and practitioners get involved for the betterment of the education of the children through the six types of involvement explained. Epstein's theory on its own is not sufficient for this study as it only focuses on the parents and practitioners. Therefore, Bronfenbrenner's ecological perspective was also used for the study.

The following section discusses the second theory to complete the theoretical framework that underpinned this study, namely Bronfenbrenner's ecological perspective. While this sub-section focuses on the partnership strategies and opportunities for parents and practitioners, the next discusses the environment in which a child exists and has to develop – the ecological system. Such an environment will indicate other stakeholders in the development of children over and above the parents, practitioners and principals. The discussion of ecological systems highlights platforms and opportunities, which parents and practitioners can leverage in provisioning of ECD support at home and at the school.

2.2.3. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological system theory explains how the educational development of the child can be influenced by the environment surrounding the child which includes the family (Ettekal & Mahoney, 2017). Epstein's theory alluded to the components such as communication among people in the life of a child, to which this theory advanced by indicating such 'people'. Bronfenbrenner's (2005) ecological systems clarifies that the development and growth of the child starts in the family within the environment where the child is growing up. Abdu (2014) emphasised that the child's development is influenced by those around him. The interaction through communication among the different layers of the system surrounding the child is a component of partnership which formed the focal point of this study (McLinden, Lynch, Soni, Artiles, Kholowa, Kamchedzera, Mbukwa, & Mankhwazi, 2018). However, it is

important to note that family structures and living arrangements for children do differ in different contexts especially between the developing and the developed countries. In African communities, for example, a child might live with a certain family during the week and with another family over weekends. In such a context the nature of communication within these two spheres may be different. In probing questions, the researcher needs to be conscious of this.

The theory proposes four ecological systems, as illustrated in Figure 1.1, with each ecological system representing good relations with parents, ECD practitioners, and the community (Benjamin, 2015). It can be argued that Bronfenbrenner's theory talks about where partnership happens (the enablers) and Epstein's alludes to how that partnership should happen, with the blending of the two theories in this study providing a comprehensive guide through which partnership between parents and practitioners can be viewed.

Bronfenbrenner explained that if tension exists between these levels of the ecological system, it undesirably affects the development of the child. It is imperative therefore that effective communication takes place. Bronfenbrenner's four ecological structures are the mesosystem, exosystem, microsystem, and the macrosystem (McLinden et al, 2018).
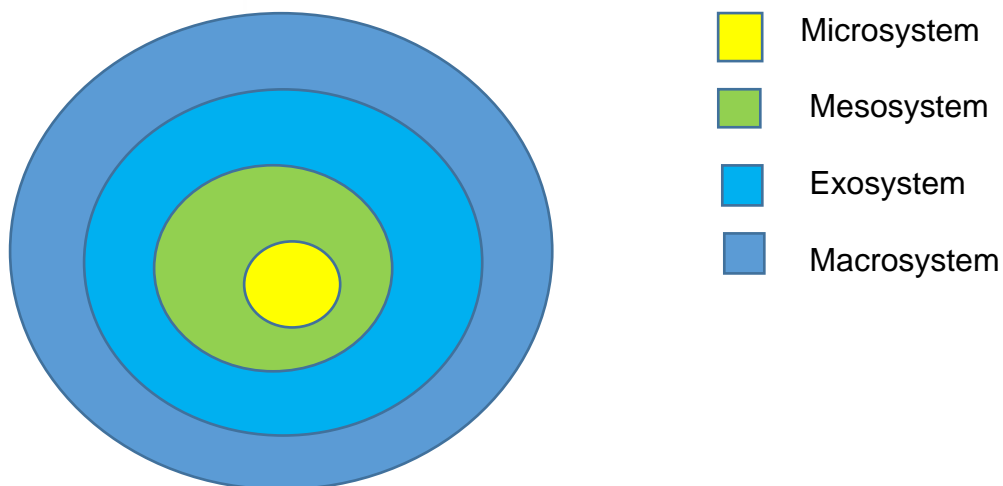
Figure 1.1. Bronfenbrenner's ecological model

Source: Attekal and Mahoney (2017)

Bronfenbrenner's structure consists of four distinct systems, each having a direct or indirect impact on the development of the child. Each level is discussed in detail in the section below.

2.2.3.1. Microsystem

The microsystem is the level that is closest to the child. The microsystem contains contexts that are the parents, household members, relatives, playmates, ECD centre, and neighbourhood (McLinden et al. 2018). At the inner circle, the microsystem is the outline of events and relations which a child experiences at home, the ECD centre and the community. The microsystem comprises the interrelationships between two or more situations which a child shares at home and at the ECD centre, which make up the sections of the child's day.

The relations of the microsystem are bi-directional. The parents of the child and the ECD practitioners or the ECD centre that the child is attending may impact the child's behaviour (McLinden et al, 2018). There are factors that affect the child in the microsystem, which include childcare environments, parenting style, parent's health, and socio-economic position of the parents such as marital status and income (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; McLinden et al 2018).

McLinden et al. (2018) explained that family structure acts as a whole, in the sense that it constantly impacts others and functions in unison towards a mutual goal. This explains that a family is a complete component unit, with members who work hand in hand to reach a common goal, and the family structure assists in shaping a child's development by virtue of the constant contact with the child. Bronfenbrenner (2005) asserted that family is very influential in the child's academic development.

The family structure is impacted by either a good or bad event. When a member of the family loses a job, this affects the whole family as it may be difficult to provide financially for the rest of the family. Amatea, Mixon and McCarthy (2012) noted that most families establish a structure in which they interact with one another when developing relations. As children grow, they start to be inquisitive, asking questions like 'where do babies come from', the differences between genders, things happening around them and if there are no solid relations between parents and children the opportunity to teach them will be lost. If the ECD centre is not effective, it will fail to provide answers to such questions. Therefore, only when parents and practitioners

have knowledge about the development of the children, are they will able to reinforce each other's actions and teachings for the better of the child.

Furthermore, if there is an effective relationship between parent and child, it encourages parents to be energetic participants in the child development in the home environment. Sims and Brettig (2018) described the ECD child microsystem as the one that includes the ECD centre as an environment that is immediate and where children can learn.

It is important that ECD practitioners create an effective bond with each child and have an understanding that their families have different structures. Furthermore, it's important for ECD practitioners to devise ways for effective relations with the children at an early stage – before helping meet their developmental needs (McLinden et al 2018). One such creative way is to have an understanding and clear communication with each child's parent(s). Knowing the dynamics of the family helps ECD practitioners to better understand the needs and expectations of parents and children. This study investigated whether such partnering efforts are made from both sides, for the betterment of the child development. The rate of interaction and the attachment process between parents and ECD practitioners will influence children's learning development outcomes (Benjamin, 2015; Fan, Williams & Wolters, 2012).

Children learn by observing and imitating gestures of another's body language like frowning as well as by hearing through which they pick words and expressions. It is imperative for those around children to communicate in a respectful manner with respect to each other and using appropriate gestures so that children will learn the right thing and develop appropriately.

2.2.3.2. Mesosystem

This is the second layer of Bronfenbrenner's ecological system. The mesosystem contains the microsystem which is at the centre. There are connections between more than two structures, different micro structures, for example home, playmate settings and the ECD centre. What happens in a micro system, such as at home the environment where the child is living, can affect what occurs at the ECD centre, and also what happens at the ECD centre can affect communication at home.

Furthermore, it is noted that if parents and ECD practitioners come together to better the education of the children, this will result in mesosystem functioning (Benjamin,

2015; Fan et al. 2012). This layer can be considered a partnership zone, intersecting actions of different role players in children's lives; with partnership going beyond the immediate clusters and including other clusters to which there is exposure, for example church.

The link between other systems, such church or community, can provide support to family to deliver the essential support to the child. For instance, counselling facilities available for the family can influence the working of the mesosystem. Sims and Brettig (2018) described the mesosystem as the second ecological structure, comprising a level of relations between home, that is with parents, and at the ECD centre. ECD education does not depend only on the role of ECD practitioners as the parents' contribution is essential (Hafizi & Papa, 2012). To produce this kind of structure, it's important for parents and ECD practitioners to build partnerships focusing on communication (Sims & Brettig (2018). This study is interested in the nature, frequency and extent of interaction, between ECD practitioners and parents, which can set the stage for collaboration between parents and ECD practitioners, which in turn is crucial in children's educational development and learning (Benjamin, 2015).

2.2.3.3. Exosystem

Exosystem is on the third layer, with which the children do not directly have contact. The structure contains micro and meso structures, and impacts the welfare of all that interact with the child including their behaviours. The procedures and choices that are made at a wider level can indirectly influence the child. For instance, a parent's workplace may not have off days which can affect the developmental progressions that occur and therefore the educational development of the child. An example is if child needs to be taken to the hospital by the parent, but because of work the parent is not able to do so, this negatively affects the child. In cases where parents are not able to get time off work to be present at a parent and ECD practitioners' seminar, the parent does not have time to talk to ECD practitioners, and this will affect the child's educational development adversely. The guidelines of the ECD centre on those children with special needs can be considered as exosystem impacts on the child's development (Sims & Brettig 2018).

Bronfenbrenner (2005) described the exosystem (third circle) as a structure that does not include the developing individual as active participant, but as a system in which

events happen that affect what occurs in the developing of the person. A good example of an exosystem could be when a parent's work, actions and involvement can indirectly impact the child. The abovementioned example refers – a parent cannot attend a meeting at the ECD centre due to work. The demographics as well as employment and other activities of the parent are elicited through the survey and their time conflict with school-related demands is ascertained. These are considered factors that may impede on the partnership necessary for child development.

Additionally, some parents may fail to partner with practitioners because they do not have transport systems to easily travel between centres (for example parents relying on organised transport to fetch a child from the centre) and will not have the opportunity to interact with practitioners.

2.2.3.4. Macrosystem

This is the outermost context layer, which is considered the societal blueprint and it impacts all the layers. Some aspects of the macrosystem that impact other layers are cultural features such as economic disruption and political upheaval, all of which can collectively shape children's development. For instance, cultures that have more liberal divorce laws are likely to have single parent families. A single income in a household can affect income, hampering the opportunities for a child such as taking part in sports (Benjamin, 2015).

Christensen (2016) cited a case indicating that what parents and the ECD practitioners consider as important and the way they organise the routines to accomplish their goals is affected by cultural practice and belief system around distinct accomplishment. Culture and religion may go to the extent of parents requesting exclusion of their children in some learning activities thereby creating negativity between practitioner and parent at the expense of the child. In addition, theory has indicated that if the efforts of the structures work collectively, they direct and support the development of the children (Bronfenbrenner, 2005).

Macro-systems have value that operate according to values (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). For instance, poverty is regarded as one of the major challenges that South African ECD centres are faced with (Abdu, 2014; McLinden et al 2018). Children at an ECD centre are compared to wet cement in that whatever falls on them makes a lasting impression. Therefore, everything that is happening in the environment where the child

is, affects that child, it could be from the parent's side, at the ECD centre or the way the ECD practitioners are operating. Partnership between the two parties (parents and practitioners) will help to ensure that the environments and activities to which the child is exposed are conducive for their learning and the learning of good habits. If the two parties collaborate then one can easily identify inappropriate behaviours being displayed by the child which may have been picked up from the other party.

Each level shares roles which are important for relations, which make a way to develop partnerships (Christensen, 2016). Partnerships are important for the total child development and for each structure's influence on the child's educational development. Through the partnerships between parents and ECD practitioners each structure can share communication and work out common goals and be able to encourage educational development of the child (Christensen, 2016). Relations between parents and the ECD practitioners form a way for the structures to work in the direction of common goals, able to encourage the child's educational development. This study argues that it is only possible when the two parties have an understanding of the educational development needs of a child and share expectations around their role to help children attain that development.

2.2.4. Theoretical framework summary

The previous section discussed the two theoretical frameworks that underpin this study, Epstein's theory of parental involvement and the Bronfenbrenner's ecological system. Epstein's theory explains how partnership should occur through the different components with communication being central but does not provide guidance on where (context) and by whom (other than the centre and parents) interactions should take place for effective partnership. The latter is catered for by Bronfenbrenner by providing the identifying players (in layers) and degree of influence on a child's life and the development that parents and ECD practitioners should be aware of to enable effective partnership. In that way, the two theories complement each other and thus provided a holistic guide to inquiry for this study. Epstein suggested that the partnership between parents and ECD practitioners should show that there is shared responsibility. These two theoretical frameworks guided this study to assess if there is partnership between parents and practitioners in the ECD centres around East London.

2.3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE RELATED TO THE STUDY

This section comprises a discussion of literature that is related to this research study. The discussion is guided by a number of research questions as outlined in Chapter One. Sub-section 2.3.2 reviews the ways in which parents and practitioners partner in order to support the educational development in early childhood centres. This is followed by a discussion on how parents and practitioners view the way they work together in the provision of resources at ECD centres. Literature is also reviewed on how parents and ECD practitioners communicate in early childhood education provisioning. Literature also includes how parents and ECD practitioners partner in the decision making in early childhood education provisioning. The strategies to enhance parents and practitioners' information sharing in early childhood education provisioning are also addressed. Finally, a discussion on what operation framework could be suggested to enhance parents and practitioners' partnership in the ECD centres is presented.

2.3.1 Parental involvement and parental engagement

Parent Involvement is a term that is used to explain how ECD personnel and parents get together in ECD centres or have a common goal and common understanding and overall interest in the affairs of the centre. These terms, parental involvement and parental engagement, are used interchangeably. It is indicated that positive results cannot be attained if there is no active and expressive participation by the parents, which includes their paying attention, being open to new ideas on how to cooperate with their children, contributing to tasks, assisting with homework and dealing with questions. It is also indicated that active contribution is related to better-quality of parenting, plus improved positive parenting and less negative parenting (Haine-Schlagel and Walsh 2015). If there is parental involvement there is a constant, positive connection between parents' engagement in their children's schooling and their outcomes (Donkor, A.K. (2010).

Research has shown that parental involvement is related with the child's consequences such as lower dropout and absenteeism rates. Researchers focused on how parental involvement affects children, and trying to find out why some parents they get involved whilst others do not want to be involved and what ECD personnel

can do so that the parents can be involved (Patrycia, Piotrowska, Tully, Lenroot, Kimonis, Hawes, Moul, Frick, Anderson, Dadds. 2017) From the research that was done by Garcia and Thornton (2014) it is indicated that the involvement of parents in the education of the children can improve their grades, absenteeism is reduced and parents will have self-confidence in their children's education. Children with parents that are involved in learners' education, get good grades and their social skills are better and there is better improvement in good behaviour. The situation whereby parents directly involved in the educational system of their children that's parental involvement, parents can involve themselves and they can also be get involved by the ECD personnel in the learning at the centre (Clinton & Hattie, 2013).

2.4.1. Early childhood development education in South Africa

The legislation governing the sector

It is indicated that every child has a right to good early childhood education, as per Bill of Rights (Republic of South Africa Constitution, 1994). If children are educated at their earliest educational level this will build a great basis for life-long education and great opportunities. In South Africa, as everywhere in the world, children with a well-laid education foundation are most likely to excel later in life (UNICEF, 2012).

According to the UNICEF report (2012), 67% of five-years olds signed up for Grade R, which indicates development of the government's goals of access to Grade R to the children. This indicated that there is governmental recognition, with ECD being significant in setting a sound basis for effective academic development particularly for early childhood education (UNICEF, 2012).

White Paper 5 on Early Childhood Education (2001) indicates that if children do not get the opportunity to access ECD education and grow up in poor families where parents and ECD practitioners are not partnering, the children are at risk. The risks range from slow growth to poor adjustment to the school setting when they are in their early grades, a higher increase in repetition of the grades and also high risk of school dropouts (Department of Education, 2001). It is noted that children who do not attend ECD education, are the ones who are more likely to drop out. Research findings indicate that these children are mainly from poor families, their parents are not

educated much and they do not have time to partner with the early childhood practitioners for the development of their children.

The South African Government saw the importance of providing the opportunity for children to get ECD education and also to develop the effectiveness of ECD education services, mostly for children who are poor (Department of Basic Education, Department of & UNICEF, 2010). Government improved funds for ECD centres (0 to 4 years of age) through the SADSD and also for Grade R through the DoE (Department of Basic Education, SADSD & UNICEF, 2010).

The improvement of services offered by ECDs and achieving of intended goals is possible when there is partnership between parents and ECD practitioners. The two have a shared responsibility for children's development and for the success of the sector. This is achieved through communication and understanding the different stakeholders in a child's life.

ECD practitioner training and capacity development

The United Nations International Children's Education Fund (UNICEF) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) identified ECD as an important basis for the wellbeing of an individual and the success of society. It is imperative to have well-trained and capacitated practitioners to achieve the intended goals. The South African Government is doing their best to educate the ECD practitioners so that they can include parents in all the activities that they will be implementing in the ECD centres (Department of Social Development & UNICEF, 2010). Concerning children from 0 to 4 years attending ECD centres, it is noted that in 2007 the SADSD spent R350 million by providing ECD sites that are registered. The SADSD encouraged the ECD practitioners to partner with the parents for the betterment of the education of the children (DoBE, SADSD & UNICEF, 2010).

Furthermore, the SADSD illustrated that, even though there is a lot that was done to expand availability and excellence in ECD centres, there is still a lot that needs to be done in the development of service delivery. The partnership between parents and practitioners is seen as still low (DoBE, SADSD & UNICEF, 2010). It is indicated that some noticeable problems that are encountered by ECD centres comprise the lack of material to use when learning, specifically in classrooms, the lack of qualified ECD practitioners, and not enough security whilst at the ECD centre. In addition, there is

also the challenge of parents who do not want to be involved in activities at the ECD centre (DoBE, SADSD & UNICEF, 2010).

Okeke (2014) indicated that practitioners at ECD centres are the ones who are failing to involve parents in the activities of the centre. It could indicate a lack of knowledge on how to involve parents. Therefore, there is need to educate the ECD practitioners in this regard; but the parents also need to be educated in how to assist at the ECD centre where their children are being educated. Parents should be aware that children are not supposed to learn only when they are at an ECD centre but should also have continuous educational development at home (Okeke, 2014).

The access and quality of learning programmes (international and national sources)

Even though the number of ECD centres have increased in the last ten years, the real size of an ECD sector is unknown (DoBE, SADSD & UNICEF, 2010). It's crucial to note that coverage of ECD centres differs per province. More so, the extent of relations between parents and ECD practitioners differs between provinces. In some provinces the parents and ECD practitioners have good functional partnerships and they all know how to communicate, share information and share the way decisions are made at an ECD centre. In other provinces, partnerships are not as well developed with parents and practitioners still needing to be educated on how to work together for the children's educational development.

In summary, the key literature review strategy, per sub-question, is outlined in the table below.

Table 2.1: Summary of areas for literature review

Sub-research questions	Literature review – main heading	Sub-headings for literature review
1. In what ways do parents and practitioners work together in supporting learning and development in early childhood education provisioning?	Ways to support learning and development	- Collaboration of the parents and ECD practitioners to support learning - The importance of parents and ECD practitioners in supporting learning and development in ECD centres - Parents and practitioners' partnerships - Benefits of partnership between parents and practitioners - Practitioners' ways of involving parents to support learning and development - Challenges faced by parents and practitioners on partnership
2. How do parents and practitioners view the way they work together on provision of resources in early childhood education provisioning?	Parents and practitioners' views on provision of resources	Views of parents on provision of resources
3. How do parents and practitioners communicate in early childhood education provisioning?	Parents and practitioners' communication in ECD centres	Different forms of communication between the parents and ECD practitioners
4. How do parents and practitioners work together in important decision making in early childhood education provisioning?	Parents and practitioners together in decision making	- Strategies to involve parents in decision making - Factors affecting parent decision making in early childhood development - Cultural differences - The child's development - Parent perspective
5. What are the strategies to enhance parents and practitioner's information sharing in early childhood education provisioning?	Strategies to enhance parents and practitioner's information sharing	- Agenda items for the meetings - Sharing information about the curriculum - Group meetings and workshops - Digital photographs and displays - Parents sharing information with practitioners

		➤ Practitioners sharing information with parents

The next section discusses the way in which parents and ECD practitioners work hand in hand in order to support learning and development in the early childhood education, as outlined in previous studies. Reviewing the empirical works helped to define gap that exists in literature, in relation to theory as discussed above and in relation to practice. This help to show the significance and relevance of the current study.

2.3.2. Supporting learning and development in early childhood development education

The South African Department of Social Development (2014) suggests the diverse ways in which parents can support children, such as attending orientation events at the centre to support their child. This will allow them to meet with other parents and get to know their child's teacher. It is good for the parent to know the ways the practitioner would want to communicate, for example through phone call or emails. Parents are encouraged to demonstrate a positive view of education at home. Parents can support learning by becoming part of the governing board at one of the centres.

A child can usually detect if the parent views education as important. Parents can support learning through reading books to the child. Either encourage reading alone and the child will realise that reading is important or read the book with the child and discuss together. More so, parents can support learning by making sure that the child does their homework and make sure there is a conducive environment in which to work on their homework. It is good for the parent to attend the events planned at the centre, like games, concerts and award events (Kwatubana & Makhalemele, 2015). Volunteering at the centre is another way of supporting learning. A parent can volunteer to translate the newsletter, making calls to other parents about an event that is going to take place at the centre. Parents are not supposed to force themselves to volunteer if time does not permit, they can volunteer for other things like donating materials to use at the centre (Sapungan & Sapungan, 2014).

Parents may support learning and development of their children through asking practitioners for suggestions on how they can help a child's school work at home. In

addition, parents can support through reading, telling stories, singing songs to the children, reinforcing what is being learnt at school. Practitioners can also support learning and development through letting the parents know what was going on in the class the whole day, letting the parents know the performance of the child and how they can work hand in hand with practitioners to make their children better in terms of education. Practitioners can also use notice boards to communicate with parents. They can also send home photographs, letting parents know the topics that interest children, and organise information sharing with parents (Sapungan & Sapungan, 2014; South African Department of Social Development, 2014).

If parents are involved there is positive influence on the children's educational development. Although there is literature on parental involvement in the children's educational development, research studies have indicated that parents and ECD practitioners' partnership in ECD education is still inadequate (Okeke, 2014). Parents should have the knowledge that they have an exceptional influence on the education of the child. If parents and practitioners are not working together there will be poor development in the education of the child.

Parents have diverse information about the children from what practitioners know. Therefore, if they work together the results will be pleasing. For example, parents know the child's history in terms of their physical, social, emotional, intellectual development and medical history. In this respect, the parents know their children as family members and role played by the child in the family. Parents are thus supposed to update the ECD practitioners on all the aspects that surround their child so that if the practitioners see a child behaving in a certain manner, they will be aware because the parent would have let them know of all the behaviours of the child and how to deal with it. Parents are children's primary educators and hence they are supposed to work together with the practitioners so that there will be overall excellent educational development of the child (OECD, 2012).

Through the parents, the practitioners learn about the child's home lifestyle such as what makes the child happy or sad. Parents bring about a sense of continuousness for the child and can provide a way in which the ECD practitioner views a child. Practitioners bring another view to the relations as child development professionals as they view children in relation to what they already know are normal milestones and

proper behaviours. Unlike the parents, practitioners see children from a perspective that is balanced by numerous other ECD children they have taught, therefore both parents and ECD practitioners can gain a whole picture of the child (Mawere, Thomas & Nyaruwata, 2015).

If parents and ECD practitioners have meetings, the parents also have the opportunity to share information about parenting with other parents. Parents become more productive when they know what is expected of them in the educational development of their children. Practitioners are supposed to show or give the parents ideas on how to handle the development of the children. (Halme et al. 2014; Sneck, 2016).

According to Halme, Lindy, Piirainen and White (2014), the benefit of parents taking part in parent involvement in ECD development requires the child, the parent and ECD practitioners adopting a confident attitude and behaviour towards education. If parents and practitioners partner, they are able to set realistic expectations for the child. The parents gain greater confidence in themselves as a parent and in their ability to help the child at home and practitioners gain more confidence in the child's progress. The support from parents and ECD practitioners increases morale for both and each will be empowered to make decisions concerning the child's education (Mawere, Thomas & Nyaruwata, 2015; Sneck, 2016).

As a result, the partnership is expected to be present if parents and practitioners care about a child's educational development. In that regard, this study sought to ascertain the ways in which parents and ECD practitioners work hand in hand to support educational development of their children.

2.3.2.1. Parents and ECD practitioners' collaboration to support learning

From studies such as Halme et al. (2014) and Sneck (2016) it is noted that the partnerships of parents and ECD practitioners for the better of the child's educational development are of paramount importance for all children at the ECD centres, even more so for those children with a disability, educational developmental delay. Parents and ECD practitioners can come together in finding ways to assist these ECD children, for instance parents are supposed to teach children at home doing revision of the work that they were doing during the day at an ECD centre. More so, it is ECD practitioners' responsibility to alert the children's parents about activities they are working on with children in a week or specific day.

ECD practitioners benefit from partnering with parents as their partnership gives opportunities for professional development through formal and informal learning from parents with various experiences and proficiency (Halme et al. 2014). Furthermore, when parents and ECD practitioners are working together and gain experience through cooperating with each other and also with policy makers, this can add to new information about ECD advance. Therefore, ECD practitioners are supposed to know that they cannot operate the centre without the help of the parents. Parents have a right to know what activities are happening at the ECD centre (Sneck, 2016; Willemse, Thompson, Vanderlinde & Mutton 2018). That right comes with responsibility to make effort to know what is happening around and to your child during the time at an ECD centre.

Partnering needs skilled commitment and having respect for one another's work and expertise and it is the accountability of all, the parents as well as the ECD practitioners. Parents are supposed to appreciate work that is done by the ECD practitioners and hence the practitioners are supposed to appreciate what parents do and encourage them to be part of their children's education development. The crux of inquiry in this research was to find out if the two parties are each doing what is expected of them and the extent of that effort. Early childhood practitioners need to have knowledge on how crucial communicating is and they should plan together with parents to respond to the children and to ensure complete, continuous tactics for their education development.

2.3.2.2. The importance of parents and ECD practitioners in supporting learning and development in ECD centres

ECD practitioners and parents collaborate through communicating with each other and planning together in order to get the best from the children and for the development of learning of the children at the centre. Moreover, parents and practitioners come together to encourage positive transitions for the children. If parents and practitioners are willing to work together, they will benefit in the sense that they will be learning from one another on how they can encourage the education and educational development of their children. Furthermore, working together in partnership will bring a lot of achievements and great results for the children (Lekli & Kaloti, 2015; Willemse, Thompson, Vanderlinde & Mutton, 2018, Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017).

Parents and ECD practitioners share knowledge and planning together to ensure complete tactics to the children's educational development. It is of paramount importance to have an understanding of each other's practice and expertise, and make referrals where suitable. Parents and ECD practitioners should build on children's already existing knowledge and experiences to shape continuousness for their educational development and understanding of that prior learning is through their partnership. It is important that parents and practitioners work together to support parents and the children, making sure that a child's best interests are being prioritised (Lekli & Kaloti, 2015, Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017). It is noted that practitioners are able to share some of their expertise with parents so that new knowledge is created, and they should also share the ideas about children's education and development (Willemse et al. 2018, Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017).

It is further explained that the partnerships that are effective between parents and practitioners are by having positive communication, coming together for planning, and the pursuit of common goals (Willemse et al. 2018, Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017). ECD practitioners are encouraged to have a longing to make sure that there is the best possible education and development for the children, and parents should show eagerness for coming together to meet this aim (Willemse et al. 2018, Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017). Effective partnerships between parents and practitioners guarantee that the children receive full and complete care to meet their educational development requirements. This motivated the inquiry in this study as understanding the current levels of partnership would help propose strategies to enhance partnerships for the benefit of the children.

2.3.2.3. Parents and practitioners' partnership

Parents and practitioners' partnership exist when the two work together in ways that encourage children's educational development. Parents and ECD practitioners should have clear roles and responsibilities, and it is important to have an understanding and respect for other's roles (Hadley & Rouse, 2018). Parents are supposed to provide the kids with resources that are needed at the centre. Practitioners are encouraged to make sure the parents are aware of what is expected of them at the centre. Furthermore, it is explained that fruitful partnerships are constructed upon mutual goals for children's educational development (Hadley & Rouse, 2018).

Partnerships between parents and practitioners collect the expertise of diversity to meet the educational development needs of children and to make sure there are smooth transitions and continuousness in children's lives. Children, parents and ECD practitioners all get a positive outcome from partnerships in which understanding and experience are shared (Hadley & Rouse, 2018; Willemse et al. 2018). Collaborative partnerships support inclusive practice which will ensure formidable development of children to their full potential.

Hadley and Rouse (2018) found that when ECD practitioners feel more confident they can help through sharing ideas with parents. The relationship between parents and practitioners is crucial in the sense that they are able to rely on one another to deal with challenges that may arise. Collaboration between parents and ECD practitioners on problem-solving at the centre has benefits for ECD practitioners and parents working in partnership. It is also reported that ECD practitioners' sense of effectiveness is motivated when working together with parents in decisions making. ECD practitioners are very knowledgeable about what the children want/need in their educational development. Partnerships can lead to informal or formal learning opportunities (Rouse, 2012).

If parents and ECD practitioners respect each other's experiences, it will result in the best outcome for the educational development of the child. This was a key justification for carrying out this current study as the focus was on parent and practitioner partnership in early childhood education development (Hadley & Rouse 2018).

It is noted that relationships turn into partnerships when parents and ECD practitioners have a mutual goal, for instance supporting the effectiveness of ECD and sharing accountability of getting the goals accomplished. Partnership starts with constructive relations that include supporting each other, more so regarding everyone as important and having mutual respect for one another. It is of great importance for parents and ECD practitioners to listen and talk, understanding and trusting each other's views. In order to form a great partnership, it is important to consult each other when making significant decisions (Hadley & Rouse, 2018; Rouse, 2012).

In the ECD centres, parents and practitioners are in different stages regarding the building of partnerships. Some parents and ECD practitioners have a relation which others have not yet fully developed. Parents will choose to get involved in their

children's ECD centre at different levels. Building partnerships takes long and it's a continuous thing, people need to keep working together. This study sought to identify where effort is being put towards that, and which party to the partnership is lagging in terms of effort to establish, maintain and grow the partnership. Parents and ECD practitioners who build partnerships are argued to experience more fulfilment when they cooperate with each other. Is this the case in the East London education district? This study helps to provide answers to such questions (Rouse, 2012).

2.3.2.4. Parents and ECD practitioners' benefits in partnering

Children do very well if parents show an interest in their school work and when parents work together with ECD practitioners. Parents and ECD practitioners should talk about how they can come together to help a child so that the child can be successful. Parents are the ones that have the knowledge of the strength of the children and their behaviour. ECD practitioners get to know the child through the interaction on a daily basis when they teach them. If parents and ECD practitioners work together they share information and try by all means to meet the children's needs to support their educational development (McDowell, Ashlie, and Meredith, 2018; Mahuro & Hungi, 2016). It is however not clear whether this is happening among South African ECD centres, and more specifically within the East London schooling district.

When parents and ECD practitioners are partnering, the children can see the different settings, like at home and the ECD centre, where they see people showing care and working hand in hand. For instance, children can obey rules and follow routines in diverse locations if there is knowledge of the rules, routines and if encouraged. Partnerships can help parents and ECD practitioners to comfortably approach each other (McDowell, Ashlie, and Meredith, 2018; Mahuro & Hungi, 2016).

Through contribution at ECD centres, parents have a better opportunity to link with other parents that have children at that ECD centre. Parents benefit from having a support system of individuals. They share knowledge and understand work through problems. ECD centres connect parents with one another. If ECD practitioners are supportive, parents will feel comfortable and relaxed to leave children at the ECD centre. It is noted that when ECD practitioners get along with parents, the ECD practitioners feel connected and valued. ECD practitioners can develop more understanding of each parent and how they would like their children to be raised.

Having understanding of a child's world will allow ECD practitioners to relate to children in a nice way, making them feel understood and this will then strengthen relations. Relations assist ECD practitioners to feel important and satisfied in their work of supporting the educational development of the children (McDowell, Ashlie, and Meredith, 2018; Mahuro & Hungi, 2016).

Partnership between parents and ECD practitioners contribute to open communication. It is important that information is shared between parents and practitioners so that together they can support the children's learning and educational development, and be able to know how children behave at home and at ECD centre. It is of paramount importance to support children's educational development and to know what they enjoy and be able to provide the requirements for addressing children's challenges (Match & Collins, 2012).

The interaction within a partnership can help parents and ECD practitioners to feel wanted and valued and trusted. In such a situation the children also feel the sense of fulfilment. The children explore their educational skills and parents have time to discuss the development of the child (Match & Collins, 2012).

Match and Collins (2012) also confirmed that communication between parents and ECD practitioners helps build partnerships that are honest and there will be a genuine trust between each other. This will allow them to open up about thoughts and feelings. Communicating involves sharing of knowledge, and makes it easier for parents and ECD practitioners to encourage each other and improve the educational development of the children. When parents are willing to share beneficial information like their beliefs and values, the child's strengths and weaknesses, this will help the practitioners to assist in the children's educational development. This research investigated the ways in which parents and practitioners partner in the provisioning of ECD education, with the question – Do parents share important information?

2.3.2.5. Practitioners' ways of involving parents to support learning and development

ECD practitioners are supposed to involve parents in whatever that they will be doing. It is good for the practitioner to know the parents of the children that they are teaching so that they will understand the children better and support or engage them

appropriately. If the practitioner knows the parents personally it will not be a problem to involve the parents in the activities of the centre (Wilson & Gross, 2018).

ECD practitioners are supposed to have activities at the centre, where parents would come, and they will have the chance to communicate with them. If parents are not satisfied with or unsure of what will be happening at the centre, the situation needs to be clarified as transparency is important between parents and practitioners. Practitioners need to accommodate diverse language groups. For example, it is good to speak a language that everyone can understand. (Wilson & Gross, 2018). Two-way communication is very important, it gives the parents a chance to express everything they have on their mind to the practitioners. The practitioners also get a chance to communicate with the parents. If there is good communication, it will be a great advantage for both parents and practitioners and the children will gain a lot in their educational development. Communication creates partnership that is centred in open relationships between parents and practitioners (Rouse, 2012 and Malete, 2013).

However, according to Wilson and Gross (2018), partnering between parents and practitioners is a challenging task for the ECD practitioners. It seems that preconceptions on how the relations with children's parents should be developed, prevented them from building trust in children's parents. Practitioners are seemingly afraid that if they become more open with the parents, they will be viewed as weak. It is said that practitioners are reluctant to be assessed by the children's parents (Wilson & Gross, 2018). Although practitioners are excited about applying new practices in ECD centres, they displayed resistance and even indifference towards the training with regard to building a robust theoretical background that permits them both to gain more insight into their practices and to manage more effectively (Galini & Efthymia, 2010).

Sneck (2016) argued that practitioners need to involve parents in the activities at the centre. Parents have the right to know knowing what's happening and what children are taught. It is the work of the practitioners to inform parents in whatever is necessary about their children. Practitioners are supposed to show love and respect to the parents and the parents also need to respect the practitioners (Wilson & Gross, 2018). If there is a good relationship between the ECD practitioners and the parents, the educational development of the children will benefit and the development of the centre

will increase. The ECD centre should have an environment that is suitable for the children to learn and where children are encouraged to learn (Wilson & Gross, 2018, Rentzou & Ekine, 2017, Rentzou & Ekine, 2017)

Parents and practitioners' partnership is crucial and more important when the child is young than when the child is grown up. Most nations have an institutionalised parents and practitioners' partnership. In countries like Nigeria, the government take measures to involve parents in their child's educational development by means of encouraging ECD centres to institute partnership between parents and practitioners (Sneck, 2016; Rentzou & Ekine, 2017). On the other hand, in Greece the parents and ECD practitioners have separate tasks and their relationships have not developed enough to be partnerships. Thirty Greek and 30 Nigerian ECD practitioners completed a survey to see if there is a partnership with parents. The results suggested that no partnership existed between parents and practitioners (Rentzou & Ekine, 2017).

Effective working relations between ECD practitioners and parents can help parents to understand their children's educational development, and they can contribute to the children's education and welfare at home and also in the ECD centre (Duan, Guan & Bu, 2018). The justification of the study is broad as it extends to the benefits of the parties over and above those of the children and policy makers. It is also supported by Bronfenbrenner's (2005) ecological system of humans which suggests a theory for ECD practitioners and parents in partnership. Children learn more from their parents and childhood education centre, and also from their community. Children's communication with other children and their involvement within these surroundings impact the way they learn and develop. The quality of children's knowledges is also inclined to be impacted by the surrounding ecological system, like the way parents and ECD practitioners work together, and the macrosystem of social and conceptual beliefs. The relationships between the classifications impact the child's educational development (Rouse, 2012).

Bronfenbrenner (2005) suggested that learning and developmental of a child's contribution in situations is improved where there is agreement on goals, and helpful connections between settings. The principle of combined action recognises the numerous players in development. This means the success in the development of

children is the effort of many individuals working together, such as practitioners and parents.

There are requirements for partnership between parents and practitioners, like communication and meetings with parents especially regarding the progress of the child. Epstein (2011) emphasised that communication is a very important component of the parental involvement in the educational development of the child. New Zealand's ECD policy emphasises the worth of partnerships between ECD practitioners and parents. The South African ECD framework needs to be put in practice, ensuring all the identified stakeholders, with parents and practitioners central, partner in ensuring effective partnership. They emphasised encouraging cooperative relations, which includes stronger relationships between ECD practitioners and parents (Rouse, 2012). This study tested the strength of linkages in the case of South Africa. According to Duan, Guan and Bu (2018), many ECD practitioners have defined their relationship with the children's parents as positive and stated only a few undesirable communication instances with parents. More so, it is said that a number of practitioners try to establish the terms for their relationship with parents, but in spite of their efforts it does not always work that way. The study shows that ECD practitioners often tell parents about their open-door policy. This implies that practitioners encourage parents to visit their classrooms. It further indicates that practitioners welcome messages from parents. Furthermore, it is noted that in reality, if one looks deeper, practitioners also have approaches for handling their relations with parents.

Duan, Guan and Bu (2018) further suggested that we look more thoroughly at the practitioners' side of these relations and understand how they try to structure their relationship with parents. Sneck (2016) claimed that much of the so-called parental participation is not in reality a matter of cooperation but is more like 'a professional client connection where the authority is unequally distributed'. Abdu (2014) suggested that, "regardless of the value of fairness that is contained in the knowledge of parent partnership, in practice the parent involvement is rarely one of equal statuses". Abdu (2014) argued that one purpose that ECD practitioners may try to negotiate in their relations with the children's parents is their contemplation of themselves as specialists. In other cases, the parents regard the practitioners as the professional.

According to Wright (2009), more than 80% of practitioners reported that in order to function well, they are supposed to work with parents. Practitioners also indicated that this communication with and involvement of parents is the greatest challenge they face. The study also indicated that practitioners were worried about the support, parental insight, homework and prospects. The study found that most ECD practitioners wanted parents to support them in their effort to teach their children. They indicated strongly that they had requested parents to support them as specialists who have their child's interest at heart. Practitioners strongly believed that children's development should be central to parent involvement.

A study by Duan, Guan and Bu (2018) indicated that practitioners acknowledged the necessity to improve parental involvement and the idea of better communication was indicated to be very important. This comprised the premise of this study, focusing more on assessing the existence and strength of that partnership. The communication desired by ECD practitioners should be reciprocal and should be equal in terms of power-sharing and responsibility (Abdu, 2014). The partnership should not be one-sided, but rather be balance with the two parties treating each other with respect.

2.3.2.6. Challenges faced by parents and practitioners on partnership

The work of Atmore, van Niekerk and Cooper (2012) emphasised that many problems can impact the educational development of the children during the initial years. The challenges arise as a result of the seemingly non-involvement of the children's parents in the school work and the fact that many parents are not present at home for a long time. In some instances, it is argued, parents have long working hours and sometimes they do not respond to the calls for a meeting at the ECD centre (Ntumi, 2016). These are some of the factors the researcher looked out for when gathered data, with the aim of this scrutiny being to ascertain whether these factors do influence partnership between parents and practitioners. Children may feel they are not included in some activities, simply because they did not bring resources for the activities such as a fantasy play. Voster, Sack, Amod, Seabi and Kern (2016) also conducted research on the challenges faced by ECD practitioners and they also mentioned that it is important for parents and practitioners to have a partnership in which they are able to discuss the diet of the children as that too is crucial for growth and development of children. It is indicated that some of the children arrive at the centre hungry, some on an unbalanced diet (Atmore et al. 2012; Voster et al, 2016).

Atmore et al. (2012) and Voster et al. (2016) also referred to the challenges that arise when parents do not partner with ECD practitioners, which include aspects such as changes in family structure, through for example, marriage, divorce, death, among many others. Family structure in the 21st century has changed, and as a result there are more families that need more help from ECD centres (Ntumi, 2016). This problem might have been caused by parents who are no longer there to support the children and leave the children to be taken care of by grandparents and caregivers. This might create a challenge for the children to adjust in a new family structure. The practitioners play a key role to sustain stability in the life of a child, especially in the wake of extended families disappearing; hence partnership is critical for seamless support to the child. This study also interrogated the effects of situations such as when parents do not have a support system in the form of other grownups in the family to assist with the education of the children (Atmore, van Niekerk & Cooper, 2012).

Ntumi (2016) alluded to the fact that the extended family relations are no longer as crucial as they were. There are a lot of recent developments that have shaped present day families, whereas previously families would share a house which led to solidification of the bond between them. Communities are not as faithful as they used to be (Ntumi, 2016). Previously people believed that "it took a village to raise a child" – implying partnership in the community to raise a child, unlike today where it is common not to know a person who stays next door. Ntumi (2016) indicated that people are said not to value others anymore; therefore, there is less support for individual parents to partner with the ECD practitioners. Parents can feel troubled by their work pressure roles and therefore the partnership between them with practitioners suffers. They can feel that they are too occupied to be involved in the children's educational development activities. It is suggested that this might be caused by burdens experienced from the type and the way they work at their workplaces. When they get home they do not have the energy to help the child with homework, therefore the educational development of the children suffers (Ntumi, 2016).

According to Atmore et al. (2012), parents are sometimes not able to attend meetings at their children's ECD centre due to moving around for work reasons. Children and parents in a tight situation do not always know how to handle it, because when they are about to adjust to a new place parents need relocate to another place. This negatively affects both the parents and the children as well as partnership which is

weakened (Ellis, lock & Lummis 2015). Those children that are given care by other people who are not their parents, need encouragement as well as appreciation for their effort. In some instances, caregivers are ignorant; therefore, they are not able to help a child with homework, implying that support from home will be non-existent or inaccurate when attempted.

Furthermore, some families may experience challenges because of destruction like health issues (HIV/AIDS) or any diseases that can result in children being taken care by someone who is not willing to partner with the ECD practitioners. It is said that grandparents may be poor and they are not able to support their grandchildren. Single or divorced parents may have challenges like difficult financial situations or too many working hours and therefore they do not have the opportunity to connect with the ECD practitioners of their children's care facility (Kruger & Michalek, 2011). Such parents face challenges to survive as they cannot afford to buy resources that are needed at the ECD centre for educational development. This negatively impacts the learning of the child (Atmore et al. 2012).

2.3.3. Parents and practitioners' views on provision of resources

The resources come in different forms, namely financial, time and physical goods which may all go a long way in supporting the teacher and thus indirectly ensuring effective development of child. One of the foci areas in this study was on how parents and practitioners partner in providing resources for the centre. It is argued that parents evaluate the way and extent that ECD practitioners interact with them (Ellis, Lock & Lummis 2015). Parents are aware that besides paying school fees they are also supposed to provide support and resources to the centre, resources that can be used for learning and development.

Parents and practitioners can work together in the provision of resources that are needed and used at the ECD centre. Parents can provide resources such as charts, playing structures, learning material (Morrison, Storey & Zhang, 2015). Morrison, Storey and Zhang (2015) suggested parents might help the centre by trying to see if the buildings where children learn are well painted. Parents can offer help if they have time to renovate the building so that children can learn in a better place. If parents can give learning material to the centre this will help children's educational development. It is a responsibility of ECD practitioners to update parents on kinds of resources they

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need. Furthermore, ECD centres might need resources like empty containers for pencils and crayons, therefore it is best for them to ask parents if they can provide this (Mukuna & Indoshi, 2012). It is only through effective partnership that parents can go an extra mile to provide such resources to the school, even beyond the child's needs. However, if there is no partnership, parents do not value the support they can potentially provide as the concern for the teacher with limited resources will not be there.

Mukuna and Indoshi (2012) suggested parents and ECD practitioners can come together in the provision of resources by instituting volunteer programmes. Parents can also assist on preparing material, and serving as interpreters (Mukuna & Indoshi, 2012).

Parents and ECD practitioners are encouraged to work together to make sure children get suitable care and that their educational development is improved. Though this partnership is seen as important, it is argued that parents are passive participants and they rarely contribute in making choices about ECD programmes (Mukuna & Indoshi, 2012). Parents can take part in ECD curriculum development by assisting ECD practitioners to prepare a curriculum. Parents' views and aspirations around what children should learn need to be taken into account as their lived experiences do matter as best practices and learning curves.

Parents and ECD practitioners should make sure children learn in a good and spacious environment (Mukuna & Indoshi, 2012). It is further added that parents are supposed to contribute by giving resources for the ECD practitioners to use. They are also supposed to ensure the learning plan provides enough to learn and get a rest. As Epstein (2011) claimed, parents are supposed to be involved in the events of the ECD.

2.3.4. Parents and practitioners' communication in early childhood education

There are different factors that come to play to hinder and or foster communication. Some families are forthcoming, others are not. This implies that the involvement of parents in ECD centres takes place in various ways and to varying degrees depending on the aims of the ECD centre, and the ECD practitioners need to appreciate that each family is different with its own principles and ethnicities. This information helps

practitioners to know how to deal with different parents when they involve them in the education development of the children (Blackman & Mahon, 2016).

Parents are supposed to act formally and informally in voicing their opinions for decision-making processes regarding the ECD centre's aims and educational developments (Hardley & Rouse, 2018). The enablement purpose includes affording an opportunity for both parents and ECD practitioners to improve the excellence of their relationship for the advantage of the children's educational development (Hadley & Rouse, 2018). Parents are supposed to make contact with ECD centres to share information, and to participate in their programmes and the governance of the centre (Hardley & Rouse, 2018).

Hadley and Rouse (2018) argued that the level of parental contribution in ECD programmes is mainly influenced by a family's societal status, the mother's level of education, the parents' status, and family ethnicity.

A study by Mawere et al. (2015) asserted that parents rarely take part in ECD education. More so, it was noted that some are passive contributors and rarely take part in contributing to what goes on in an ECD centre as they may consider it less important. The other reason may be that practitioners do not have ways in which they can involve the children's parents and some parents are occupied to the extent that they have no time to visit schools since most of them are working – although they know the meaning and importance of participation in the educational development of their children. The training of ECD practitioners may be lacking components on how to engage the relevant stakeholders such as parents in ensuring effectiveness of ECD education provisioning.

Although parents may show willingness to participate in the communication between themselves and practitioners, they have challenges in understanding the rationale of the processes. Parents they have conflicting ideas with ECD practitioners, especially if there is a problem with a child. For example, if practitioners try to explain the challenges which the child is facing at the centre, the parents sometimes tend to brush the practitioners off by telling them that they already know about what is going on with their child. The parents sometimes tend to care more about their careers and when they are invited to the ECD centre they always have an excuse for not being able to attend (Hardley & Rouse, 2018).

It is good for the parents to know a child's practitioner – showing curiosity about the child's practices. More so, talking to the ECD practitioner more often at the time of dropping and collecting a child is important. If this cannot happen it is a good idea to make an appointment to share information. It is of paramount important to the ECD practitioner that the child goes home happy about the work done at the centre and which the child will then try to do at home. More so, parents should be telling the ECD practitioner about a child's successes. Parents can also share family traditions; this helps the practitioner in how they can help children to feel they belong to a setting. Parents should let ECD practitioners know about the behaviour of their children especially when they portray some differences from other children at the centre (Fitzpatrick, 2012).

Parents may also tell ECD practitioners about what might be affecting a child's behaviour, for example when a pet dies, when a parent is not well, when there is divorce in the family. It is good to also inform the ECD practitioners when there is something to be excited about for example events like birthdays at home. Parents can share concerns about the child's development with the ECD practitioner. It is good to share information about a particular support that the child needs in order to participate in activities. More so, parents can share information about a child's needs which will help the ECD practitioner to know how to treat or relate to the child, ensuring the child still benefits fully from learning activities at the centre. For instance, if the child has health issues, the parents should open up to the ECD practitioners. (Murray et al, 2015, Narvanen & Markstrom (2015), Fitzpatrick, 2012). Such information sharing in an organised manner will allow the practitioner to know more about the learner and be able to support them.

It is important for practitioners to talk informally to parents regularly and at parent and practitioner seminars. They should encourage parents to come to ECD practitioners for more information. ECD practitioners can share some of the examples of children's work, such as files with the children's work that the parents can see whenever they wish to check. They can organise some open days to display and celebrate the children's work. They can send files with children's work home at the end of the year and display the work of the children in hallways. Further, they can make sure that the

notice boards reflect the multiplicity of the parents who use that ECD centre (Murray et al, 2015; Narvanen & Markstrom 2015; Fitzpatrick, 2012)

Some parents may need assistance to understand the report cards, including meanings of words (Fitzpatrick, 2012). It is important to let parents know that there is always someone to talk to at the centre or over the phone. This can help those parents who do not have the chance to come face to face with practitioners at the ECD centre. Nevertheless, it is better to come for a discussion, especially when there is a misunderstanding. It is good to have seminars about children's educational development, for instance on how children can learn by playing, giving parents chance to be involved in some of the events. A variety of events can be organised for parents on a day that they can attend in numbers (Murray et al, 2015; Narvanen & Markstrom, 2015; Fitzpatrick, 2012).

Practitioners can build relationships with parents when they drop by and when they collect children and can then encourage them to take part in their children's educational development by coming to meetings at the ECD centre. Practitioners can organise social events where parents to build networks with other parents and with ECD practitioners as well (Murray et al, 2015, Morrison, Storey & Zhang, 2011; Fitzpatrick, 2012). Regular opportunities for communication with parents are important for accurate and timely exchanges of information when parents and practitioners can together decide on what they would want to implement (Fitzpatrick, 2012).

2.3.4.1. *Different forms of parents and practitioners' communication*

i. Written/formal

Communication between ECD practitioners and parents can take different forms like written letters and reports. The centre can develop a dedicated space for parents. If space permits, they can develop space that is comfortable with furniture and inviting parents to speak informally with each other as well as with children's practitioners. It is also a good to put a parent notebook in a convenient space where parents can write comments for practitioners (Hardley & Rouse, 2018). Newsletters are also a special way of communication between parents and practitioners. Newsletters can be used to communicate to parents either on paper, or electronically, providing information about children's educational development (Hardley & Rouse, 2018). ECD practitioners are encouraged to offer newsletters written in different languages so that all the parents

will be able to understand. Practitioners are supposed to be creative and find ways to involve the children's parents in writing, photography, and making the newsletters.

ii. Open day/Meetings

Open days provide ECD centres the opportunity to show off their facilities. At open days, ECD practitioners can provide the children's parents with the time to visit the ECD centre and have an opportunity to chat with the practitioners and peruse their children's educational development files. Furthermore, parents and ECD practitioners may communicate through meetings. The formal discussions between parents and ECD practitioners concerning educational development of the child are a crucial form of communication. These consultations give time for parents and ECD practitioners to share knowledge and ideas with the goal of improving the children's educational development (Hadley & Rouse, 2018). ECD practitioners may help parents with parenting skills by giving workshops or deliberations on topics that are relevant to parents, such as explaining the educational developmental phases of a child, guidance and parenting methods. Parents can be involved at the ECD through making decisions (Hadley & Rouse, 2018).

Conferences, conducted in the parents' home language, are said to be most effective. Practitioners can also share the children's files, ask for parents' insights about children's experiences, and encourage parents to become more involved in classroom educational development. Having someone to interact with about your child's development may ignite the imagination and creativity to challenge your child further to develop.

It is of great importance for practitioners to organise parent and practitioners' meetings regularly and in a more organised way. It is crucial for the ECD practitioners to time these meetings when most of the parents will be able to attend. To schedule a meeting will depend on the availability of the parents, and of the ECD practitioners. Meetings offer time for ECD practitioners and parents to share some points of view, taking note of implications in terms of educational development. Partnership meetings should be done with mutual respect and honesty to each other, good listeners, and practitioners should answer questions from parents (Cheatham & Ostrosky, 2013, Fitzpatrick, 2012, Murray et al, 2015,

Furthermore, pre-arranged meetings can give parents and ECD practitioners an opportunity to be ready and contemplate about things they will deliberate over. A full development outline can deliver a valuable focus for conversation, if that outline includes donations from parents. Pictures can be useful in meetings. Children's educational development documented through photos can give insight into what is motivating them and provide information about the stage of learning and development. Videos have the advantage of recording language and movement and can be played again and again (Cheatham & Ostrosky, 2013, Fitzpatrick, 2012).

iii. Verbal/Informal communication

The ways in which communication with parents takes place include: Informal, such as telephonic contact with parents, and the use of small notes. Communication is said to be a foundation for good parent and ECD practitioner partnership. Verbal communication has a strong positive impact, mostly for those parents who are working (OECD, 2012). Parents are more involved if they receive communication from ECD practitioners. The more interaction parents have with the ECD practitioners, the more they become more interested in taking part in their child's activities inside and outside the centre (McDermott, 2012).

iv. Electronic communication/Websites

A centre's website is a 21st century approach to communicate information about the ECD centre. The website can be used to upload pictures of children's educational development and also to record some daily events with parents. A website can offer parenting/child development videos and any other resources. Parents may assist with photography, sharing information, designing and updating the website. The programme events, ECD programmes, encourage parents to take an active part in classroom events such as field trip planning and travel, community worker visits, and holiday celebrations. This can include asking parents for thoughts about events that are good to them and will encourage them to take leadership roles in their planning.

ECD practitioners can send a child's videos in class showing the parent how the child was doing that day or how the child was performing in certain activities (Ozmen, Akuzum, Zincirli, & Selcuk, 2016; Hardley & Rouse, 2018). That becomes a starting point for discussion at home, reinforcing what was learnt at school and correcting any bad behaviours. However, parents would need to be cautious on how to approach

poor performance by a child as the child may feel exposed and withdraw from participation at the centre – more often children can demonstrate different behaviours at centre versus at home. Some ECD centres share videos of the children through WhatsApp. Some ECD centres communicate through Facebook where they post videos and pictures of children performing some learning activities.

The communication of parents and ECD practitioners electronically must be done in a professional way and confidentiality is important (Morrison, Storey & Zhang, 2015). Centres need individuals with understanding of technology and media to monitor and update social media pages and blogs because if anyone does it the chance of posting sensitive information is high which will strain relationships with parents. A limited-access website is advised because user-friendly arrangements make it easier for parents to search for information. This makes it easier to share learning activities taking place at school and motivates parents to be involved as they view their child in relation to others. This in turn promotes partnership, which this study focused on investigating. It should be noted that the web pages should have a password to ensure there is no public access to information and uploading of material. Information about children, their parents and ECD practitioners is not suitable on a class website. The school needs to, whenever possible, arrange for meetings and events to help guarantee that parents who wish to participate can do so (Morrison, Storey & Zhang, 2015).

When ECD practitioners create a relationship with children's parents, they feel more satisfied about their part as practitioners. Experienced practitioners, working in high-quality ECD centres, have more parent volunteers. From a study that was done by Doe (2015), it is evident that communication plays a crucial part in parental involvement and maintaining relations.

2.3.5. Parents and practitioners' joint decision making

Parents are the ones to make decisions about the children, on issues of food, choosing playmates and the type of ECD centre. Parents need to be involved when ECD practitioners are making decisions about the children. Parents have the responsibility for their children's nurturing and ECD centres are responsible for organisation and quality of educational development of the children.

According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) (2005) parents and ECD practitioners need to acknowledge that they cannot do without each other's help; they need each other in order to be able to communicate about the educational development at home and at the ECD centre. This has the potential for the two to complement each other's contribution to the children's educational development and have respect for each other's input to the child-care and education of children. Kernan (2012) placed emphasis on improving communication and common understanding. Practitioners should listen to parents, improving communication, and should know about the family conditions which seems to be the key for overcoming challenges (Kernan, 2012).

Ward and Gould (2018) suggested that another form of parental involvement is implementing the Positive Parenting Programme (Triple P). This programme includes changing the way parents behave in relation to themselves and the children. Parents are supposed to be better problem solvers, should be able to screen and assess their performance, and need to see themselves as capable parents. The programme skills parents to create positive educational development for their children by using praise, offering quality time and setting a good example (Ward & Gould, 2018).

Parents and ECD practitioners contribute different learning developments to the child. Parents are the ones that have the knowledge about the home setting, the child's life and other related issues of the child (Ward, 2018). ECD practitioners have understanding concerning the needs of children at the ECD centre, curriculum activities and the relationship of the children with peers. Contribution of partnership can be: Keep in touch with ECD practitioners, keep updating them with crucial changes in the family that can disturb learning and development (for example, moving to a new house, divorce and so forth).

Practitioners could try to accommodate parents by making them feel wanted and special, beyond just dropping and picking up children. Practitioners are supposed to keep information flowing on the development of the child. Developing this type of partnership can often be demanding (Ward, 2018).

Ward and Gould (2018) emphasised the fact that ECD practitioner-parent relations are difficult; the managing of practitioner-parent relationships in such a way that gives parents an actual voice without intimidating practitioners' identity as professionals.

Ward and Gould (2018) added that a coordinated partnership of ECD centres should span the first five years of a child's life and parental involvement must take place.

2.3.5.1. Strategies to involve parents in decision making

i. Areas where parents could be involved

Parents could potentially be involved in helping practitioners understand the cultural and community issues of the children. This can be achieved through contributions in informal discussions with practitioners or through formal centre meetings. If parents are given the opportunity to make a contribution to the meetings at the ECD centre they are likely to be able to enforce decisions that are made at the centre. If practitioners just exclude the parents from the decision making at the ECD centre, parents will be isolated and not able to contribute to decision making of the children's educational development (Mahuro & Hungi, 2016). Therefore, parents must be involved and the areas where they should be involved are stated below.

ii. Areas where parents should be involved

Parents should be heard when decisions are being made at the ECD centres. This will make parents contribute in choices about the centre's plans and activities that will impact on children's educational development. All parents must be given the opportunity to suggest ways to improve the ECD centres. Parents need to be stakeholders in the ECD which contributes to feelings of ownership of the ECD centre plans and events. Examples of how ECD centres could encourage collaborative decision making comprise encouraging the parents to attend ECD development team meetings and assigning ECD practitioners to help parents address concerns. The researcher of this study asked parents about meeting attendance, how the invitation/ notifications of such meetings are made and any suggestions they have regarding areas of involvement. Parents could also be involved in planning orientation for new parents, developing skills programmes, and recruiting practitioners to the centre (Landry, 2014). These activities will help parents to be involved more and to realise that their efforts, time and expertise are valued and they will thus be motivated to support their children even more. The study explored strategies that are applied by practitioners in ECD centres in the East London education district.

ECD centres should be aware of the contribution made by parents as it reflects opinions from all, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups in the ECD centre. The thoughts

of all those participating must be valued. No matter the type of activities that the ECD is applying to assist with decision making, it is important that activities are documented and assessed (Landry, 2014). The documenting of events includes obtaining signatures from all the decision makers.

iii. Advantages and disadvantages of parental involvement in decision making in centres

Being organised and updating all stakeholders regularly will build ties between ECD centres and parents, including other stakeholders. Evaluation is important as this is the determining aspect of whether the activity should be continuous, and this has potential to show parents that their voice is needed and is heard. This becomes one way or ensuring the partnership does work.

Commitment to evolving partnership between parents and ECD practitioners based on mutual accountability and recognising the need to improve the capacity of parents are common themes across multiple studies of parent involvement in their children's decision making at an ECD centre. High levels of accomplishment are made possible through organised collaboration between parents and ECD practitioners. Efforts to organise and allow parents to make decisions have been shown to contribute to the development of ECD centres (Landry, 2014).
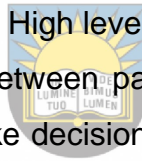
iv. Strategies reported in literature

Urban ECD centres with strong parent engagement plans used various approaches to include parents in making decisions. Strategies include parent groups to help in the ECD policies, parent surveys to measure satisfaction and plan new events, and having parents on the ECD governing board. These strategies are related to cumulative parents' self-efficacy and comfort level in taking part in their children's decision making in educational development.

Other approaches the ECD centres found to raise children's success include an office of parent relations to establish communication between parents and ECD practitioners, creating parent centres in neighbourhoods, and establishing community organisations to generate active parent participation in ECD centres affairs. Furthermore, giving parents the opportunity to get involved at the ECD centre and having contact with ECD practitioners is said to be associated with the level of parent decision making in ECD-related events (Landry, 2014).

2.3.5.2. Factors affecting parent decision making in early childhood development

i. Cultural differences

With increasing social diversity of families, the home and ECD centre environment may have different opinions about the suitable degree of parent involvement in making decisions (Luo, Tamis-LeModa & Song, 2013). The philosophy of the parents often impacts how they wish to be involved in their child's development. On the other hand, involvement also has to do with whether or not the ECD centre chooses to embrace the parents' culture (Luo, Tamis-LeModa & Song, 2013). Many parents are hesitant to make decisions due to their social belief that ECD practitioners are imposing figures in the child's education. This reduces chances of partnership as hierarchy is more pronounced. In this study, parents and practitioners' race and language (which are linked to culture) were obtained to enable better understanding of the variation in responses. Parents fear questions or criticism that can put their child at a disadvantage at the ECD centre.

ii. Child's development

A parent's contribution to decision making in the ECD centre can positively influence a child's educational development. Lin and Yawkey (2013) emphasised that children with parents who participate in ECD programmes not only show progress in educational development, but also are involved in less hazardous behaviour in future.

iii. Parent perspective

The demands of time and life parents seem to hinder parents from being decision makers in the ECD centre. Time appears to be a barrier hindering parents from actively participating in ECD activities or helping their children with ECD work at home. With the growth in single parents and the changes regarding work of mothers of ECD children, time has become a treasured commodity for those parents who fight to make ends meet (Menon, 2013). A parent often cannot participate in ECD activities due to work commitments, family household tasks or other time restrictions. According to the Department of Labour (2005), the broad labour power for women improved by 59% from 1995 to 2005. This shows that a high percentage of women in South Africa have entered the labour market. In addition, there is a sharp rise in the number of women-headed families in diverse cultural settings. Single parents are also less likely to be

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involved in children's educational development experiences because it's not easy to play dual roles (Lin & Li, 2018, Magwa and Mugari (2017).

Single parents have access to fewer resources needed for parent involvement, such as time, money and social support. Many families do not have child care resources or a live-in care giver. In South Africa, a high number of children are left to informal networks for childcare or childcare is delegated to family members. This study focused on formal ECD centres to ascertain how parents and practitioners are collaborating for education provisioning. The findings create awareness amongst ECD centre management on the impact of children development (Lin & Li, 2018 Magwa and Mugari (2017).

2.3.5.3 Families in South Africa

Family structures generally differ and such differences have the potential to affect the role of parent in a child's life. According to Sooryamoorthy and Makhoba (2016), the families in South Africa do not present uniform characteristics. They exhibit features that are dissimilar in terms of structure, form, role and functions. This affects the application of the different theories to the South African context. The Department of Social Development (2012) indicated that the proportion of households that were made up of nuclear families decreased between 1996 and 2001, from 46% to 40%, while the proportion of households made up of extended families increased from 32% to 36% over the same period. This means that a significant number of children are staying in extended families where the adults may not have the opportunity or inclination to be involved in ECD provisioning.

2.4. CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented the theoretical framework underpinning the study, which is composed of Epstein's parental involvement theory and Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory. The chapter first dealt with how parents and practitioners can partner and the stakeholders around the existence and development of a child. In addition, empirical literature linked to the study was reviewed, guided by research questions outlined in the first chapter. Among the studies accessed and assessed, very few take a holistic approach of triangulating the views of parents, practitioners and principals in understanding they key characteristics for children's ECD provision – that of parent and practitioner partnership. The next chapter deals with the methodological approach

followed to respond to the research questions. Ideas of the best method to use were guided by the theoretical underpinnings as well as what other researchers have applied in previous studies.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented a review of literature related to the parent and practitioner partnership in early childhood education. This chapter presents the methodology used in this study. The discussion in this chapter is structured around the research paradigm; research approach; research design; population and sampling; data collection instruments; validity and reliability; trustworthiness of data; procedures for data collection; data analysis and finally ethical consideration. Research is based on underlying philosophical assumptions about what constitutes 'valid' research and which research methods are appropriate for the development of understanding in a given research study. To conduct any study, it is therefore important to know what these assumptions are and how such assumptions can guide inquiry. This chapter discusses the philosophical assumptions supporting this study. According to Creswell and Poth (2017), research methodology refers to ways of finding, organising and analysing data. The methodological decisions depend on the nature of the research question, whether a qualitative or quantitative research approach is needed as well as how much is already known about a phenomenon. In this study, methodology refers to how the research was conducted and its logical sequence to meet the study objectives as outlined in Chapter One. The focus of this study was to assess the partnership between parents and practitioners in ECD centres in the East London district.

3.2. RESEARCH PARADIGM

In educational research the term paradigm is used to describe the researcher's view of the research problem (Kivunja & Kuyini 2017). This worldview is the perspective, or thinking, or set of shared beliefs, that informs the meaning or interpretation of research data. More so, a research paradigm reflects the researcher's beliefs about the world that we live in and want to live in. Research paradigm is therefore the abstract beliefs and principles that shape how a researcher sees the world, and how to interpret and act within that world. It is the lens through which a researcher looks at the world (Creswell, 2014). It is the conceptual lens through which the researcher implements the empirical strategy aspects of their research project to gather data and analyses it to meet the study objectives (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). This is the basis for any

empirical investigation and this chapter of the work initiates that logical flow of research activities which enabled the researcher in answering the research questions set in Chapter one.

A research paradigm has been explained as a collection of logically related assumptions, concepts or propositions that position thinking and research (Martens, 2015). In that regard, the paradigm helps in terms of how questions are created for the survey and interviews, and what the collection of data and its analysis entail. On the other hand, a paradigm can be viewed as a perspective about research held by a community of researchers that is based on a set of shared assumptions, concepts, values, and practices (Putnam, 2012). The approaches and methods to be chosen in this enquiry need to be acceptable to the community of researchers as scientifically sound and relevant to address the research problem. It is an approach to thinking about and doing research, as a result, it is proclaimed that paradigms serve as lenses by which reality is interpreted (Martens, 2015; Searle, 2015).

In addition, Martens (2015) defined paradigms as the models for understanding and observation that shape what we view and how we get to understand it. It is said that paradigms are ways of seeing reality and these are frames of reference we use to form our observations and perceptions. In addition, Kivunja and Kuyini, (2017) noted that paradigms are systems of interrelated practice and thinking that define for researchers the nature of their enquiry along three dimensions. These dimensions include ontology, epistemology and axiology. Ontology specifies the nature of reality that is to be studied, and what can be known about it, while epistemology specifies the nature of the relationship between the researcher and what can be known. On the other hand, axiology comprises the ethics and values that we believe in (Creswell, 2014). The ontological, epistemological and axiological stances we adopt are considered paradigms and reflect the researcher's understanding of the nature of existence from the first principles that are beyond "logical" debate (Harkiolakis, 2017). As paradigms, they are accepted as self-sufficient logical constructs (dogmas in a way) that are beyond the scrutiny of proof or doubt.

Methodology specifies how researchers may go about practically studying whatever they believe can be known (Searle, 2015) with flexibility afforded by three paradigms which exhibit a continuum of reasoning about research. Three paradigms exist,

namely positivism, interpretivism/constructivism and pragmatism (combination of the two former) (Creswell, 2014).

Table 3.1 summarises the paradigms and relates to ontology and epistemology. The paradigms are further expanded in subsections that follow to provide understanding of application in literature

3.2.1. Paradigms and philosophical underpinnings

Table 3.1: Paradigms and philosophical underpinnings

Paradigm	Ontology *What is reality?*	Epistemology *How can I know reality?*
Positivism	There is single reality.	Reality can be measured hence need for validity and reliable tools to obtain it.
Constructivism/ Interpretivism	There is no single reality. Reality is created by individuals in groups.	Therefore, reality needs to be interpreted. It is used to discover the underlying meaning of events and activities.
Pragmatism	Reality is constantly renegotiated, debated, interpreted, in light of its usefulness in new unpredictable situations.	The best method is one that solves the problem. Finding out the means, and change is the underlying aim.

Source: Easterby-Smith., Thorpe and Jackson (2012) and Scotland, J. (2012).

From the table it can be seen that there is a clearly connection (logical flow) from paradigm to ontology and then epistemology. Positivism is about summarising for generalisation, while interpretivism is about digging deeper for meaning. This is better revealed in the schematic illustration of Figure 3.1.

According to Harkiolakis (2017), positivism is based on the idea that the social world exists externally and can be studied and represented accurately by human knowledge only when it has been validated empirically. The argument is that social entities as human beings and their interactions are seen as observables that can be expressed through the appropriate choice of parameters and variables (being quantifiable, therefore quantitative approach inclined). This implies that variables can be studied

and empirically tested to reveal the true nature of social phenomena. Positivism is criticised for its inappropriateness in describing complex social phenomena that are formed by the intricate nature of human behaviour (Creswell, 2014; Harkiolakis, 2017). It has been observed that while positivism is quite appropriate for measuring variables that define phenomena and proving hypothetical propositions, it does not leave room for discovery; simply because you cannot prove or measure something you suspect does not exist. The paradigm is appropriate when the research has some knowledge about the studied subjects and measurements, focusing on explaining a phenomenon and testing propositions. In that regard, it follows that such a paradigm is aligned to deductive reasoning where theory leads data collection and analysis.

Contrary to positivism, interpretivism believes that there is no single reality or truth, and therefore reality needs to be interpreted, with inclination towards qualitative methods to get those multiple realities (Creswell, 2014). There are many realities and explanations as there are many subjects under study. The purpose of this study was to address the subjective nature of social experience and interaction. In the constructionist paradigm, it is argued that our perception of the world is a social construct formed by commonly agreed beliefs among people and that these constructs should be investigated by research. A major challenge with constructionism regarding research is the fact that when dealing with external events, like how the market behaves or how an organisation interacts with its stakeholders, an external perspective is required (Harkiolakis, 2017). Another challenge faced is the inability to compare views of individuals as they are subjectively formed and do not represent accurate/realistic reflections of their outside world. To address many of the challenges that constructionists face with respect to quality (like validity in positivism), compliance with a set of criteria is sought in constructionism-based research. Prominent among them is authenticity, whereby the researchers need to display understanding of the issue under investigation (Harkiolakis, 2017). On the other hand, this thinking enables inductive reasoning where data leads to theory development, and is suitable for exploratory studies where little is known about a phenomenon under investigation.

Pragmatism is premised on the reasoning that reality is constantly renegotiated, debated, interpreted, and therefore the best method to use is the one that solves the problem (the general and specific can tell more than either one). The approach takes the best of both worlds to ensure a comprehensive approach to answering research

questions to arrive at a logical conclusion. This study used the pragmatism paradigm, employed as the philosophical underpinning for using mixed methods (Creswell, 2014).

Pragmatism is explained as a leading contender for the philosophical champion of the mixed methods arena. With pragmatism, data collection, analysis and interpretation involve both qualitative and quantitative techniques to improve solving of the research problem at hand. Further, this could assist in providing a comprehensive answer, as both numbers summarising respondents' choices and detailed narratives by participants were used. According to Creswell (2013, 2014), in the real world, not everything can be quantified nor does a story tell everything clear and generalisable, therefore borrowing from both techniques becomes crucial and that is the proposition by the pragmatism paradigm. This paradigm is therefore placed rightly to help this study find answers to the questions that are a combination of qualitative (for example, how parents and practitioners view the way they work together in the ECD centres) and quantitative (the frequency of interaction between parents and practitioners in ECD provisioning). It is imperative to note here that the paradigm comes in three variants based on how the two (qualitative and quantitative) methods are brought together. It can either be embedded where they are equally and concurrently infused, exploratory where qualitative dominates sequential or explanatory sequential with quantitative leading (Harkiolakis, 2017).

Paradigm

Methodology

Reasoning
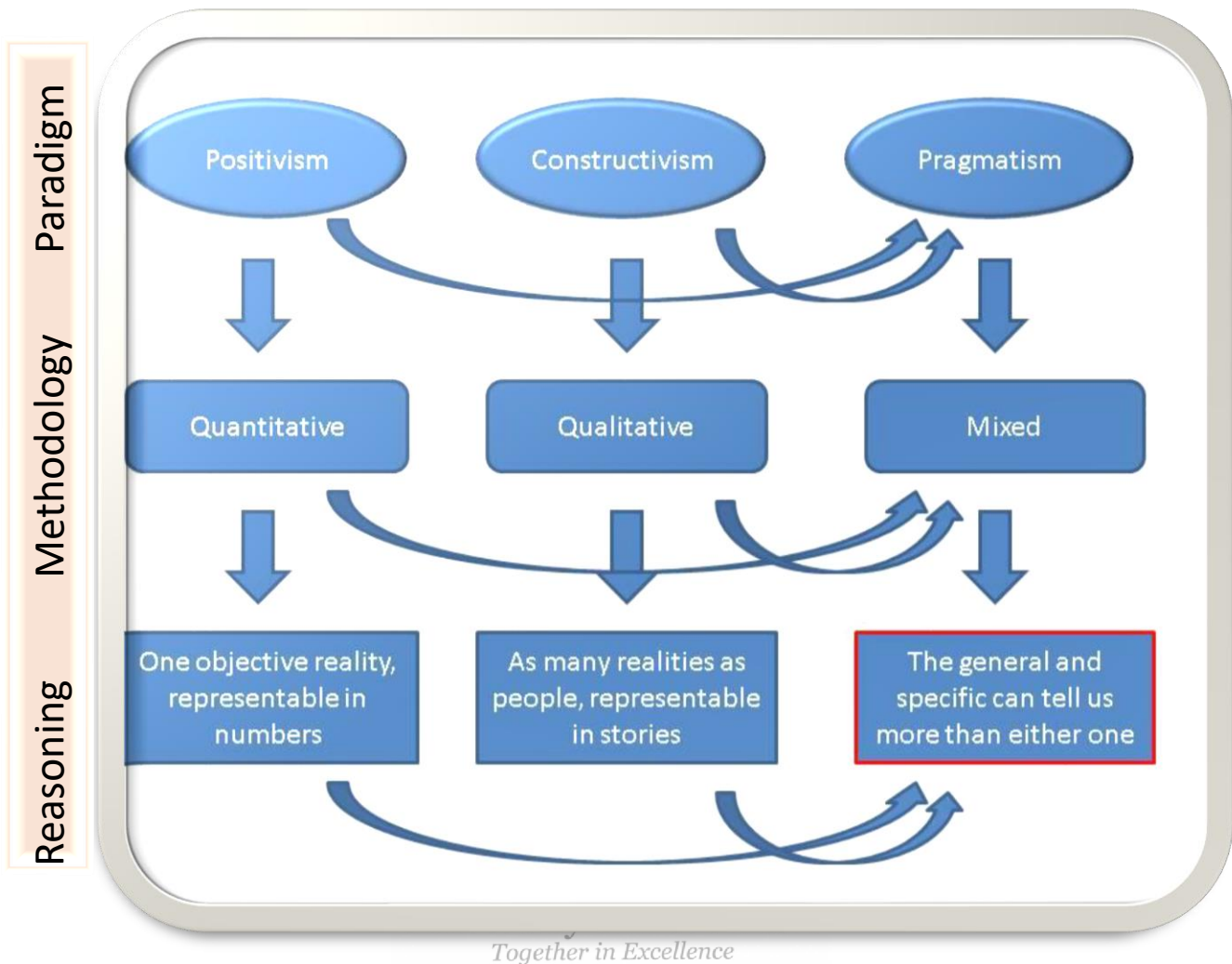
Figure 3.1: Paradigms and research approaches

Source: Creswell, (2014)

The paradigms are discussed in detail in sub-sections 3.2.1- 3.2.3 below.

3.2.1. Positivism paradigm

Positivist researchers believe that there is a single reality, which can be measured and known; furthermore, they are expected to use quantitative methods to measure this reality (one objective reality, representable in numbers). Positivism is regarded as logical positivism which holds the view that scientific technique is the way to start truth and unbiassed reality. Positivism is the view that science is the only foundation for true knowledge. It embraces that the methods used in natural sciences offer the best framework for exploring the social world. Positivism applies scientific method to the study of human action (Brown, 2014; Dean, 2018).

A positivist researcher maintains that it is possible to adopt a distant, detached, neutral and no interactive position (Chilisa & Hanson, 2012). Positivists favour a reasonable description of measurable statistics (Creswell, 2014). The ideas of social association may be related to the specific capacities of the social world (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

It is detailed that positivism is concerned with the construction of regulations related to all humans. Positivism has not met with agreement and support by all scientists, since it has formed challenges and questionable assumptions. It has been pointed out that positivist social scientists assume that social reality can be explained in rational terms, because people always act rationally (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

3.2.2. The constructivist/interpretivist paradigm

The interpretive paradigm is also called the phenomenological approach. This is an approach that aims to understand people. Interpretivism aims to understand reality events – how they happen every day (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

Accordingly, to Marten (2015) reality is said to be explained through interpreting the meaning that human beings describe as their living in the world. The meaning can only be revealed by talking to people and not by quantifiable exploration (Creswell, 2014). The social world cannot be known by principles of research in the natural sciences (Dean 2018; Yanow, 2014). People are the ones that give meaning to the social world. People have the mind and how they do their things is contributed by the facts of the social world to which they are related (Dean, 2018)

Researchers with an interpretivist orientation regard the social world as fluid dependency. From this perspective, something that is true today cannot be true another day. This is because it is believed that knowledge can be developed and theory accumulates (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2014).

According to Dean (2018), everything in the social world is relative to all other events and experiences. Interpretivists reject the notion that research is value-free since the researcher's interpretation is also socially constructed, reflecting their motives and beliefs. Human interests not only channel our thinking, but also impact how the world is investigated, and how knowledge is constructed (Yanow, 2014).

Dean (2018) explained that the greatest approaches within the explanatory research paradigm are through reflection and clarification. It is best for the researcher to have knowledge on how people live and how they view their world.

The paradigm allows the researcher to be a participant by observing what will be taking place, spending more time with participants and seeing what will take place. The researcher is able to mingle with the research contributors in order to experience the exact challenges (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2014). Constructivism and interpretivism are related concepts that address understanding the world as others experience it. Constructivists differ from the positivists on assumptions about the nature of reality, what counts as knowledge and its sources, values and their role in the research process (Dean, 2018).

Regarding the related assumptions on ontology, on what reality is, the interpretivists believe that it is socially constructed (Creswell, 2014) and that there are as many intangible realities as there are people constructing them. Reality is mind dependent and a personal or social construct. It is a way in which you try by all means to find the sense of the world that you are in (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2014).

3.2.3. Pragmatism paradigm

Dean (2018) identified pragmatism as a leading contender for the philosophical champion of the mixed methods arena. This study sought to generalise as well as dig deeper for understanding a phenomenon implying that both quantitative and qualitative techniques are required, thus leading the researcher to align with the pragmatism paradigm (Creswell, 2014; Dean, 2018; Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2014; Yanow, 2014). Pragmatism defines mixed methods as normally associated with the idea that researchers can match methods to specific purposes of research and work back and forth between approaches as supposedly required by the research context (Dean 2018). Pragmatism allows mixing the methods as is explained in sub-section 3.2.4. Pragmatism is argued to offer a base balanced analysis and it is not committed to any one scheme of idea and/or reality. This is also the premise of the strength in mixed methods research, in that it draws from both the numerical and qualitative.

Researchers are said to have the freedom to choose a methodology, even the procedure of the study is for them to meet the needs and the purpose of the study and

includes the researcher's own preferential orientation, own views, beliefs and values. Researchers that use mixed method approach use different types of approaches for the collection of data, analysis information and for interpreting it. Pragmatists are concerned with "what" and "how" in their research study (Dean, 2018).

Furthermore, the ontological perspective indicates that pragmatists trust in an external world self-governing of the mind. Ontological perspective expects researchers not to ask questions around truth and the regulations of nature but direct them to multiple methods, different assumptions, as well as different forms of data gathering and analysis (Dean, 2018; Mertens & Wilson, 2012). This entails triangulation, a technique used to supplement methods and data for robust conclusions. This was relevant for this study as different stakeholders (parents, principal and practitioners) and forms of data (qualitative and quantitative) were required to understand the phenomena.

Moreover, the choice of epistemological pragmatism offers justification for combining methods. Pragmatism accepts the claims of interpretivism and positivism about information and truth and that no one is outright superior. Pragmatism argues that understandings in the world are controlled by the nature of the world, and the view of the world is limited to the clarifications of understandings (Dean, 2018; Mertens & Wilson, 2012; Goldkuhl, 2012).
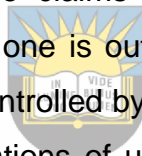
3.2.4. Application and justification of pragmatism in this study

This study made use of the pragmatism paradigm, employed as the philosophical underpinning for using mixed methods (Dean, 2018). With pragmatism, data collection, analysis and interpretation involve both qualitative and quantitative techniques in order to improve solving of the research problem at hand (Creswell, 2014). The use of both qualitative and quantitative methods assists in providing a comprehensive answer, as both numbers summarising respondents' choices and detailed narratives by participants are used (Creswell, 2014). According to Creswell (2014), in the real world, not everything can be quantified nor does a story tell everything clearly or is generalisable. Therefore, borrowing from both techniques became inevitable for this study and that is the proposition of the pragmatism paradigm. This paradigm was therefore appropriately placed to help this study find answers to the questions that formed a combination of qualitative (for example, how do parents and practitioners view the way they work together on provision of resources

in early childhood education provisioning?) and quantitative (for example, what are the strategies to enhance parents and practitioners' information sharing in early childhood education provisioning?

Pragmatism in conjunction with mixed methods research methodology has heightened the awareness of pragmatism (Hall, 2013). Pragmatism provides researchers with the ability to observe, understand, reflect and provide guidelines to mediate within a social context (Goldkuhl 2012). It suited this inquiry well given that exploring partnerships and how they function is a complex phenomenon as many players and interpretations exist. What one stakeholder considers the partnership to be may not be so with another; yet what one considers to be responsibility of the other may often not be viewed in the same way by another stakeholder. To extract all interpretations, views, experiences and observations a hybrid of qualitative and quantitative was needed, hence the choice of the pragmatic paradigm.

3.3. RESEARCH APPROACH

With the research problem articulated in Chapter One and the epistemology and ontology defined and discussed in the context of this study, and the research methodology defined in sections above, this section focuses on research approaches that are available and a selection of the one that was followed in this study. Research approach comprises the plans or procedures for research that span the steps from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection, analysis and interpretation (Creswell, 2014). Further, it is explained that the research approach is a way of collecting and analysing data, focusing on the research questions. Therefore, the research approach can be regarded as a process that includes choices on the methods of the research, which are: sampling approaches, data collection techniques as well as data analysis procedures. There are three approaches available, which are: qualitative, mixed methods and quantitative (Creswell, 2014) as outlined in Figure 3.1. A research project can be guided by one of the approaches, and where mixed method (which is combination of the first two) is chosen, an additional step is needed in determining how the mixing of the methods is done. Figure 3.1. also shows the alignment of each approach to the paradigms as discussed above.

It is imperative to note here that the research questions that had to be answered were compiled with the understanding of knowledge available regarding the research topic.

Therefore, the aim of the research, whether exploratory, explanatory or a combination helps determine approach to follow. Eventually, an approach is chosen based on the research problem and questions to be answered as outlined in the introductory chapter. Figure 3.2 below depicts the chronological sequence of arriving at the approach of interest – in a nutshell, the diagram depicts what has taken place up until this stage where the researcher is faced with three approaches to choose from.
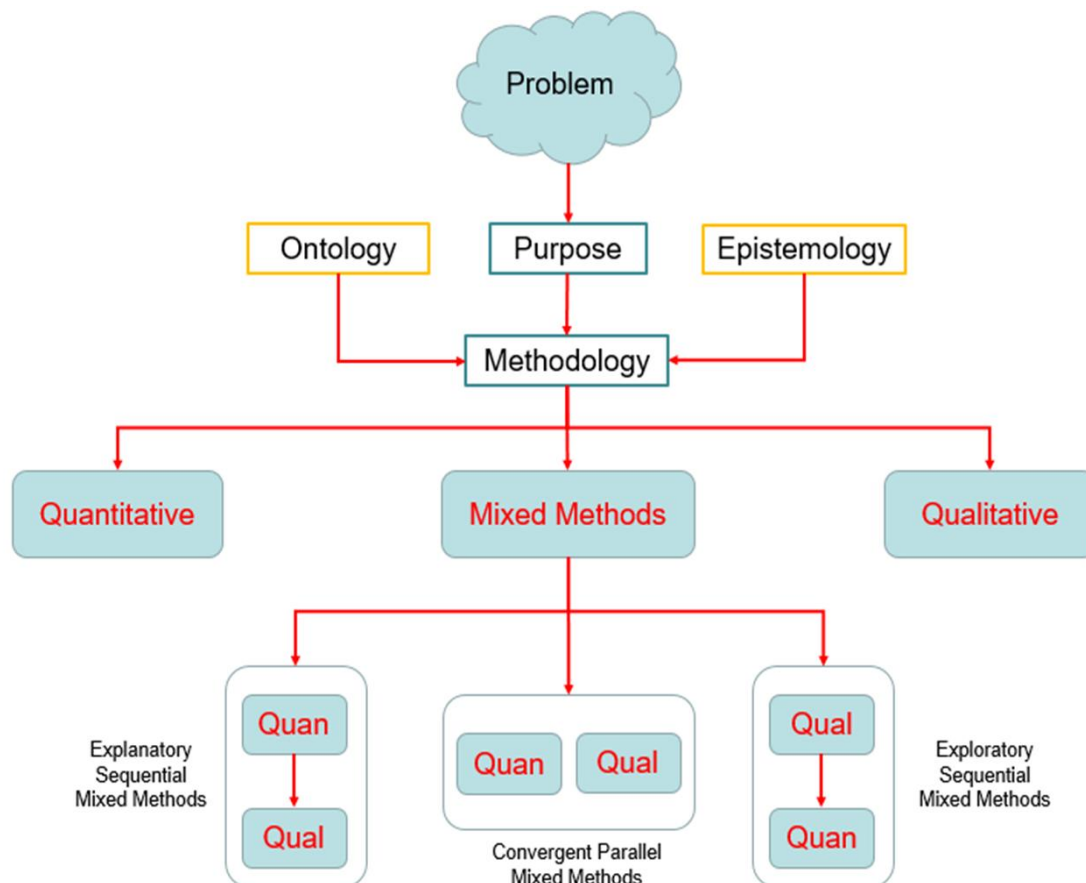
Figure 3.2: Research methodology and approaches

Source: Harkiolakis (2017)

The diagram depicts that, if mixed methods is selected, an important decision is one on how to mix the quantitative research methods and qualitative research methods to address research questions. It is acceptable that either quantitative or qualitative dominates leading to an explanatory sequential mix methods or exploratory sequential mixed methods respectively (Harkiolakis, 2017). On the other hand, the two approaches may guide the study in equal proportions in a format known as convergent parallel mixed methods (also referred to as embedded or concurrent).

Subsections that followed discussed each of these three options, indicating how each of these can be applied to this study. A selection of the most suitable approach is then made.

3.3.1. Quantitative research approach

This is premised on measuring, counting, generalising and summarising information. The researcher holds post-positivist claims for increasing understanding for instance "cause and effect" thinking, reduction to specific variables and hypotheses and questions, use of size and observation, and the test of philosophies. The quantitative approach makes use of experimentations and surveys, collects statistic information, and uses instruments that yield numerical data (Creswell, 2014).

Furthermore, quantitative data collection and analysis is based on meaning derived from data in numerical form, for example the scale scores. This study used Likert scales in collecting data and then computed total scores for analysis. This is in contrast to qualitative methods where meaning is derived from narratives (Creswell, 2014; Almalki, 2016). The numbers in the quantitative research can come directly from measurements during observation (for example grading one's performance in class; measuring one's height) and indirectly by converting collected information into numerical form, for example using a Likert scale. While this definition of quantitative research covers the basics of what it is, a more in-depth representation defines quantitative methodologies as an attempt to measure an objective reality. In other words, we assume that the phenomenon under study is real and can be represented by estimating parameters and measuring meaningful variables that can represent the state of entities that are involved in the phenomenon under study (Harkiolakis, 2017).

Quantitative research is regarded as deductive approach to research (Rovai et al., 2014) in that the researcher is guided by theory to collect and analyse data. Quantitative investigators consider the world as external and there is objective truth of the observations (Rovai et al., 2014). In order to produce reliable evaluations, quantitative research requires large numbers of participants and the analysis is done through statistical tools (Creswell, 2014). Large samples ensure better representativeness and generalisability of findings as well as proper application of the statistical tests (Rovai et al., 2014). The investigator and the investigated are independent entities and, therefore, the investigator can study a phenomenon without

influencing it or being influenced by it. This ensures an objective treatment of the collected data increasing, in this way, the reliability of the study. Facts are separated from values and in this way the "truth" of what is observed is the external reality of the observation. This is also supported by the rigid procedures that need to be followed during data collection in addition to ensuring reliable measurement to eliminate potential biases and personal values of the researcher (Almalki, 2016).

Collecting data for quantitative studies is based on instruments and spelt-out procedures. For this study to bring out the efforts and experiences of practitioners in partnering with parents in an objective and standardised manner, a quantitative approach was employed. In this study, a questionnaire was used to collect data following the strategy design and procedures detailed later in this chapter. The former concerns the development of written forms for collecting information through observation and surveys, while the latter concerns the formal steps followed in collecting information. Since data comes in numerical form, the use of mathematical methods like statistics is utilised. At this point it should be clarified that while some variables are by nature numerical, for example age in years, others like beliefs or attitudes might need the development of some scale for their measurement. A questionnaire might be developed where a measure of agreement with a statement for example "strongly disagree', 'disagree', 'neither agree nor disagree', 'agree', 'strongly agree' can be selected by participants. This type of scale is "assumed" equivalent to a numerical scale (like 'strongly disagree' = 1, 'disagree' = 2, and so on) (Almalki, 2016; Creswell, 2014).

This type of mapping (referred to in some instances as coding) between wordy representations of variables and numerical ones allows for an analysis of the data with the use of statistical and other analytical forms of processing. In essence, the aim is to remove interpretation that could be ambiguous during the analysis phase. While the great advantage of quantitative methods is the establishment of proof about dependencies and the existence of relations among quantities that are easy to replicate and generalise, the methodology is not free of criticism. A typically mentioned disadvantage of quantitative methods is that it is sometimes not clear what the answers to questions mean in terms of the subjects' behaviour. In other words, the contextual details of a situation are not easily captured, especially when attitudes, beliefs, and behaviour in general are studied. This is something that quantitative

researchers usually defend by emphasising that the focus of quantitative methods is not on what behaviour means but on what causes it and how it is explained (Creswell, 2014; Almalki, 2016).

This study included questions that require such quantification, for example number of children in a class, in the whole ECD centre; and rating in Likert scales. Therefore, the study was guided by this approach on such research questions. A questionnaire was designed with closed-ended questions that fit the description of instruments attributable to quantitative methods as discussed here.

The next sub-section discusses the qualitative approach which is premised on digging deeper for meaning, with the research knowledge, skills and experiences central to the quality of the study utilising this approach.

3.3.2. Qualitative approach

Qualitative study commonly explained as the inquirer often marks understanding claims based on constructivist viewpoints. In a qualitative approach the researcher collects open-ended answers and seeks to get more insights from the source of information (Creswell, 2014).

Qualitative research is grounded on comparing theoretical constructs as it is in the act of comparison that new constructs are developed. Such constructs are necessary in social sciences when human behaviour needs to be studied. Humans are moved by needs, and in response to environmental triggers (both physical and social) they build an understanding of the world around them that helps them make sense of it and respond. One definition that captures all this is to see qualitative research as a methodology that aims to understand human behaviour in a specific context and more specifically the beliefs, perceptions, and motivations that guide decision making and behaviour (Almalki, 2016).

Conceptually, qualitative methodology assumes a dynamic and subjective reality – there is no one interpretation of reality or the world around it; it depends on who is interpreting and their knowledge and experiences. The role of the researcher becomes critical as they interpret not only the results but also the content of what is captured and the way it is captured. Some words may be similar but how such words are given/presented and how such words relate to other set of words is critical in giving

meaning to the words – in this regard words carry more meaning than the ordinary one (Harkiolakis, 2017). One can only think of the interviewing process (a typical data collection technique for qualitative methodology) and how the interviewer can influence (consciously and unconsciously) the subjects of the study due to their preconceptions and biases towards the phenomenon of investigation. Qualitative research is based on the constructionist epistemological stance and heavily reflects the relativist ontological perspective. As such, it is heavily based on interpretation and induction (Creswell, 2014). The social position of interviewer versus interviewee is of material importance as is observing bodily language of the interviewee, implying that a very conscious consideration is needed in planning qualitative study to minimise extraneous factors.

In a qualitative study, the emphasis is on discovering meaning of individuals attributed to social challenge (Creswell, 2014). The qualitative approach can be considered as attainment of a viewpoint of matters from examining them in a specific situation and the sense that people bring. It emphasises upon drawing sense from opinions of participants. In that regard the methods are defined as inductive, with underlying expectations that reality is a societal construct, variables are a challenge to measure, complex and intertwined, that there is importance of subject matter and that information collected will cover an insider's viewing platform (Rovai, Baker & Ponton, 2014). Rovai et al. (2014) specified that the qualitative research approach supports individuality and social justice, it provides rich information (Almalki, 2016).

The open-ended methods that are used in qualitative research are meant to explore participants' interpretations (usually collected in relatively close settings) and include, among others, interviewing, on-site observations, case studies, histories, biographies, ethnographies, and conversational and discourse analysis. Data and information are usually collected from samples of actors and their accounts of their perspectives and recollections of events and impressions they formed about specific situations they experienced (Creswell, 2014).

This study included questions that required explanation of why individuals responded in a certain way or why they behave in particular way. Such open-ended questions are in line with the discussion here. In addition, parents have qualitative instrument-

interview schedule drawn up for them. The study could therefore benefit from a qualitative approach as discussed here.

Taking into account that a study can benefit from both quantitative and qualitative in what is known as the mixed methods approach, and that the above two approaches have been identified as relevant to this study in their respective accounts, a mixed methods approach is discussed in detail below.

3.3.3. Mixed methods research approach

A mixed methods approach is one in which the researcher tends to base knowledge claims on pragmatic grounds, for example consequence-oriented, problem-centred, and pluralistic. A mixed method research approach employs strategies of inquiry that involve collecting different types of data (quantitative and qualitative) either simultaneously or sequentially to best understand research problems (Almalki, 2016).

For this study, the researcher sought to examine the partnership between parents and practitioners. For this reason, the researcher interviewed the parents on how they partner with the ECD practitioners. The researcher operated from a pragmatic paradigm for the gathering of qualitative and quantitative information.

Use of mixed research methods involves collection, analysis and mixing of both qualitative and quantitative data in a single study (Creswell, 2014). The research questions in this study required both qualitative and quantitative data and analysis techniques. For example, to understand how parents and practitioners' partner in early childhood education provisioning, the need existed for qualitative data obtainable through interviews. On the other hand, to ascertain the strategies to enhance parents and practitioner's information sharing in early childhood education provisioning, the need also existed for quantitative data and analytical approaches. As a result, this study used a mixed methods approach. The mixed methods approach comes in various forms, but is mainly concurrent/embedded or sequential (Creswell, 2014).

As explained, the qualitative and quantitative approaches can be put together and they will be termed mixed methods (Creswell, 2016). It is thus an effort to draw from multiple epistemologies to recognise phenomena. Researchers may increase validity of research through triangulation that is to reach generalisations that support creation of theories to explain phenomena being studied. Combined methodology changes from

methods and gets nearer to practice as an approach to examining a research problem. There are researchers who view methodology as a separate and self-determining epistemological way of approaching a study. This brings the quantitative and qualitative methods into the realm of pragmatism in among positivism and constructionism (Almalki, 2016; Creswell, 2016).

To add onto the use of qualitative and quantitative, mixed methods comprise the method of investigation that is a systematic integration (Almalki, 2016). Other possibilities of combinations have also been identified, like conducting one before and after an intervention, or having quantitative data in qualitative research and vice-versa (Creswell, 2014).

Given the selection of mixed methods as the approach followed in this study, the next sub-sections provide the strengths, weaknesses and overall justification of a mixed method the approach.

3.3.3.1. Strengths of mixed method approach

Creswell (2014) explained that there are benefits when using a mixed methods research approach. These methods are valuable in understanding conflicts among quantitative and qualitative results. Mixed methods reflect the view points of the participants. This type of research method gives voice to research participants to make sure the research results are grounded in experiences of participants. That kind of research enhances extensiveness to multidisciplinary research by inspiring the collaboration of mixed methods researchers.

There is a flexibility in the mixed methods approach. Mixed methods are adaptable to many research designs. Mixed methods are said to be good in the sense that they collect rich, complete data (Almalki, 2016). Mixed methods are a perfect method to evaluate difficult interventions. They validate results using mixed methods data sources. Assessors use a convergent plan relating to findings from mixed methods documents. The mixed method comprises the collection of both kinds of the information, assessing information by means of parallel concepts for both types of information; distinctly analysing both types of data; and linking results through procedures like side-by-side contrast in conversation, converting qualitative information to quantitative scores, or equally presenting both forms of information (Almalki, 2016; Creswell, 2014). For instance, the researcher may collect qualitative

information on how parents and practitioners work together in important decision making in early childhood education provisioning. The study also collected quantitative data using questionnaires to gather data on ways in which parents and practitioners work together in supporting learning and development in early childhood education provisioning

The mixed methods approach uses qualitative information to explore quantitative results. This research illustrates usage of these methods in order to elucidate qualitatively how quantitative instruments work (Creswell, 2014).

3.3.3.2. Weaknesses of mixed methods research approach

Researchers using a mixed method approach require more time and funds to complete the research, creating a challenge when time and incomes are not on their side (Creswell, 2014). Projects using a mixed methods approach are challenging, mainly when they are used to assess difficult situations. Mixed methods research approach is said to escalate the difficulty of estimates. When it involved conducting and planning, they are complex. There is need for cautious preparation to define all features of the study. This includes the study samples being identical, embedded, or parallel and the sequence of qualitative and quantitative portions (Almalki, 2016; Creswell, 2014).

A high-quality mixed methods research study needs a multidisciplinary group of researchers. They may be open to approaches that might not be their range of proficiency (Almalki, 2016). Each method may follow its own values for truthfulness as safeguarding suitable excellence of each part of a mixed method can be a challenge. For instance, quantitative studies need a much bigger sample to obtain numerical meaning than qualitative analyses, which involve meeting goals of fullness and significance (Creswell, 2014; Hu & Chang, 2017). Imperative to note is that the majority of the demerits of this approach are more to do with time and resources. The researcher thus planned the research plan taking these challenges into account and ensured resources needed, given the extent of the study, were available. The next sub-section presents the justifications.

3.3.3.3. Justification for using mixed methods

The mixed method was used because it affords comprehensive understanding of complexity of the problem being studied (Rubin & Babbie, 2017). The mixed methods

research approach was of paramount importance in this study because the study included research questions that had to be answered quantitatively and qualitatively, therefore making the mixed methods research approach appropriate for this study.

In this study, questions like how parents and practitioners partner needed to be answered qualitatively – explanations were required for what strategies are used for parents and practitioners to work together, and since these questions had to be analysed quantitatively the mixed methods approach proved to be suitable for this study (Almalki, 2016). The researcher believed that using both quantitative and qualitative would ensure a deeper understanding of the partnership between parents and practitioners in the ECD centres.

The integration of quantitative and qualitative data in the form of a mixed methods study has great potential to strengthen the study and enrich the analysis and findings. By carefully selecting the mixed method design that best suited the evaluation's questions and met its resource constraints, the researcher obtained more meaningful information regarding the partnership between parents and practitioners in ECD centres.

3.4. RESEARCH DESIGN UNDER MIXED METHODS

Research design is the outline, plan, or strategy required to seek an answer to the research questions. It is a detailed plan aimed at explaining how a research study is to be conducted (Archibald, 2015). Research design is a way of gathering and analysing data in a study. There are diverse models for doing research, and these models have different names and processes linked with them. Research designs are crucial in the sense that they guide the approaches and the decisions of the researcher. After a researcher has decided to utilise the mixed method, the next thing is to choose a specific mixed method design. (Archibald, 2015; Almalki, 2016, Creswell, 2014).

There are three variations, which are: (a) concurrent triangulation, (b) concurrent nested, and (c) concurrent transformative designs (Creswell, 2014, 2016). Concurrent triangulation designs are aimed at using both qualitative and quantitative data to more accurately define and explain relationships among variables of interest. On the other hand, concurrent nested designs, although both qualitative and quantitative data are

collected during the same stage, one form of data is given more weight than the other. Concurrent transformative designs are theoretically driven to initiate social change. Given that this study had no preference for one type of data over the other, it was aimed at advocacy, the option was therefore concurrent triangulation (Creswell, 2014, 2016). Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected from parents and practitioners at the same time, receiving equal recognition.

Furthermore, in analysing data, qualitative information is complemented with quantitative and the other way round to fully answer the research questions (Archibald, 2015). There are three main mixed methods in social research which are concurrent triangulation, explanatory design and exploratory sequential design (Creswell, 2014; 2016). When deciding what type of research design to use, it is important to take into account the overall purpose of the research, for example exploration or generalisation, the specific research questions, and the strengths and weaknesses of each design. These three-research designs are explained in detail below.

3.4.1. Concurrent triangulation design

Almalki (2016) emphasised that concurrent triangulation can be used to provide a more comprehensive understanding of a topic. More so, it is used to cross-validate or corroborate findings. The goal of triangulation is to establish validity of research findings by comparing results from quantitative and qualitative data.
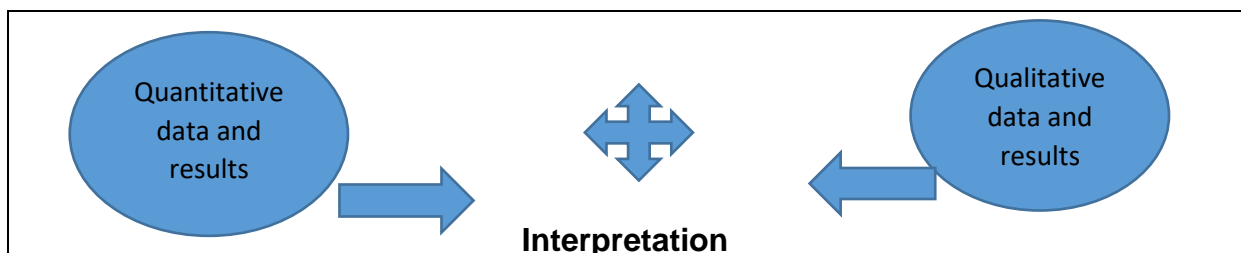
Figure 3.3: Concurrent triangulation design

Source: Concurrent triangulation design (Almalki, 2016)

In addition to Figure 3.3 above, a further illustration of the concurrent approached is outlined below.

84

Figure 3.4: Concurrent triangulation design – Further illustration

Source: Own drawing

This study used concurrent mixed methods where qualitative and quantitative data were gathered at the same time. This process of triangulation starts with the investigator designing research in which the same research question is examined using two methodologies. These qualitative and quantitative data sets are independently examined using quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods to obtain two sets of results. The findings from both sets of information are then equated to determine if they have reached the same assumptions (Almalki, 2016). If it is found that the same conclusions are reached using both methods, this supports the veracity of the conclusions. If there is disagreement in the conclusions, this requires a further examination to reconcile the reasons why the two sets of data disagree.

Almalki (2016) indicated that the concurrent triangulation design utilises different methods to gather information from different bases and provides well-validated findings. Compared to sequential designs, data gathering takes less time (Archbald, 2015). This research required great effort and expertise to adequately use two separate methods at the same time. It could have proved difficult to compare the results of two analyses using data of different forms. It could also have been unclear how to resolve discrepancies that arise while comparing the results. Given that data collection was conducted concurrently, results of one method, for example from interviews, could not be integrated in the other method, the survey.

3.4.2. Explanatory research designs

Almalki (2016) explained that explanatory design is used when a researcher needs qualitative data to expand on or explain initial quantitative findings (Archbald, 2015; Creswell, 2014). Explanatory design involves the collection and analysis of quantitative data followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data. Priority is given to the quantitative data, and the findings are integrated during the interpretation phase of the study. The explanatory research design is used to help explain, interpret or contextualise quantitative findings, and to examine in more detail unexpected results from a quantitative study.

Figure 3.5: Explanatory research designs

Source explanatory (Almalki, 2016)

The explanatory research design can also be used when quantitative results are desired to direct the selection of applicants for a qualitative study. In the explanatory design, the qualitative data gathering emerges from and is connected to the quantitative outcomes. Research studies using the explanatory design happen in two sequential phases, with the quantitative information gathered and analysis happening first and providing the overall stress of the study (Creswell, 2014; 2016). Explanatory research comprises two-stage design which understands quantitative information being used as source on which to build qualitative information. Quantitative data enlightens the qualitative information selection, which is a great asset in the sense that it allows investigators to precisely pinpoint information that is appropriate to a research study. Explanatory research has some benefits in the sense that it is easy to implement because the steps fall into clear separate stages. Furthermore, the design is easy to describe and the results easy to report.

3.4.3. The exploratory research designs

The third research design type is the exploratory design. This design is best suited when there is little empirical knowledge about a particular research area, for example lack of a theoretical framework, instruments, or variables (Creswell, 2014). Investigators prefer to use an exploratory design when they first explore a problem before they can test it (Creswell, 2014; 2016). It is said that priority is given to the qualitative part of the study, and findings are combined during the explanation stage.
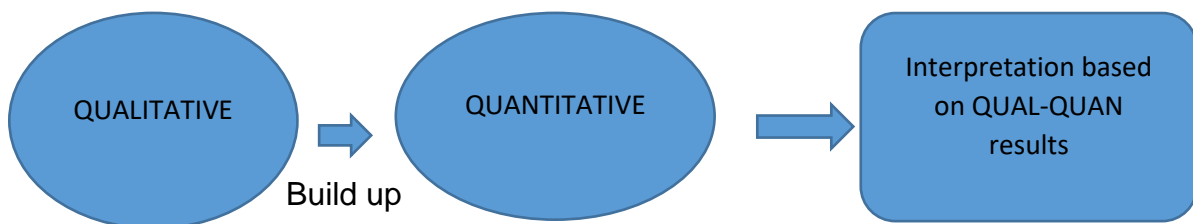
Figure 3.6: The exploratory research design

Exploratory research design (Almalki, 2016)

The exploratory research design is used to explore a problem and expand on qualitative conclusions. Furthermore, it is used to test fundamentals of a developing theory resulting from qualitative study. It is also used to generalise qualitative conclusions to different samples in order to regulate the distribution of a phenomenon in a chosen population.

Almalki (2016) indicated that exploratory design is also called an explanatory model, with qualitative data informing the quantitative information gathering process. Benefits of the exploratory research are that separate stages are relaxed to implement, and that qualitative data is tolerable to quantitative investigators. Exploratory research design is easy to implement because the steps fall into clear separate stages. The design is easy to describe and the results easy to report. However, it requires a substantial length of time to complete all data collection given the two separate phases. It may be difficult to build from the qualitative analysis to the subsequent data collection (Creswell, 2016).

In this research, one data collection phase was used, during which a quantitative or qualitative method embedded the other lower priority method, qualitative or

quantitative, respectively. The embedded method addresses a different enquiry from the dominant method or seeks data from diverse levels. The information collected from the two methods are mixed during the analysis stage of research.

3.4.4. Justification of concurrent/embedded triangulation

Concurrent triangulation was deemed suitable for this study because it allows the use of both the quantitative and qualitative design. Furthermore, this study included qualitative and quantitative questions in the questionnaires and interviews. These research questions needed to be analysed quantitatively and qualitatively which made concurrent triangulation suitable for this study. The type of questions posed to obtain information about the partnership between parents and practitioners in the early childhood development centres had to be analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively since they formed the "how" and "what" parts. The research design informs sampling, instrument and the analysis technique.

3.5. POPULATION AND SAMPLING

3.5.1. Population

Population is the larger pool from which a sampling element is drawn, and to which the researcher wants to generalise the findings (Creswell 2014). A sample is a proportion drawn from the population in order to study it and generalise to the population (Creswell, 2014). The sample needs to be representative of a population. A population can be defined as all people or items (unit of analysis) with the characteristics that one wishes to study. The unit of analysis may be a person, group, organisation, country, object, or any other entity about which the researcher wishes to draw scientific inferences (Vishnu, 2015). The target population refers to all the people who meet the criterion specified for a research enquiry. In this study, the population consisted of ECD centres in East London which means all the ECD centres that are situated within the boundaries of East London. The nature of investigation depends on the population. Population may be homogenous or heterogeneous. Population is said to be homogenous when its every component is similar to each other in all aspects. This study required the population to be at least 306 ECD centres (Buffalo City Municipality, 2017).

3.5.2. Sampling

Sampling is the process used to select a portion of the population for the study (Creswell, 2014). The sample includes a representative collection of the population and using the information collected as research data (Vishnu, 2015; Alvi, 2016). The sampling was guided by the elements in the population and the nature of data to be collected for example qualitative requires to dig deeper with fewer participants.

3.5.3. Sampling procedure

In this study, the population comprised all ECD centres in East London, of which the total number is 306 (Buffalo City Municipality, 2017). The study targeted at least 10% of the centres, which is 31 centres. At least two practitioners were targeted per ECD centre (total of 62 practitioner respondents) and each principal (total of 31 participants). For parents 10 centres, the researcher considered selecting one parent per centre. Using the list obtained of ECD centres within East London, the researcher randomly selected 31 centres that were approached for participation in the survey.

This simple random sampling technique ensured that each of the 306 centres had an equal chance to be selected, which reduced any bias (Creswell, 2014; 2016). Although centre selection was purely random, the selection of practitioners, principals and parents was purposive. The researcher selected a sample based on her knowledge about the study population. For parents, the researcher used the help of the centre to contact parents and suggest interview meetings with those that were interested.

3.6. DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

The tools for obtaining data relevant to the study depend on the research topic, research questions, and the research problem. The chosen tools were aligned to the approach chosen as outlined above in the discussion of each approach. In this study, the two data collection instruments used were semi-structured interviews and a semi-structured questionnaire.

3.6.1. Semi-structured questionnaire

A questionnaire is a way of collecting information in a survey and it contains questions that people respond to (Creswell, 2014). To yield data for this research study, both qualitative and quantitative data was obtained from the questionnaires (Harkiolakis,

2017). The questionnaire had open and closed-ended questions in line with a mixed methods approach. Given the purpose of this research, self-administered questionnaires were administered to the principals and practitioners. The process of designing research instruments is as outlined in Figure 3.7 below. The research questions guided the nature of the instrument (questionnaire vs interview schedule). The questionnaire has sections as demographics, questions to validate the respondent in the context of the study and the subject (study) questions which are derived from the research questions. Literature was used to validate relevance and scientific merit of proposed questions, before pilot testing and use of experts such as statisticians, was done.
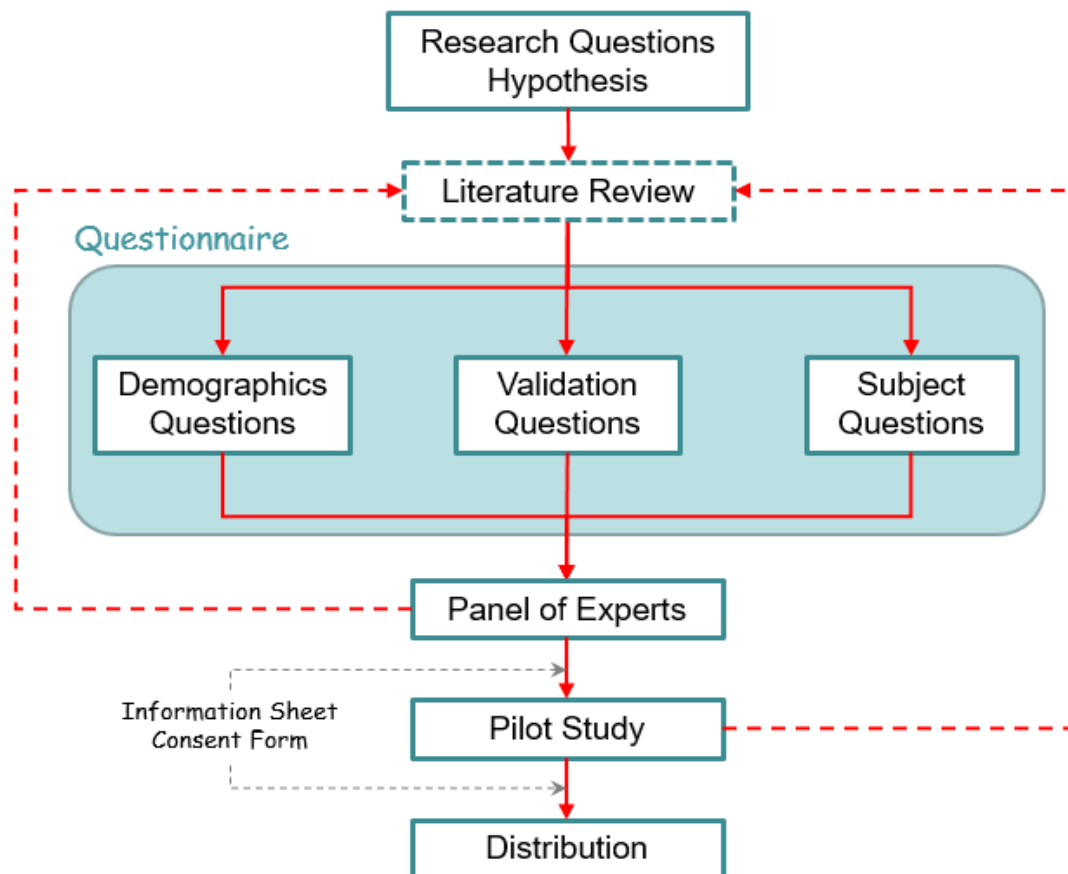
Figure 3.7: Research design and instrument design

Source: Harkiolakis, (2017)

The questionnaire was a critical instrument in this study, with its evaluation presented in the sub-section below.

3.6.1.1. Strengths of semi-structured questionnaire

The use of semi-structured questionnaires was regarded as positive in light of the potential number of respondents from the chosen sample. The literature review recognised the grounds for the development of the questionnaire. Questionnaires help reach a large number of participants at a fairly low cost (Harkiolakis, 2017). People from a big area can be reached quickly and easily (Bryman, 2012). The principals and practitioners were able to complete their questionnaires in their own time.

A semi-structured questionnaire is more user-friendly for participants, allows them to complete the questionnaire at their own convenient time, allowing time to think of responses and reflecting as they complete open-ended sections. Another advantage of questionnaires is that they mostly offer low return rates, time-consuming follow-up and data capturing is easy (Harkiolakis, 2017). Additionally, questionnaires allow the gathering of massive quantities of information with less effort. Simplicity of production can result in gathering of more information than can be used. Furthermore, accessibility of a number of members in one place makes it easy. To add to that, as research instruments the questionnaires can be used time and time again to measure differences between groups of people. They are thus reliable data gathering tools. Well-designed questionnaires can allow relationships between data to be identified. They are particularly useful for showing relationships with data that are easily quantifiable (Creswell, 2016).

The semi-structured questionnaire accommodates closed-ended questions (ones with predefined responses) and open-ended questions (where respondents detail responses) in qualitative form (Creswell, 2014). Given the nature of research questions, one type of question will not enable full answers, therefore the instrument allows respondents to tick responses and provide an explanation, in line with the chosen paradigm and approaches discussed above (Harkiolakis, 2017).

3.6.1.2. Limitations of semi-structured questionnaire

It is imperative to note that the researcher was aware that there were also some limitations to the use of questionnaires. There is little control over who is answering the questionnaire, which can result in unfairness (Bryman, 2012). Lack of enough time to finish a questionnaire can result in incorrect information being returned. The researcher administering a questionnaire has no time to establish rapport, clarify the

purpose of the research and elaborate on the sense of matters that might not be clear. There may not be personal contact if the questionnaire is sent by email, which may mean comeback rates might suffer, hence expense on follow-ups, calls, messages asking the participant to clarify something.

3.6.2. In-depth semi-structured interviews

In-depth interviews allow the researcher to dig deeper for information from the selected participants and provide qualitative data to answer questions, for example in this study – how the partnership is taking place. The strengths and weaknesses are developed below.

3.6.2.1. Strengths of in-depth semi-structured interviews

Interviews are viewed as the best actual way of gathering data from individuals, and also saves on time. Interviews are good because you can ask as many questions as you want, you are not limited to specific questions and you can be directed by the interviewer in real time (Bryman, 2012). In addition, interviews provide direct feedback from respondents and the researcher can ensure answers are from the person intended. In interviews, the investigator can probe for more comprehensive and better clarified replies in the subject matter and explore in more depth (Creswell, 2014; 2016).

With interviews there is personal interaction between the interviewee(s) and researchers. Adequate communication skills are therefore important on the part of the interviewer. Semi-structured interviews allow participants to ask for explanations when they don't understand something and the researcher can clarify vague statements and permit the exploration of the topic under investigation. Interviews produce rich information not obtainable through other ways, which may be supported by information from surveys and standardised test responses. Interviews are also flexible (Bryman, 2012). In this study, a semi-structured interview was selected to allow more descriptive and cross-checking enquiries.

3.6.2.1. Challenges of in-depth semi-structured interviews

The volume of information gathered from interviews is time consuming in terms of analysis. The fact that the researcher will be there when the information is being collected might affect the responses from the participants. This is where differences in characteristics such as gender, sexual orientation, nationality, race, age among

others, between interviewer and interviewee may become barriers to successful data collection. The task of the researcher comprises much work as there is recording, writing down answers and trying to keep the session alive (Bryman, 2012).

3.6.3. Research questions, objectives, unit of analysis, instruments and nature of data

Table 3.2 below shows the research questions, research objectives, unit of analysis, research instrument used to collect data and the nature of data

Table 3.2: Research questions, objectives, unit of analysis, instruments and nature of data

Research questions	Research objectives	Unit of analysis	Research instruments	Nature of Data
1. In what ways do parents and practitioners work together in supporting learning and development in early childhood education provisioning?	To assess the ways in which parents and practitioners work together in supporting learning and development in early childhood education provisioning	Practitioners Principals Parents	Questionnaire Interview	QUAN QUAL
2. How do parents and practitioners view the way they work together on provision of resources in early childhood education provisioning?	To determine how parents and practitioners view the way they work together on provision of resources in early childhood education provisioning	Practitioners Principals Parents	Questionnaire Interview	QUAN QUAL
3. How do parents and practitioners communicate in early childhood education provisioning?	To ascertain how parents and practitioners communicate in early childhood education provisioning	Practitioners Principals Parents	Questionnaire Interview	QUAN QUAL
4. How do parents and practitioners work together in important decision making in early childhood education provisioning?	To ascertain how parents and practitioners work together in important decision making in early childhood education provisioning	Practitioners Principals Parents	Questionnaire Interview	QUAN QUAL
5. What are the strategies to enhance parents and practitioner's information sharing in early childhood education provisioning?	To find out the strategies to enhance parents and practitioner's information sharing in early childhood education provisioning	Practitioners Principals Parents	Questionnaire Interview	QUAN QUAL

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6.	What operation framework could be suggested to enhance parents and practitioner's partnership in early childhood education provisioning?	To develop an operation framework that could be suggested to enhance parents and practitioner's partnership in early childhood education provisioning	Practitioners Principals Parents Researcher	Questionnaire Interview	QUAN QUAL

3.7. VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY (FOR QUANTITATIVE STUDY)

Validity and reliability are the two most important and fundamental features in the evaluation of any measurement instrument or tool for good research (Mohajan, 2017). Singh (2014) defined reliability as the stability of results, while validity is explained as representing truthfulness of the results. Therefore, validity and reliability increase transparency, and decrease the opportunities to insert researcher bias in the qualitative study (Singh, 2014).

If validity and reliability are not assessed in the research, it will be a challenge to describe for the effects of measurement errors on theoretical relations that are measured. When using various types of methodology to get data for obtaining true information; a researcher can enhance the validity and reliability of the collected information (Mohajan, 2017). The purpose of testing validity and reliability in a study is crucial in the sense that data is thorough, and the outcomes are truthful. Reliability for this study was tested through Cronbach alpha with a value of at least 0.70 indicating reliability of instrument (Creswell, 2016).

3.7.1.1. Construct validity

It is the degree to which a test measures what (construct) it claims or purports to be measuring. Question items in instruments should elicit precise responses. Construct validity refers to whether you can draw inferences about test scores related to the concept being studied. This can be achieved by having the instrument reviewed by experts in the field. In this study, review of the instrument served as the superior/expert review for ensuring validity.

3.7.1.2. External validity

It is generalisation, and it is a measurement of the extent to which results of research may be generalised to populations, and measurement variables. The sampling procedure and its representability are key to ensuring external validity. In addition, the

expert review also ensures that the instrument is in line with the study objectives and thus generalisation can be done. This study used expert review in the form of the study supervisor's review. In addition, the study used simple random sampling that ensures representativity, and therefore external validity.

3.7.1.3. Content validity

When a test has content validity, the items on the test represent the entire range of possible items the test should cover. It is the degree to which enquiries into the tool and scores from questions represent all possible questions that may be asked about the content (Creswell, 2014). Content validity safeguards that the survey includes satisfactory questions that tap the concept. The more the scale of questions represent the domain of concept being measured, the greater the content validity is (Mohajan, 2017; Heale &Twycross, 2015). Guided by literature and supported by pilot testing this study had exhaustive questions on the topic.

3.7.2. Reliability

Reliability is called the degree in which a research instrument crops stable or consistent findings (Chakrabartty, 2013). Reliability is defined as the extent to which findings are consistent. A correct sample of the population under study is stated as reliability and if results of a research can be reproduced under a similar methodology, then the research instrument used is considered reliable. The term is used to mean consistency or repeatability of measurement. Reliability indicates the extent to which the research is without bias, is error free, and hence ensures consistence measurement across time and across the various items in the instruments. Furthermore, reliability is explained as the stability, repeatability and consistency of results, that is, results of research are reliable if consistency results are obtained (Mohajan, 2017).

Reliability is utilising the same instrument used several times and producing the same results (Creswell, 2014). For reliability of the instruments for this study, a pilot survey was carried out on related cases that would not be part of the actual survey. The data was collected, cleaned and captured to test for reliability by using the Cronbach alpha test. The alpha has to be at least 0.70 to say the instrument is reliable (Creswell, 2014). On the other hand, validity was tested by having the questionnaire inspected by an expert, as well as running factor analysis to see if the subscales emerge. In

quantitative research, reliability refers to exact reliability of the processes and the results.

Mohajan (2017) explained that reliability evaluates steadiness of measures controlled at diverse periods to similar individuals and equivalence of sets of objects from similar tests. The more the reliability is checked, the more correct the outcomes will be; which ensures the chance of making the right conclusion in the study. Reliability is crucial and an adequate condition for the validity of research (Mohajan, 2017).

3.7.2.1. Test-retest reliability

A measure of reliability is obtained by testing the same test twice over period of time with a group of individuals. The reliability coefficients attained by duplication of the same quantity for a second time, is termed test-retest reliability. It evaluates the external consistency of a test. It is explained that if the reliability coefficient is high, for example r=0.98, it can be suggested that both tools are relatively free of measurement mistakes. If the coefficients yield above 0.7, they are considered satisfactory, and if coefficients yield above 0.8, they are measured very well (Madan & Kensinger, 2017).

 Test –retest reliability shows score variation happens from testing sessions as a result of mistakes of size. It is a measure of reliability attained by dealing with the same test twice over a period of time, on a collection of characters.

3.7.2.2. Inter-rater reliability

Inter-rater reliability is a measure of reliability used to assess the degree to which different judges or raters agree in their assessment decisions. It measures the degree to which test results are reliable when tests are taken by different people using the same instruments or methods. It is the extent to which the way information being collected is being collected in a consistent manner. It establishes the equivalence of ratings obtained with an instrument when used by different observers. No discussion can occur when reliability is being tested. Reliability is determined by the correlation of the scores from two or more independent raters, or the coefficient of agreement of the judgments of the raters (Mohajan, 2017; Bolarinwa, 2015). This study did not apply this technique given the strength of the ones utilised, namely internal consistency reliability.

3.7.2.3. Internal consistency reliability

This is a check to assess the extent to which test items that probe the same concept produce the same findings. Internal consistency concerns are the items on the instrument measuring the same thing. The appeal of an internal consistency index of reliability is that it is predictable after only one test administration and therefore avoids challenges associated with testing over many times. Internal consistency is estimated on the split half reliability index and coefficient alpha index which is the most common form of internal consistency reliability (Bolarinwa, 2015). This study used Cronbach alpha to measure reliability. A 0.70 alpha is required to confirm reliability. The study's alpha average was above 0.70 for the scales used. More information about this is listed in Table 3.4.

Pilot study report

A pilot study is a strategy used to test the questionnaire using a smaller sample compared to the planned sample size (Fraser, Fahlman, Arscott & Guillot, 2018; Mallick, Thabane, Borhan & Kathard, 2018; Ismail, Kinchin & Edwards, 2018). A pilot study was done during the month of February 2019. This pilot study was conducted in order to pre-test or try out the research instruments.

The importance of a pilot study is that it can alert the researcher to possible challenges that may occur in the final study. It also allows for testing research instruments that might be inappropriate or too complicated for the participants. The pilot study establishes whether the sampling frame and technique are effective. In this pilot study, the researcher tested for validity and reliability of the research instruments (See Table 3.3). The pilot study helped the researcher to practise administering the questions in a way that the participants would understand them well. Based on the outcome of the pilot, the researcher was able to restructure the questions, identify the questions that were irrelevant, and they were removed in the final study (see Table 3.4).

The pilot study was conducted with seven ECD practitioners and three principals and for the interviews, two parents were selected. These results are not included in the main research study. Both practitioners and principals were able to answer the questionnaire to completion and the parents who participated in the interviews did not find it difficult to answer the questions. All the practitioners and principals who participated were females. Three indicated that they were married and seven were

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single. Regarding their first language, it was evident that one respondent could speak English, one Ewe (Nigerian), seven could speak Xhosa and one Shona (Zimbabwean). Regarding race, one indicated that she is white and seven were black African

Table 3.3: Pilot study – Demographics

Variable	Category	Frequency	%
Status	Principal	3	30
	Teacher	7	70
	Total	**10**	**100**
Gender	Female	10	100
Marital	Married	3	30
	Single	7	70
	Total	**10**	**100**
First Language	English	1	10
	Ewe	1	10
	Xhosa	7	70
	Shona	1	10
	Total	**10**	**100**
Race	White	1	10
	Black African	9	90
	Total	**10**	**100**
Highest academic qualification	Matric	6	60
	Post-Matric certificate	4	40
	Total	**10**	**100**

The purpose for piloting the questionnaire and the interview questions was to examine the feasibility of the approach that is intended to be used in a larger scale of the research study, to check if the questions are answerable by the participants. The pilot study determines whether conducting a large-scale survey is worth the effort. The pilot study helps to structure some of the questions in the questionnaire and in the interview. The researcher made contact with parents at the day care centres when they came to drop their children and requested them for an interview and a convenient place to meet. The researcher thus visited each relevant day care centre to administer the questionnaires to the principal and practitioners and to recruit parents.

Reliability of scales

The researcher did a reliability test and the results are shown in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4: Reliability test results

Scale	Original number of items	Original Cronbach's alpha	Items deleted	Items reversed	Revised alpha	Comments
Ways in which parents and practitioners work together in supporting learning and development	8	0,614	B3	-	0,762	B3 was removed because it is totally different from all other items.
Important to involve parents	5	0,691	-	-		
Parents and practitioners' views on provision of resources	9	0,948	-	-		
Parents and practitioners' communication	6	0,624	D4	-	0,807	D4 does not fit well with other questions.
How parents and practitioners work together in decision making	8	0,898	-	-		
Why parents don't get involved	10	0,889	-	-		
Strategies to enhance parents and practitioner's information sharing	10	0,931	-	-		

In the final study, questions were removed as after the researcher had done a reliability test of the instruments, as based on the table above, numbers B3 and B4 were not included in the final questionnaire. All other questions were fine, as the scales had a reliability Cronbach alpha of at least 0.70. Where items were reverse worded, revision in the form of reverse coding was done. And in all cases the alpha increased to acceptable levels.

During the interview process, participants indicated that the interviews were too long. They were giving the researcher full detailed answers at the beginning and at the end they were giving short answers. In the final interviews, the researcher made sure that the participants could provide detailed answers at the end by means of probing.

The pilot study was necessary and useful in providing the groundwork in the research project. Pilot study guided the development of the main research plan. The smaller

study informed and provided feedback to the final study. Based on this feedback the researcher was therefore able to make adjustments to and refine the research questionnaire before attempting the final study

3.7.3. Data trustworthiness (For qualitative studies)

Data trustworthiness is very important in qualitative research. To enhance the trustworthiness of this study, multiple data collection sources were used. This enabled checking the findings and if two sources pointed to the same conclusions, this gave the researcher more confidence in the results (Creswell, 2014). During the verification process, participants were provided with a transcript of the interview to correct errors of fact. Furthermore, member checking of interview transcripts and accurate reporting of data through giving prominence to the voice of the participants took place.

3.7.3.1. Credibility

Credibility entails the member checking, multiple sources of data collection, and pilot testing of instruments. Engagement with data, for example recordings, was done to establish clear associations between data and interpretations (Harkiolakis, 2017).

3.7.3.2. Transferability

Is the thick descriptions through the use of verbatim quotations of participants, the detailed description of the research context (Creswell, 2014).

3.7.3.3. Dependability

The researcher made sure data was coded correctly, there are recordings of the data and peer examination was ensured. The determination of the test is to illustrate steadiness in the procedure of investigation. Attention was given to guarantee that the study procedure was reasonable, and clearly recognised in a reflective manner by giving a detailed explanation of the study procedures (Creswell, 2014).

3.8. DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

The study utilised questionnaires and interview schedules as data collection instruments as follows:

3.8.1. Questionnaire

A questionnaire is easy to use and a highly reliable instrument (Creswell, 2014). Semi-structured questionnaires, one for practitioners and the other for principals, were used to obtain both quantitative and qualitative data. The questionnaire contained items to rate and tick for predetermined responses as well as providing spaces for explanations to questions that required detail (the qualitative ones). The questions in the two instruments were related to allow analysis of how the partnership functions. The questions contained in the instruments, besides the demographics and socio-economic characteristics, were derived from the study research questions.

Trained research assistants helped to administer the questionnaire at the selected centres. Efforts were made to collect data after appointments at the centre, generally during quieter times. During the pilot study it was observed that the best time is between 12:00pm and 14:30pm to have a good concentration of respondents.

3.8.2. Interview schedule

Interviews were conducted with one parent at each of the 10 ECD centres to solicit their views on the partnership between practitioners and parents at the centres and to identify what strategies are put in place to support the partnership. The interviews were semi-structured in order to obtain responses that would help conclude on the research questions of the study. A semi-structured interview schedule has the ability to accurately guide the interview, while at the same time giving flexibility for follow up questions and probing (Creswell, 2014).

The questions were open-ended with subsequent questions guided by how the discussion unfolded, and there was more emphasis on the interviewee elaborating points of interest (Creswell, 2014). This type of interview allowed the researcher to get information about the parent-practitioner partnership in ECD education. These interviews were conducted on a one-on-one basis, with only the researcher and the interviewee present. The majority of parents were interviewed as they waited to collect their children from the centre, with the appointments having been made in advance and parents having indicated a suitable time. Recordings of the interview as per acceptance of the participant were done.

3.9. DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is the procedure whereby the researcher extracts some form of explanation, understanding and interpretation from the qualitative data collected. Quantitative data for this study was captured, cleaned and coded to prepare for analysis in SPSS. To determine the status of the parent and practitioner partnership, univariate analysis in the form of measures of central tendency like mean as well as frequency tables was used. On the other hand, to determine the drivers of partnership, regression analysis was used with the dependent variable being the partnership score and the explanatory factors being the measure demographic and related characteristics (Harkiolakis, 2017). Regression analysis tells the researcher whether there is a relationship, the pattern of the relationship (negative or positive) as well as the strength of the relationship. To determine who between the parties is more inclined to the partnership, paired sample tests were conducted to compare the mean involvement scores (Pallant, 2014).

According to Creswell (2014), qualitative data analysis is based on interpretation, examining meaningful and symbolic content of qualitative data. For this study, the data was grouped into themes and is presented and discussed accordingly in the following chapter.

3.10. ETHICAL ISSUES

An essential ethical aspect is the issue of confidentiality of the results and findings of the study and the protection of the participants' identity (Harkiolakis, (2017). The researcher sought ethical clearance from the University of Fort Hare. She also requested permission from the parents, the practitioners and the principals to be participants. Participants were assured that their participation was voluntary. A consent form was given to the participants to sign if they were willing to participate. No personal information was collected during the interviews. Each participant had an option to stop the interview if they so wished, without any consequences. The collected data was kept confidential and was secured and is not accessible to any other parties.

3.11. CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented the methodology of the study, which is the plan and outline of how an enquiry is made in addressing the research problem through answering the

research questions presented in Chapter One. The methodology used for the study is in line with the context of the literature reviewed in Chapter Two. The pragmatism approach was selected as the most suitable paradigm, with a mixed method approach naturally flowing as the suitable approach. A concurrent parallel mixed method approach is the triangulation technique. The following chapter, Chapter Four, deals with the data presentation, analysis and discussion of findings.

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter concurrently presents the results from analysing the quantitative data collected from questionnaires completed by the practitioners, and qualitative data collected from interviews conducted with the parents. The aim of this study was to assess the partnership in educational provision between parents and ECD practitioners at selected centres around the East London area. Semi-structured questionnaires were administered to the ECD practitioners and the principals. Data was collected from the questionnaires which had six sections, the first section being the demographic information of the participants. The demographic information section is of paramount importance because it provides a snapshot of the participants in the study and guides inferences and drawing of conclusions. The other five sections focused on the research objectives which includes: the ways in which parents and practitioners work together in supporting learning and development; parents and practitioners' views on the way they work together in the provision of resources; parents and practitioners' communication in early childhood education provisioning; how parents and practitioners work together in important decision making; and lastly, the strategies to enhance parents and practitioners' information sharing. This approach ensured that the study would meet the set objectives, thereby contributing to solving the articulated problem.

In-depth interviews were done with 10 parents, each from 10 different ECD centres. The interviews were to provide data to answer the same objectives as those of the questionnaire. The data from the questionnaire and that from the interviews were analysed and interpreted in a sequential manner, albeit using different techniques (descriptive for quantitative and thematic for qualitative) of analysis given the nature of the data. The discussions also reflect on theories and the literature reviewed in Chapter Two. As a result, the chapter is subdivided into the following sections:

- Ways in which parents and practitioners work together in supporting learning and development in early childhood education provisioning

- How parents and practitioners view the way they work together on provision of resources in early childhood education provisioning

- How parents and practitioners communicate in early childhood education provisioning

- How parents and practitioners work together in important decision making in early childhood education provisioning

- Strategies to enhance parents and practitioners' information sharing in early childhood education provisioning

- Developing an operation framework that could be suggested to enhance parents and practitioner's partnership in early childhood education provisioning.

The theoretical lenses that are pertinent to this type of the data are the Bronfenbrenner and Epstein theories. In Chapter 3, the research paradigms, research approach and research design underpinning this study were discussed; the chosen methodology was justified; sampling and population specifications were discussed. How data was collected and the validity and reliability of the data were also confirmed during pilot study. Results are presented and discussed concurrently as each question is answered.

4.2. SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

This information was gathered to understand the nature of the participants and how they possibly differ from one another. The aim in presenting demographic information is to understand the way they responded to the questions, and whether any of the participants' characteristics explain the similarity or differences in responses to certain questions. For clarity, the demographic variables data analysis is presented in two parts - Part 1 and Part 2 to allow graphs to be clear. The data presented in Figure 4.1a (part 1) and 4.1b (part 2) is a summary of the responses received on the position held at the centre, gender, race and marital status of each respondent.
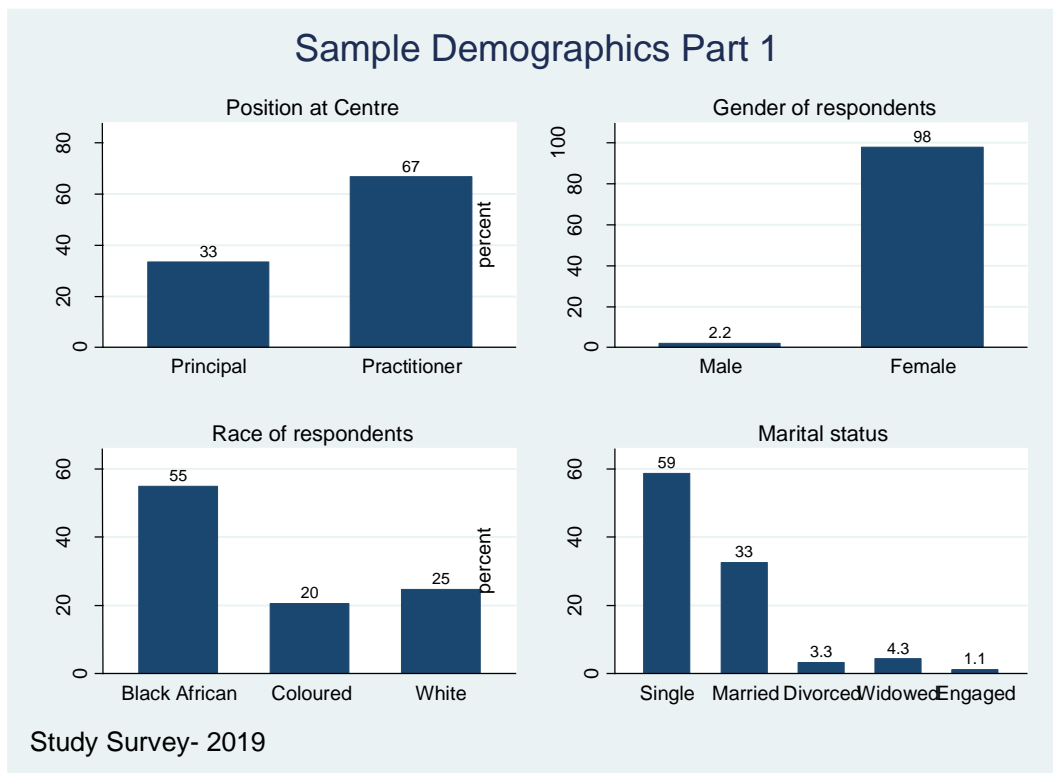
Figure 4.1a: Demographics of respondents – Part 1

Source: Author computation using Survey data

From the sample demographics presented in Part 1, the results show that 33% are principals and 67% are practitioners. From the results above, the gender of respondents shows that 2% are male and 98% are female which attests to the long-held notion that early childhood development is best suited for females (Xu, 2020); however, no effects of gender differences were established (van Polanen, Colonnesi, Tavecchio, et al., 2017; Xu, 2020). With regards to the race of the respondents, findings revealed that 55% are Black African, 20% are Coloured and 25% are White, reflecting the distribution of the population of the region in general. Regarding marital status, results show that 59% of the respondents are single, 33% are married, 3.3% are divorced, 4.3% are widowed and 1.1% engaged.

From the sample demographics Part 2 (Figure 4.1b), it is evident that 29% of the respondents indicated English as their first language, 52% speak IsiXhosa as first language, 17% are Afrikaans speaking, 1.1% speak Shona and 1.1% speak Ewe. Regarding the highest academic qualification, 5.4% show that they have a degree,

15% a post-Matric certificate, the majority (59%) have completed Matric, 19% primary education and 1.1% no formal education.
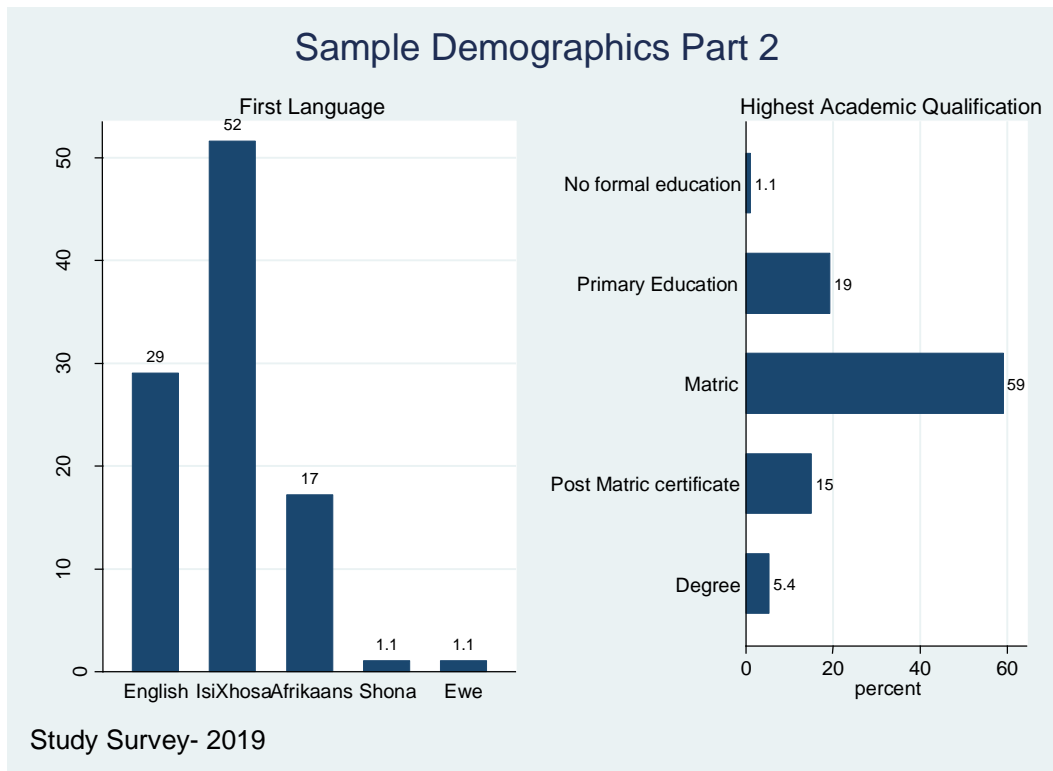
Figure 4.1b: Demographics of respondents – Part 2

Source: Author computation using Survey data

Checking the language of the research participants was important as this determines their level of communication ability and ethnicity which gives an effective platform for engagement of the parties about school programmes and educational growth of the children (Griffin & Steen, 2010). However, it is imperative to note that South Africa is a multilingual country (Sibomana, 2017; Abdoola, Mosca, & Pillay, 2019). In rare cases, as the language of teaching is mainly English, the need of interpreters existed to cater for those parents who do not understand the language used by ECD practitioners (Cano et al, 2016).

In respect of the professional qualification of both the principals and practitioners, 25 indicated that they have an ECD professional qualification and 68 said they do not have a professional qualification for ECD. Level of education, and by deduction professional qualification, was found to be highly positively correlated with higher

quality early childhood education and care (Manning, Garvis, Fleming, & Wong, 2017) Table 4.4. presents the results cross tabulating with position at the ECD centre.

Table 4.1: Cross tabulation: Highest academic qualification and respondents' position and centre

			No formal education	Primary education	Matric	Post-Matric certificate	Degree	Total
Practitioner/Principal	Principal	Count	1	7	14	8	1	31
		% within Practitioner/Principal	3.2%	22.6%	45.2%	25.8%	3.2%	100.0%
		% within 8. Highest Academic Qualification	100.0%	38.9%	25.5%	57.1%	20.0%	33.3%
	Practitioner	Count	0	11	41	6	4	62
		% within Practitioner/Principal	0.0%	17.7%	66.1%	9.7%	6.5%	100.0%
		% within 8. Highest academic Qualification	0.0%	61.1%	74.5%	42.9%	80.0%	66.7%
Total		Count	1	18	55	14	5	93
		% within Practitioner/Principal	1.1%	19.4%	59.1%	15.1%	5.4%	100.0%
		% within 8. Highest academic Qualification	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 4.1 shows that among the principals, one (3.2%) does not have formal education, seven (22.6%) have primary education, 14 (45.2%) have Matric as their highest qualification, eight (25.8%) have a post-Matric qualification, and only one (3.2%) has a degree. From the practitioners' side, it is revealed that none of the respondents have formal education, 11 (17.7%) have primary education, 41 (66.1%) have Matric, six (9.7%) have post-Matric education and 4 (6.5%) have a degree.

From another angle, it is shown that 38.9% of those with primary education are principals and 61.1% are practitioners. Of those with Matric as their highest qualification, 25.5% are principals and 74.5% are practitioners. Of those with post-Matric certificate, 57.1% are principals and 42.9% are practitioners and of those with a degree, 33.3% are principals and 66.7% are practitioners. Combining both practitioners and principals, it is evident that one (1.1%) has no formal education, 18 (19.4%) have primary education, 55 (59.1%) have matric, 14 (15.1%) have a post-Matric certificate and five (5.4%) have a degree. The majority of the respondents have matric; principals dominating in the post-Matric category and practitioners dominating in the Matric and primary education categories. Leadership of the centres rests with

principals who can guide how learning and teaching take place, providing hope that practitioners who may lack a qualification can receive training under the tutelage of principals.

All the continuous variables were summarised using measures of central tendency, as presented in Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2: Demographics – Descriptive statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Age	93	21	62	35.78	10.093
Years of ECD Experience	93	1	35	6.69	5.718
Average Age of the children in class	93	1	5	3.56	.983
Total Number of Children in class	93	5	56	18.69	10.336
Total Number of Children at the ECD centre	93	16	210	68.66	51.122
Valid N (listwise)	93				

On average, the respondents are 36 years old (35.78), with the youngest being 21 years and the oldest being 62 years of age. The respondents on average have seven (6.69) years of experience in ECD (6.69), with the shortest period of experience being one year and longest being 35 years. The centres have children who on average are age three and half years, with the youngest being one year old and the oldest being five years. Considering size of class and school, the average is 19 and 69 children respectively, with a minimum of five and maximum of 56 in terms of class size and 16 minimum and 210 maximum in terms of total number of children at the centre.

An attempt was made to dissect age and experience by position of respondent at ECD centre. The results show that on average principals are 44 years old, with the youngest being 28 years and the oldest being 62 years old. On the other hand, practitioners' average age is 12 years lower, at 32 years, with the youngest being 21 and the oldest at 54 years old. Regarding years of experience in the ECD environment, principals have the longest service record averaging 10 years (9.67), with the shortest experience record being one and the longest being 35 years. On the other hand, practitioners have experience averaging five years, with a minimum of one and maximum of 16 years of experience.

Table 4.3: Demographics – Descriptive statistics by position of respondent

Practitioner/Principal		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Principal	Age	31	28	62	43.97	9.315
	Years of experience	31	1	35	9.67	8.063
	Valid N (listwise)	31				
Practitioner	Age	62	21	54	31.69	7.741
	Years of experience	62	1	16	5.19	3.243
	Valid N (listwise)	62				

Figure 4.2 below presents a graphic distribution of these continuous variables under demographics – reflecting on skewness and kurtosis of the distributions.
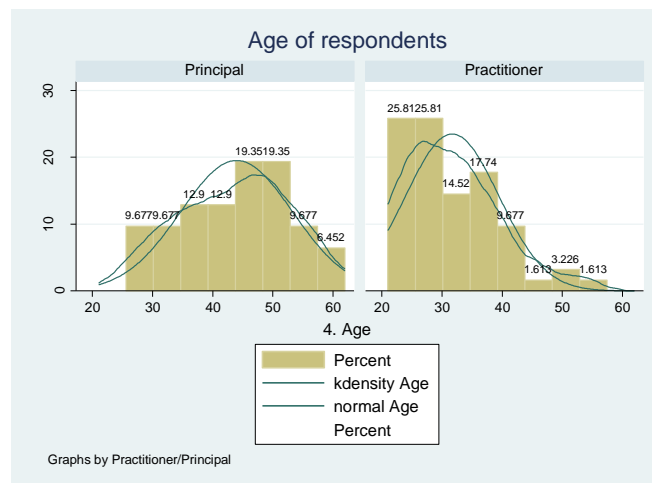
Figure 4.2 Age of respondents

Source: Author computation using Survey data

Figure 4.2 shows that the age of principals is more normally distributed with some slight left skewness, while the practitioners age is very much skewed to the right (majority in the 20-30 age category).

On the other hand, years of experience of each respondent was recorded, and both distributions are skewed to the right, with the principals' one depicting a few more outliers than that for practitioners. This implies that among principals we have individuals with many years of experience above the average, compared to the practitioners.
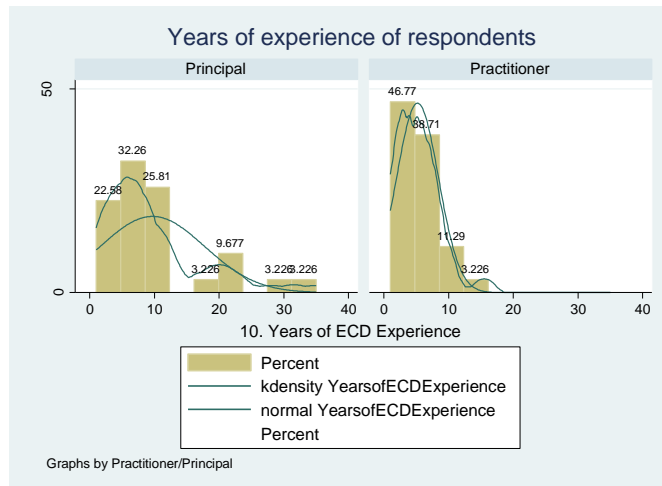
Figure 4.3: Years of experience in ECD

Source: Author computation using Survey data

Average age of the children is represented in Figure 4.4, showing the majority of the children are four years old. This represents a stage just before going to grade RR (00) which is often done at school and not in the ECD centre. Children graduate from grade RR after four years of age and enrol for Grade R (0) with provisioning done at centres as well as some schools. The number of five-year-old children at centres is in general less than those that are four years and below. This study findings attest to this phenomenon.
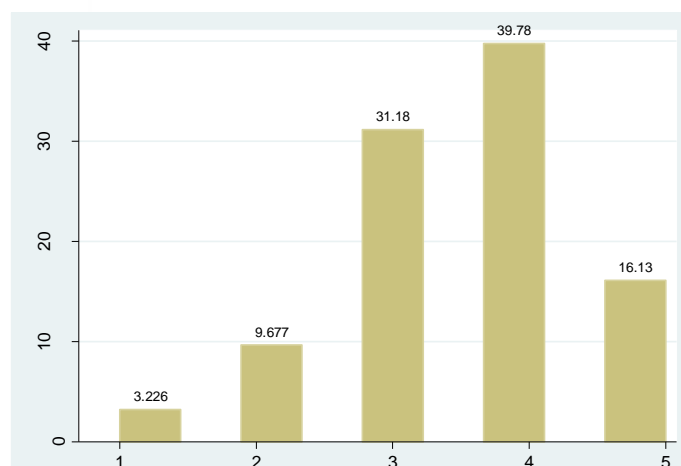
Figure 4.4: Average age of the children

Source: Author computation using Survey data

The majority of classes have 15 children on average, which is a standard class size, with extremes of 55 children in a class representing 2.151% of the sample as depicted in Figure 4.5.
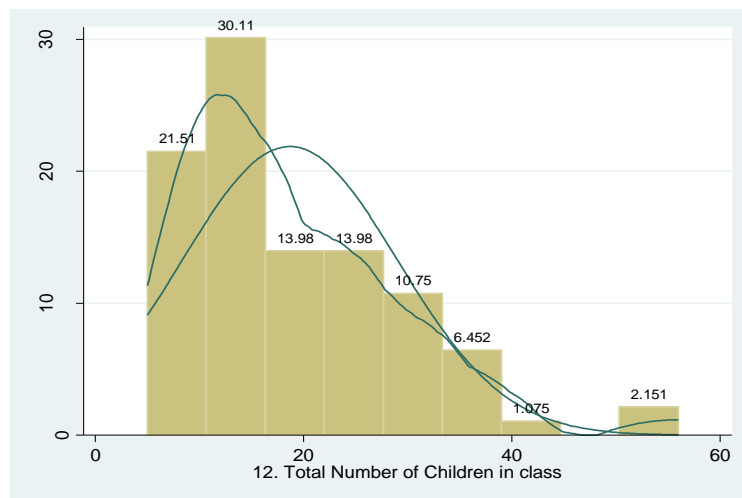
Figure 4.5: Total number of children in class

Source: Author computation using Survey data

The majority of the centres have on average 50 children; however, some do exist with as many as 200 children (6.452%). The distribution is very much skewed to the right, with centres with lowest numbers recording 40 children.
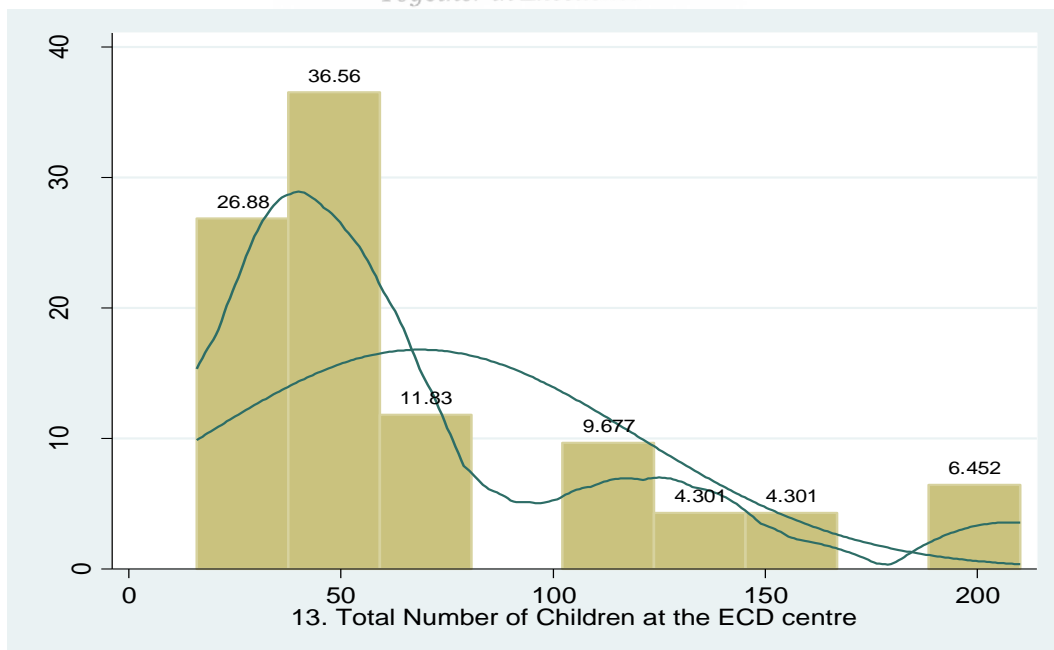
Figure 4.6: Total number of children at the ECD centre

Source: Author computation using Survey data

Having presented and discussed the demographics, the chapter proceeds to present answers to study questions in the order they appear in Chapter One. The sub-sections are named accordingly.

4.3. SECTION B: WAYS IN WHICH PARENTS AND PRACTITIONERS WORK TOGETHER IN SUPPORTING LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

This section presents the data gathered on the ways in which parents and practitioners work together in supporting learning and development. Section B of the questionnaire in Appendix 6 presented items related to this study question and the interview schedule in Appendix 5 also contained questions about the ways they work together – all of which is presented here. It emerged from this study that ECD practitioners and parents are working together in supporting learning and development in the early childhood education provisioning. The results show that parents are always involved in activities that they are asked by the practitioners to take part in, things (such as fundraising) that concern their children at the centre. In this study, practitioners indicated that they invite parents to share information, more so parents are said to be involved in children's homework and helping with potty training. This is in line with Epstein model of parental involvement which asserts that practitioners should work with parents in the educational development of the children (Epstein 2011). Furthermore, Abdu (2014) supports that the partnership between ECD practitioners and parents could positively improve children's learning, and their social and emotional development.

For a number of statements posed in the questionnaire, rating from lowest (strongly disagree) to highest (strongly agree), the results are presented in Table 4.4. In total, 93 respondents, encompassing both principals and the practitioners, were asked questions and their responses/ratings are presented in the table. Interpretation of the results was in the main adding those disagreeing (strongly disagree and disagree) compared to those agreeing (agree and strongly agree) for brevity.

Table 4.4: The extent to which principals and practitioners agree or disagree to the following statements

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Letting parents know of the daily activities	Count	1	8	68	16
	Row N %	1.1%	8.6%	73.1%	17.2%
I let parents know about the topics that interest their children	Count	3	2	72	16
	Row N %	3.2%	2.2%	77.4%	17.2%
I invite parents to share information about their culture and traditions	Count	3	23	51	16
	Row N %	3.2%	24.7%	54.8%	17.2%
I organise information sessions for parents	Count	0	15	58	20
	Row N %	0.0%	16.1%	62.4%	21.5%
Parents are involved in children's homework	Count	0	8	49	36
	Row N %	0.0%	8.6%	52.7%	38.7%
Parents help with some basic teaching like potty training	Count	1	11	44	37
	Row N %	1.1%	11.8%	47.3%	39.8%
B7 Parents do share some useful learning material that they know/have	Count	3	14	59	17
	Row N %	3.2%	15.1%	63.4%	18.3%

The results presented in Table 4.4 provided the researcher with the extent to which practitioners and parents are working together to support learning and development of the children. A total of 84 (68+16) out of 93 respondents (90.3%) at least agree on letting parents know of the daily activities. Only a few, nine (1 strongly disagreeing plus 8 disagreeing) (9.7%) were in disagreement with the statement. This indicated that practitioners are working together with parents. In addition, when asked if they share with parents the topics that the children want, 88 (94.6%) indicated that they agree with this and only about five (cumulatively 5.4%) indicated that they disagree to strongly disagree with the statement. When respondents were asked if they invited parents to share information about their culture and traditions, a total of 67 (cumulatively 72%) indicated that they agree with the statement and only 26 (cumulatively 27.9%) disagreed with the statement. When asked if they organise information sessions for the parent, 78 (cumulatively 83.9%) agreed that they organise information sessions with parents and 15 (16.1%) indicated that they were not having these information sharing sessions with the parents.

When asked if parents are involved in their children's homework, 85 (cumulatively 91.4%) agreed with that statement and eight (8.6%) at least disagreed. Only a few disagreed with the statement that parents were involved in the children's homework. These findings indicate that respondents in the study were trying by all means to support learning and development of their children. When asked if parents help with the basic teachings like potty training, 81 (cumulatively 87.1%) at least agreed that the parents are helping and only 12 (12.9%) disagreed. This shows that only a few did not recognise the help the parents are giving with potty training. When asked if parents do share some useful learning material that they know/have, 76 (cumulatively 79.7%) indicated that parents do share material and only a few indicated that parents do not share 17 (cumulatively 18.3%).

Principals and practitioners were asked to rate the importance of involving parents from the statement given, and the results are presented in Table 4.5, ranging from 1-5, 1 being the least important and 5 the most important.

Table 4.5: Rating the importance of involving parents

		1 (least important)	2	3	4	5 (Very Important)
Parents are their children's first educators	Count	0	1	2	9	81
	Row N %	0.0%	1.1%	2.2%	9.7%	87.1%
Parents' right to be involved	Count	1	3	3	13	73
	Row N %	1.1%	3.2%	3.2%	14.0%	78.5%
Practitioners are informed when parents share their information about the child	Count	0	1	6	22	64
	Row N %	0.0%	1.1%	6.5%	23.7%	68.8%
ECD Practitioners like helping parents in their child-rearing tasks.	Count	2	2	8	26	55
	Row N %	2.2%	2.2%	8.6%	28.0%	59.1%
Parent involvement in the ECD programmes is considered an indicator of a quality service	Count	4	0	5	25	59
	Row N %	4.3%	0.0%	5.4%	26.9%	63.4%

To the statement that parents are likely to be their children's first education provider, the majority of the respondents, 81 (87.1%) in total, rated this statement at 5. This shows that practitioners and principals understand that parents are supposed to be

involved in the learning and development of the children. Only one (1.1%) rated the need for involving parents.

On the other hand, checking if parents are displaying an interest and have the opportunity to be involved, most respondents ranked this statement at 4 and 5 meaning they understand that parents are supposed to be involved in what happens at the centre.

Another statement was checking that ECD practitioners have more information when parents share their knowledge about the children, and 22 (23.7%) ranked this at 4 and 64 (68.8%) ranked it at 5. This means that practitioners understand that the parents are important to share knowledge with them; that's the only way they will get to know the children better. Only a few indicated that they rank this statement at 1 and 2 meaning that they do not see the importance of involving parents in supporting learning and development of the children. Awareness and capacitation need to focus on these issues to ensure that all practitioners value parents' contribution.

The statement that ECD practitioners support parents in children rearing responsibilities was ranked high, at 4 and 5. The high scores received on these are consistent with what was found by Cano et al. (2016) that parents and practitioners should work together for the effective educational development of the children. Furthermore, a statement was posed stating that parental involvement is seen as a way of quality work: most of the respondents ranked it at 4 and 5, meaning that this is considered very important. Specifically, 25 (26.9%) ranked this statement at 4 and 59 (63.4%) ranked this statement at 5. It emerged from this study that practitioners believe they should be involving parents a lot in what they are doing at the centre.

This research shows that most practitioners highly rated the statements that parents are the first to educate their children, and they are supposed to take part in helping the children. Past research such as that by Griffin and Steen (2010), Cano et al. (2016), and Abdoola (2019) indicates that communication between ECD practitioners and parents is of paramount importance as it was said it gives an effective form of school-to-home and home-to-school communication, and this will better the educational development of the children.

Furthermore, Morrison, Storey and Zhang (2015) asserted that partnership between ECD practitioners and parents can create safer ECD centre environments, strengthen parenting skills and improve academic skills of the child. This is also supported by Bronfenbrenner (2005) and McLinden et al. (2018) who indicated that parents and practitioners fall under the microsystem. Other scholars also concur with this, notably Benjamin (2015) and Fan, William Wolters, (2012). According to Bronfenbrenner (2005), the microsystem consists of such contexts as the parents, household members, relatives, playmates, ECD centre, and neighbourhood. All these are supposed to work together for the development of the child (McLinden et al. 2018). The microsystem according to Bronfenbrenner (2005) is said to have the most immediate and earliest influence on the child's development, and all stakeholders at such level need to be made conscious of such a significant role.

Past research indicates that the relationships at the microsystem can be called bi-directional since the child's parents can influence the behaviour of the child as well as the ECD practitioners or the ECD centre which the child is attending (McLinden et al, 2018). It therefore implies that it is important for the parents and practitioners to work together. In extension, the bi-directional relationship can also be depicted between the child and any of the role players' microsystem as the child is influenced, guided and instructed by the role player (parent, practitioner, centre as a whole, etc.) and the child does act or speak which is taken as feedback by the role players. The feedback gives role players the opportunity to assess progress in development, the impact of their efforts on the child's development and adjust where necessary. Being aware of such possibility opens room for co-operation between parents and practitioners, as both realise their role and how their actions towards the child's development impact the child. If their actions are not compatible, for example if the behaviours they are each trying to cultivate in a child are different (for example being assertive (aggressive/forceful) vs retiring (reserved/ unassuming), antagonism is created, and the child may depict behaviours not likeable by both. It is therefore in the best interest of both (all) stakeholders in a child's microsystem to interact and shape acceptable behaviours and support growth characteristics.

To better understand the responses and have an aggregated analysis of the statements above, a total score was computed through totalling and rating scores on

'Ways in which parents and practitioners work together in supporting learning and development' items. The variable is named 'Ways of working together'. In addition, another total of reasons of involving parents (Importance of involving parents) was done following standard scale data analysis (Pallant, 2016). The summary of statistics of the computed variables are as in Table 4.6 below, grouped by principal versus practitioner.

Table 4.6: Descriptive statistics of total scores – Section B
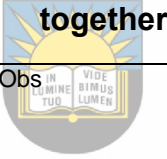
Practitioner/Principal		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Principal	Ways of working together	31	16	28	22.03	2.787
	Importance of involving parents	31	18	25	23.55	2.278
	Valid N (listwise)	31				
Practitioner	Ways of working together	62	16	28	21.37	2.464
	Importance of involving parents	62	15	25	22.63	2.491
	Valid N (listwise)	62				

The results in Table 4.6 show that, on ways of working together, principals were slightly more agreeing to the listed ways (Mean = 22.03) compared to practitioners (Mean= 21.37). In the same vein, regarding importance of involving parents, the two parties differ slightly with principals ranking slightly higher again. Principals as 'managers' of the centres ought to be ahead in terms of how child development can be fostered, and their experience does attest to that – generally they are more experienced than the practitioners as depicted in demographics. The two series of variables computed as presented above, were also analysed using the Kruskal-Wallis rank test, to ascertain the differences across the groups of demographic variables. The non-parametric tests were used to give the skewness in the data and relatively small sample (less than 100 observations), nonetheless it is a powerful statistical tool to ascertain whether the differences observed in the summary of statistics are statistically significant and not due to a chance factor (Pallant, 2016).

The results presented in Table 4.7 show no statistical significance across categories of any of the considered demographic variables (chi-square values' p-value are

greater than 0.05). This implies that the ranking of ways of working together regarding differences (for example that rank sum is higher for principals; highest from single respondents, IsiXhosa speakers, Black Africans and for those with Matric) cannot be generalised to the rest of the population. Inferences cannot be made as no statistical significance is found; however, the results can be interpreted in relation to the sample at hand. In summary, this shows that all respondents rated ways of working together, almost the same – there is common understanding within the sample of how ECD centres should partner with parents, thus corroborating findings in Kambouri-Danos, Liu, Pieridou, and Quinn (2018). Such common understanding depicted by non-statistically significant difference in ranking points to a greater possibility of social learning within the sector – to the extent that it is easier to influence and shape desired behaviours as practitioners and principals seem to learn from each other and therefore a convergence of views.

Table 4.7: Kruskal-Wallis equality-of-populations rank test – Ways of working together

Variable	Categories	Obs	Rank Sum	Chi-Square: Statistic and (p-value)
Position	Principal	31	1624.50	1.864
	Practitioner	62	2746.50	(0.1722)
Marital Status	Single	54	2458.00	4.241
	Married	30	1394.50	(0.3744)
	Divorced	3	157.00	
	Widowed	4	260.50	
	Engaged	1	8.00	
First Language	English	27	1315.00	2.425
	IsiXhosa	48	2186.50	(0.6581)
	Afrikaans	16	825.50	
	Shona	1	22.00	
	Ewe	1	22.00	
Race	Black African	51	2281.50	0.883
	Coloured	19	919.50	(0.6432)
	White	23	1170.00	

Highest Qualification	No formal Education	1	8.00	3.537 (0.4723)
	Primary Education	18	860.50	
	Matric	55	2520.50	
	Post-Matric certificate	14	678.50	
	Degree	5	303.50	

The same analysis was done for the variable 'importance of involving parents' and the results were presented in Table 4.8. Compared to the consensus observed in ways of working together, the importance of involving parents shows some statistical difference across three demographic variables. It can be observed that the ranking is statistically significant for position (principals vs practitioners) at 5%; and marital status and highest level of education at 10%. Ranked tests provide weighted comparison, taking into account differences in the number of observations. Practitioners ranked higher on rating the importance of involving parents than principals (rank sum of 2 664 compared to 1707 respectively). Practitioners interact directly with children on a day-to-day basis compared to principals, they observe a lot on the development and behaviours of each child, which creates the need to interact with the parents – thereby indicating that it is highly important. This resonates with findings in Janssen and Vandenbroeck (2018) that revealed a lack of unanimity in top-down constructions of parental roles and responsibilities.

Factors that enable practitioners to play their role of providing cues are those such as marital status. Those with at least matric have a higher rating of importance, as education enlightens, and such practitioners know what is best for children development (Atmore, 2013).

Table 4.8: Kruskal-Wallis equality-of-populations rank test – Importance of involving parents

Variable	Categories	Obs	Rank Sum	Chi-Square
Position	Principal	31	1707.00	4.151
	Practitioner	62	2664.00	(0.0416)
Marital Status	Single	54	2335.00	9.126
	Married	30	1552.50	(0.0580)
	Divorced	3	60.50	
	Widowed	4	294.00	
	Engaged	1	3 6.00	
First Language	English	27	1374.00	3.577
	IsiXhosa	48	2194.50	(0.4662)
	Afrikaans	16	653.50	
	Shona	1	74.50	
	Ewe	1	74.50	
Race	Black African	51	2538.50	1.887
	Coloured	19	901.50	(0.3893)
	White	23	931.00	
Highest Qualification	No formal Education	1	74.50	9.207
	Primary Education	18	590.00	(0.0561)
	Matric	55	2683.50	
	Post-Matric certificate	14	821.50	
	Degree	5	201.50	

Some curricula around the world make an effort to distinguish the benefits of parental involvement. On one hand, we have curricula that stress that partnering with parents can also benefit the parents (through temporarily unburdening parents from their caregiver's responsibilities), especially those who experience heavy burdens of say poverty, unemployment, social isolation, among others (Kind en Gezin, 2014). On the other hand, we have curricula that resonate much with the argument carried in this study, (for example ones in England, Ireland, Hong Kong, the Netherlands) where

advocacy for parenting support is not so much for the parents' sake but mainly to prevent children's developmental disadvantage.

In that regard, practitioners are expected to detect cues of 'child neglect' and provide parents with support to provide learning and development even at home (Janssen & Vandenbroeck, 2018). This is regardless of what parents perceive – the focus is on the child and their development as should be supported by the microsystem. This reasoning is depicted more explicitly within the Irish curriculum, addressing parents as an audience: "You can support your child's learning and development at home in the following ways: Ask the practitioner for suggestions for what you can do at home with your child…" (NCCA, 2009). This study shows that indeed practitioners are alert to the role of providing cues to parents, they understand that parental involvement is critical for a child's development, more than just for supporting parents (unburdening them of childcare).

Having looked at the quantitative data, a consideration is made for the qualitative data generated from interviews with parents to answer the same research question. Abdu (2014) indicated that if parents and practitioners work together, the educational development of the children is likely to be excellent. The results in this study indicate that parents are trying to make sure they are also working to become involved in the learning and development of the children, in line with Morrison et al. (2015), who indicated that partnership between ECD practitioners and parents can create safer ECD centre environments, strengthen parenting skills and improve academic skills of the child. If parents and practitioners have time to communicate with each other about the development of the children they are able to share advice on how they can all help the educational development of the child. This is in line with cues advocated in NCCA (2009) and Janssen and Vandenbroeck (2018). The responses of parents are analysed and results presented in the next sub-section.

4.3.1. Qualitative results on ways in which parents and practitioners work together in supporting learning and development in early childhood education provisioning

In total, 10 parents participated in the interviews, one per ECD centre, around East London. The centres were selected from the 31 ECD centres from which the

practitioners and principals' sample was drawn. Two of the parents were male and eight females. This is a general phenomenon, namely that more females are often in the care (including accompanying children to ECD centres) of children than males, a situation which is worse still within poor and vulnerable communities/families (Samman, Presler-Marshall, Jones, et al., 2016). The interviews took the form of face-to-face in-depth interviews. The researcher recorded and took notes. The responses by parents interviewed are presented below and discussed, reflecting on the responses from practitioners and principals as discussed above. This triangulation form helped in validating the responses and identifying how each part (parents vs practitioner/principal) perceives parental involvement, and gaps in efforts made to ensure the involvement

4.3.1.1. Ways in which parents should be part of children's educational development

When asked, which ways do they think parents should be part of their children's early development within the ECD centre, one of the parents stated "…*parents should be involved from the word go, because a child learns from home and also at school and most of the time the child is at home therefore the environment at home and at school should be conducive for learning. As parents, one should be helping the child to do homework or task from school, the parents can also communicate with teachers so that there will be a conducive learning environment for the child." P2.*

The views by this parent resonate sharply with the NCCA (2009) advocacy, where focus is on the child, especially that the parents should expect to help children with homework and limit disruptions such as television to enable effective learning at home.

Another parent in the same vein asserted*: "… parents should be involved quite a lot in the early years of their children' development as this will help the children [to] develop well in later years. Doing homework with the children and attending school meetings will help." P3.*

In addition, another parent considered that parents should play an active role to seek information on how to support the child, and not only wait for the practitioners to provide:

"*Parents should be able to ask a lot of questions from the teachers, asking how the child is performing in class not to wait until they see the report card at the end of the*

term. There should be a good relationship between parents and teachers so that the child can benefit from both sides." P5.

Taking responsibility as a part of the microsystem is what Bronfenbrenner advocated for. It is important to note that knowledge of what needs to be done may however not translate to actual behaviours due to other constraints like resources (Dighe & Seiden, 2020). Overall, there are good reasons why parents should be involved, one being that they are the immediate people that a child learns to trust. This was echoed by one parent:

"Children trust their parents more than anybody; so, parents should be more involved in children's life so that they can easily learn." P8

From these responses it can be deduced that parents are aware that they should get involved, and they should have a partnership with practitioners, thus they should be communicating, helping children with homework and also getting involved in many things that require parental involvement such as partnering with practitioners.

It emerged in this study, from the qualitative data that was gathered through interviews, that parents are aware they should be helping their children in different ways as required by the centre. Furthermore, parents showed that they are aware that children learn from both home and school and that helping children learn from home is good for their overall development (Dighe & Seiden, 2020). The findings of this study further concur with Abdu (2014) who alluded that the partnership between ECD practitioners and parents could improve children's learning, and their social and emotional development, else children would be disadvantaged. This means if parents and practitioners work together there will be better results in the educational development of the child. If there is no communication and if parents are not working together with practitioners the children are likely not to benefit in their educational development. In addition, Morrison et al. (2015) concurred that the ECD centre and parents are supposed to share responsibilities for the socialisation of the child. The argument is that if parents and ECD practitioners work together there is great academic development on the side of the child (NCCA, 2009; Atmore, 2013).

4.3.1.2. Experiences on how parents are helping their children

When parents were asked if they think they are doing enough in helping with the early development of their child, most of the parents indicated that they are indeed doing enough. Parents indicated that they are helping by doing extra lessons with the child at home; making sure they communicate with the practitioner when necessary; helping the centre with resources such as papers to write on, toilet rolls, cardboard boxes for cutting, among other necessary materials and resources useful at the centre. Others indicated that they are helping by attending the *mommies* meeting, checking the children' diaries and notebooks every day to see if there is something that needs to be given attention. Regarding the mommies meeting, other curricula considered it more beneficial to the parent than the child (Janssen & Vandenbroeck, 2018). In addition, others indicated that they are supporting through helping the child with homework, doing learning and playing at home. One of the parents said that they were not sure if they were doing enough. The parents had this to share:

"Yes, I am helping a lot, I am always giving my child extra lessons at home. I do teach her at home." P1

"I don't know if I can say I am doing enough or not, it's quite a relative term, what I can say as for specifically and my wife we are doing enough because. We try to communicate with the teacher, if the child is not going to be at school, we communicate with the teacher in time so that the teacher won't be worried about where is this child, was the child dropped at school or what not. So, we try to communicate as early as possible, secondly if the teacher said there is something that they want for example papers, toilet rolls, card box for cutting we try to help with those ones so that the life of the teacher in the classroom is much easier. And when they sent something in the message book indicating that the child needs to do that, we help the child so that the child won't be behind and clueless on other aspect that helps the teacher and also this helps the development of the child." P2.

Another parent said:

"Yes, I have been attending moms' meetings, being on the class WhatsApp group, checking the children' diaries and notebooks every day and signing them off, abiding by the rules and regulations of what to bring to the school. I am doing a lot to better the development of my child." P3.

The researcher probed for P3, asking if the practitioners appreciate her efforts. And she had this to say:

"YES, they appreciate, sometimes they sent me a WhatsApp message to thank me after I have sent something to the school. And they are always encouraging us to attend meeting so as to take part in the betterment of our children". P3

This was supported by the views of P8, who said:

"…, every day I have a session with my daughter where she tells me what she has learnt at school and I correct her where she is wrong." P8

All these responses from parents revealed that parents regard themselves as helping a lot with the early development of their children. Most of the parents mentioned they are helping their children with material and resources to take to the centre beyond what is prescribed, and to assist with homework.

Findings in this study show that parents are helping their children through doing extra school work with the child, and communicating with the practitioner about the child when necessary. Furthermore, it is indicated that parents send stationery to the centre, cardboard boxes and toilet rolls for doing creative art – these are key resources. Others indicated the ways that they are working together with practitioners, for example, by means of attending the mommies meeting, checking the communication book daily and always checking with the practitioners if there is something that requires the parent's attention. The ways in which parents get involved with the work of their children is supported by the Bronfenbrenner theory (2005) which asserts that home plays an important role in the child's growth and academic development. In this study, parents seem to understand that they are supposed to support their children in different ways to better their education at the early childhood centre. That builds confidence in the learner who becomes more receptive to new information from the practitioner and principal. Such effort by parents are acknowledged and need to be reinforced, and there is also need to support parents on how to handle their children's behaviour especially when it is contrary to the preferred way (Pitt et al, 2013).

This may entail change of behaviours, which is only possible when parents do understand what is expected of them, and to what extent they are doing what is expected of them. Parents were asked what they think needs to be changed for them

to increase involvement in the development and learning of their children. The responses are presented in the next sub-section.

4.3.1.3. What needs to be changed for parents to be more involved

When asked about what needs to be changed for parents to be more involved, it appears the parents were very aware exactly what they need to see changed. Some of the participants indicated that their own attitude as parents should change, especially that parents should respect the practitioners. One parent indicated that some parents just leave children at the gate without going inside the school yard, which is very bad. This is what another parent had to say:

"I think it's all about attitudes because sometimes you see other parents drop their children at the gate and they can say run inside, the teacher will just see this and maybe wanted to say something but the teacher can't, you can't be in a hurry for your child. At [GG] they have a chart which shows the behaviour of your child for the previous day, so as a parent you can pop in and check. So, if you drop your child at the gate, you won't know what is going on, so the attitudes of the parents is the one that needs to change." P2

Another parent indicated that the practitioners should give the parents time to explain to them what they are not happy about. Some parents feel that children are not learning a lot at the centre, and one parent emotionally expressed that:

"… I think there should be room to come and complain or discuss our challenges as parents. For example, for me, last week I went to the teacher and asked her why it is my child cannot count from 1 to 50. She is 3 and she is old enough to count but she can't." P1

Parent 3 felt that as parents they are supposed to know what will be taking place at the centre:

"Parents should be given the opportunity to understand all that will be going on at the ECD centre. For example, the practitioners should have consultation times for the parents because sometimes you will not be able to contact the teachers thinking they are too busy and as parents we do not want to disturb them. As parents we want the opportunity to be updated on what's going on at the centre if they are new developments parents we should be knowing. And if they are facing challenges, as

parents we should be aware so that if we have the opportunity to assist the centre, we can do that." P3.

Some parents mentioned that they expect meetings with practitioners, and practitioners should engage parents more often, there should be constant communication. Another parent indicated that parents must be taking the initiative, working for the learning and development of their children and not just wait for the practitioners to do everything for them.

This study revealed that parents expect to be given the chance to explain what they are not happy with; they want meetings with the practitioners. This is in line with assertions in Halme et al. (2014) that benefits of parent involvement in early childhood development includes that the child, the parent and practitioners adopt a positive attitude and behaviour towards education. More so, if the parents and practitioners' partner, they are able to set realistic expectations for the child. Furthermore, it is indicated that the mutual support of parents and practitioners increases the morale for both, and each becomes empowered to make decisions concerning the child's education (Mawere, Thomas & Nyaruwata, 2015; Snack, 2016).

Parents were further asked what role they see themselves playing to foster parent and practitioner partnership in early childhood development provisioning. The results are presented in the next sub-section.

4.3.1.4. Role played by parents in promoting parent and practitioner involvement

Many parents indicated that communication is vital between parents and practitioners. Some parents mentioned that it is a shared role to communicate between themselves and practitioners. This was noticed from a response by P2 who shared that:

"… they say charity begins at home therefore it is my role as a parent to communicate with the teachers. It is my role to initiate communication. I am free to ask the teachers of the other things that they do at school. In terms of resources from my company, I take paper that is written one side so that they can use it for cutting. At home it will be junk that you can throw away but to them they can use it, it's an asset to them, it can help your child and many others to develop learning. So, this helps the school in the

sense that they do not have to buy those kinds of resources because they already have them." P2.

Most of the participants indicated that they see themselves having good communication with the practitioners. It was specifically said that:

"I participate in things that require the mothers to take care of the children, meetings like mom's date nights. With this I get the opportunity to discuss about children with other parents and also discuss the challenges which other children are facing and we are able to discuss how we can solve some other things together with the teachers." P3.

"I look forward to engaging with the practitioners on what can be considered to be the curriculum of the ECD. Knowing what is covered there, will make it easier for me to also engage my child at home." P4.

"*I make sure I communicate with the practitioners if there is something that I do not understand that is taking place at the centre. I ask the principal if there is somewhere where they need some help and if I am able to assist, I can do so sometimes, it could be assisting them with some material or resources." P5.*

The study reveals existence of open communication between parents and practitioners as alluded to by practitioners and principals and then also expressed by the parents themselves. This is supported by Epstein's (2011) theory that says communicating between ECD practitioners and parents is very important as it gives an effective form of school-to-home and home-to-school communication about school programmes and children's progress. In line with that understanding, Griffin and Steen (2010) indicated that parents and ECD practitioners can have meetings at least once a year. It came to light that regular schedule of useful notices, memos, phone calls, newsletters, and other forms of communication are very important to enhance the partnership between parents and ECD practitioners. Another exciting contribution is that ECD programmes are supposed to be driven towards establishing regular and meaningful communication between parents and the ECD practitioners (Abdu, 2014; Morrison, Storey & Zhang, 2015).

Parents are expected to carry on some activities with their children and thus the study asked the parents about any activities they currently do with their children. The next subsection presents those results.

4.3.1.5. Activities parents do with their children to help learning and development

Participants were asked about the activities that they are doing with the children at home to help them learn and develop. Most parents indicated that they are doing 'a lot'. They mentioned assisting with homework, playing with the children at home, reading, writing, drawing, colouring, repeating the day's activities and rehearsing coming lessons (if they know in advance), outdoor activities and many others. Some parents expressed that:

"… the starting point is that we start with the activities that they are doing at school, because more often they have themes, for instance they will say this week we are learning about pets we have a pet at home so we start to play with that pet, discussing how good is it because it's a dog it protects us, you know we play with it. So we start with what is in the message book what they are doing that particular day, but also a number of activities like soccer star they play with a ball and what not so at home I always find time to play ball with my child. With playing with her I also see the skills and what she is struggling with. We do different skills, running, hope step and jump and what not, to see the motor skills of my child if they are developing because I can't wait for the report results at the end of the term that your child can't balance with one leg or your child can't do hope step and jump. teaching her name form example I have taught her how to write her name before they have start teaching them at school I have also teacher her how to play with letters, how to draw all those different kinds of things that I can do with my limited experience or training in that particular space as a parent I try to put those things together. I just ensure that what they are learning at school they are also learning at home." P2

To get more information on how participant 2 is helping the child, the researcher went on to probe: do you sometimes read books for her? P2 had this to say:

"Every night I make it a point that…. She has got different books some aaaaah like scriptural they are based on Christian values some are like based on the cartoons that she watches and what note so we have good bedtime stories books. We try by all

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means that we read something for her most of the times before she goes for bed. But I have also find out that it's not good to only read for her when she is going to bed but also on weekends under the shed of a tree because we have a yard that have trees and sheds to just sit on the swing or lazy bench and read for mu child and she also read for me, she does not read the specific words but she will be just seeing the pictures and tell a story from the pictures and she also get excited in reading."P2

Most parents indicated that they are reading and do all kinds of school work with their children. This is indicated by their sentiments that:

"I read stories for them, help with complying with the rules of the centre, I teach them to cut papers and also doing some colouring with them. Basically, I will be assisting with what they are doing at school and repeat it at home so that they can understand better" P3

"We bought books which are relevant to her, I do teach her counting, reading and attempt some questions as per the books." P4.

"I make sure that as soon as she is from school, I open her homework book and see if there is something that she is supposed to do. If there is something, I make sure I assist my child. I also give her some child movies to watch after school, for example if they are being taught about Easter, I can give her movies about the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ so that she can watch and when the teachers explain this at school my child won't get lots." P5

The current study revealed that parents are helping with activities that include assisting children with homework, playing with their kids at home, reading, writing, drawing, and colouring. This is in reflection of Bronfenbrenner (2005)'s thinking, that a child's family working together to pursue a goal will help children's development. Conscious or subconscious acts in this line are set to provide a wealth development pedestal for children. ECD has a bearing on a child's success in life, therefore every effort should be made to provide the children with the best experiences that shape good behaviours and allow greater learning to take place.

More so, a success event that happens in a family impacts the children positively. The findings concur with Amatea, Mixon and McCarthy (2012) who alluded that every family has a system which they maintain involving interactions with each other when

developing relationships. Bronfenbrenner (2005) echoed the same, believing parents are supposed to have strong relationships with children.

All in all, parents illustrated that they are doing additional work with the children apart from being taught at the centre. Parents are therefore trying by all means to spend time teaching their children. More often than not, parents face challenges, which also need to be understood. The question to solicit such responses was posed in the interviews and the results presented below.

4.3.2.6. Challenges parents face with practitioners in supporting learning and development of the children

Most parents mentioned different challenges they are facing; however, certain parents mentioned that they do not have any challenges with the practitioners. Some indicated that they have a problem with the way practitioners pronounce some words to the children. Due to language and accent differences, the way some parents pronounce certain words is different from how the practitioner does it, therefore it becomes a challenge to the children. This was expressed by P1 as follows:

"There is conflict between me and the teachers in the sense that the way they pronounce some words to my child is different from the way I pronounce the words. For example, my child is always saying no mummy that's not the way my teacher says it for example if she is doing the alphabet to say "H" they say hhhch, me I say ehhch. So, it becomes a challenge now". P1.

P3 was also having challenges with the practitioner, this is what she had to say:
"Some practitioners at the ECD centre are racist, they are not patient with children and I feel that this is a very big challenge because I took my children to that centre thinking that it is the best only to find out that some teachers are racist." P3.

The researcher wanted to get more detail and understand why the parent was saying this and the researcher went on to probe: what makes you think they are racist? Participant number 3 stated that:

"*Sometimes my children will come home with wet clothes and it will be cold, and I will be wondering why they did not change them but there will be spare clothes in the bag for them to change.*" P3.

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As a researcher I did not really see the evidence of being racism, it was just a perception in the head of the parent. But, suspicions will hinder communication at the expense of children development.

P5 also referred to the challenges faced, indicating that some of the practitioners seem not to be organised, and this was highlighted by what the respondent said:

"I face some challenge that they seem not to follow the procedures which they say they do. Sometimes I will find that in my child's homework book there will be nothing to do but from the start they told me that they will be sending homework every day. I become worried to an extent that I am doubting if they are learning sometimes. It seems there is lack of consistence at this centre." P5

Parents were not happy with the inconsistencies. However, other parents mentioned that they are not facing any challenges with the practitioners, as per the statement by P2 below:

"I wouldn't say there are really challenges like I have outlined that there is clear communication so to me they are doing the best but you may expect a lot for her to do a lot of things, what I have notice is that these centres they also struggle with resources so to me they are doing the best, you may expect your child to do a lot. My involvement could be to provide resources, so that challenge also cut across to the parents otherwise they have to charge more school fees". P2

Another parent indicated that she was having a challenge in the sense that the practitioners were not qualified to teach in the ECD. During interviews, a few parents indicated that they are facing challenges with practitioners; however, more parents indicated that they were not facing any challenges. by In line with this finding, Atmore et al. (2012) and Voster, Sack, Amod, Seabi and Kern (2016) asserted that there are many challenges that may affect development of learners during the early years, and that such differences need to be ironed out between parents and practitioners for the better education of the children. The challenges identified include some parents who seem not to be involved with their children's school work. In addition, it is argued that some parents work long hours and do not respond to letters and notes that learners receive from school, as was found by Ntumi (2016). Furthermore, Atmore et al. (2012) indicated that learners may feel excluded from certain activities, because they did not

bring stationery to school for certain activities such as for baking. According to Abdu (2014) and Morrison, Storey and Zhang,(2015), partnership is beyond just communication between the two, but more of sharing strategies and approaches for effective teaching and learning as well as resource mobilisation.

In summary, from both quantitative and qualitative data, it was apparent that parents and practitioners are working together in supporting learning and development in the ECD. The next section presents responses from both quantitative and qualitative data on views on the way to work together for provisioning of resources. All three groups of respondents, principals, practitioners and parents agreed about the need to work together as they clearly identify the importance for this for the development of children. However, it is imperative to note that working together is necessary but not sufficient for well-functioning of centres and children development. There are key resources needed to enable play and learning to take place in a safe and healthy environment, and having nutritious food.

4.4. SECTION C: PARENTS AND PRACTITIONERS' VIEWS ON THE WAY THEY WORK TOGETHER ON PROVISION OF RESOURCES

This section answers the research question on how parents and practitioners view the way they work together on provision of resources. First the researcher presents quantitative data gathered through questionnaires.

Table 4.9: Principals and practitioners' views on the way they work together on provision of resources

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
C1 I give parents information about where to find out more information about the curriculum	Count	0	5	64	24
	Row Total N %	0.0%	5.4%	68.8%	25.8%
C2 I share with parents information about the child's next step	Count	1	4	65	23
	Row Total N %	1.1%	4.3%	69.9%	24.7%
C3 making leaflets, DVDs, and other resources available to parents.	Count	0	32	56	5
	Row Total N %	0.0%	34.4%	60.2%	5.4%
C4 I lend books, tapes and rhymes to parents	Count	5	27	49	12
	Row Total N %	5.4%	29.0%	52.7%	12.9%
C5 making kits with ideas for activities, and include chubby crayons and safety scissors	Count	0	18	58	17
	Row Total N %	0.0%	19.4%	62.4%	18.3%
C6 I share books on child development	Count	1	12	68	12

		1.1%	12.9%	73.1%	12.9%
	Row Total N %	1.1%	12.9%	73.1%	12.9%
C7 invite parents in the ECD setting so that they can join in and learn about what their children do	Count	1	38	46	8
	Row Total N %	1.1%	40.9%	49.5%	8.6%
C8 We have newsletter with information such as songs and rhymes that children are learning, updates on policies	Count	0	25	52	16
	Row Total N %	0.0%	26.9%	55.9%	17.2%
C9 I tap into parents' knowledge, to ensure the best outcomes for the children	Count	3	13	67	10
	Row Total N %	3.2%	14.0%	72.0%	10.8%

In all cases (the questions listed C1-C9 in the questionnaire) the majority of the respondents at least agree with the statements. This shows great support expectations from parents and trusting that parents can fulfil their role. It is important to note that a number of respondents disagreed with some statements, for example 40.9% disagreed and 1.1% strongly disagreed about inviting parents to spend time at the centre; 34.4% disagreed with the making of leaflets. This is more than a third of the respondents in each case. These are statements that relate to resource and time demanding activities, which the principals and practitioners may not really have.

On Table 4.9, respondents were asked to tick whether they strongly disagree, disagree, agree or strongly agree with the different statements that were given. On the statement, "I give parents information about where to find out information about the curriculum", cumulatively 88 (68.8%+ 25.8%) agreed to this statement and only five (5.4%) respondents disagreed to this statement. This indicates that practitioners have an understanding that they should be involving parents in everything that they will be doing at the centre. Most of the respondents, 88 (69.9%+24.7%), agreed to the statement that they share information about the child's next step with the parents. Only a few, five (1.1%+4.3%), disagreed with the statement. Most respondents 61 (60.2%+5.4%) agreed that, they do leaflets and make resources available. Only 32 (34.4%) disagree with this.

This indicates that most practitioners understand and they are sharing resources with parents so that the children will learn and develop. Most respondents, 61 (52.7%+12.9%), indicated that they lend story books and tapes of songs and rhymes to parents, while only 32 (5.4%+29.0%) disagreed with this. The majority of the respondents, 75 (62.4%+18.3%), indicated that they make kits and include chubby

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crayons and safety scissors, with only a few 18 (19.4%) indicating that they disagree with this.

The majority of the respondents, 80 (73.1%+12.9%), indicated that they share reading books about children's development. This shows that practitioners are sharing resources with parents so that they children may learn and develop. Only a few,13 (1.1%+12.9%), indicated that they were not sharing books with parents. Some respondents, 54 (49.5%+8.6%), agreed with the statement that they invite parents to spend time at the centre – joining in activities and learning about the daily activities of the children, but some, 39 (1.1%+40.9%), disagreed with this probably because they feel that children won't be able to learn when their parents are there.

The majority of the respondents, 68 (55.9%+17.2%), indicated that they have a newsletter which shows that the practitioners feel they should work together with parents to support learning and development. Only a few, 25 (26.9%), disagreed with this idea of a newsletter. Most of the respondents, 77 (72.0%+10.8%), indicated that they do tap into parents' knowledge at the ECD centre. Only a few, 16 (3.2%+14.0%), disagreed with this statement.

A total of the items under the sub-scale 'parents and practitioners' views on the way they work together on provision of resources' was computed, adding all scores together. The summary of these statistics of the computed variable are presented in Table 4.10 below.

Table 4.10: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF VIEWS ON WAYS TO WORK TOGETHER ON PROVISION OF RESOURCES

Practitioner/Principal		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Principal	Provision of resources	31	21	36	26.55	3.053
	Valid N (listwise)	31				
Practitioner	Provision of resources	62	20	36	26.11	3.325
	Valid N (listwise)	62				

Table 4.11: Kruskal-Wallis equality-of-populations rank test – Provision of resources

Variable	Categories	Obs	Rank Sum	Chi-Square
Position	Principal	31	1569.00	0.833
	Practitioner	62	2802.00	(0.3614)
Marital Status	Single	54	2623.50	4.625
	Married	30	1357.00	(0.3279)
	Divorced	3	76.00	
	Widowed	4	213.50	
	Engaged	1	8.00	
First Language	English	27	1225.50	5.612
	IsiXhosa	48	2333.50	(0.2300)
	Afrikaans	16	639.50	
	Shona	1	89.50	
	Ewe	1	83.00	
Race	Black African	51	2529.00	3.504
	Coloured	19	970.00	(0.1734
	White	23	872.00	
Highest Qualification	No formal Education	1	8.00	3.887
	Primary Education	18	728.00	(0.4215)
	Matric	55	2720.00	
	Post-Matric certificate	14	700.00	
	Degree	5	215.00	

The results of this study showed that the practitioners understand that they should share resources with parents so that the children will learn and develop to their best possible potential. Practitioners said they sharing story books with parents as well as tapes of songs and rhymes. More so, practitioners indicated that they also have a newsletter where they provide useful information. This is supported in literature where it is indicated that parents and practitioners are expected to collaborate (Makuna & Indoshi, 2012).

A qualitative perspective was taken from parents through interviews and the results of the analysis are presented in sub-section below.

4.4.1. Parents and practitioners' views on provision of resource

Ten parents were interviewed in relation to working together with centres on provision of resources and they provided their input, as presented in the sub-sections below.

4.4.1.1. Parents' views on the provision of resources in early childhood education

Based on the qualitative data, participants indicated that they are working very well with practitioners in the provision of resources. Some indicated that they see it as a good thing that they need to also provide resources so that their children will learn and develop during their education. Participants went on to illustrate that their contribution regarding the provision of resources is excellent, good, great, very well. Some of the parents' expressions are quoted below:

"I see excellent because they do communicate what they need resources for. So, the partnering there is very excellent." P2

"*Working relationship with other teachers is very good, some teachers are very energetic and they are very dedicated on what they are doing they are very passionate with working with children." P3.* Together in Excellence

"*Very well, we have our meetings every second week of each month." P8*

However, some parents indicated that there is a challenge in the provision of resources, and it appears they think that the practitioners are asking for too much. The parents feel some of practitioners seem not to be organised when they request for resources from parents. There were three parents who shared the same sentiments as detailed below:

"…there are also some challenges in the sense that I think sometimes they ask too much from us and they are not trustworthy sometimes. They are always asking for things to bring at school. Then if you provide some thing this week next week, they will say bring something, I think they forgot that they ask you." P1.

"I think they ask too much of the resources, they ask a lot of things that I have to buy and send to school. I think it is better to put the amount on the school fees. Because now will see that the amount of money spent on buying other things after paying school

fees is too much. When you look for a place at that day-care you will be thinking that the fees are fair enough only to find out that there is a lot of things to provide after that." P5

"At times communication is made late about what is needed at school and it puts pressure for me as a parent to make the provision so that my child will not feel out of place at school." P7.

This current study found that parents share resources with practitioners, and they are ready to bring resources to the centre whenever they are requested. Past research indicates that though this partnership is seen as important, it is argued that parents are often passive participants and rarely take part in making decisions about ECD programmes (Mukuna & Indoshi, 2012). In addition, parents should provide play materials for teachers to use. The resources parents provide come in different forms, that is the financial, time and physical goods which may all go a long way in supporting the teacher and thus indirectly ensuring effective development of the child. Epstein (2011) argued that parents should be involved as classroom assistants and as organisers of ECD events. This study enquired about how parents and practitioners' partner in providing resources for the centre. The results show that parents work very well with practitioners in provision of resources, indicating that their relationship with practitioners concerning the provision of resources is excellent, good, great and very well.

4.4.1.2. Ways in which parents assist the ECD centre with the provision of resources

When the researcher asked the participants, 'in what ways do they assist the ECD centre with the provision of resources', all the parents indicated that they are giving resources to the centre. Parents mentioned different kinds of resources that they provide to the centre. Some said they give things like empty tins, containers, empty tissue rolls, used paper, among others – these are all items the centre uses in different ways for the learning and development of the children.

Some parents indicated that they provide the centre with paper for cutting, magazines, and newspapers. Some mentioned that they give donations and help with fundraising and others purchase stationery for the centre. This is indicated below by what some of parents stated:

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"I sent empty tins, cans, tissue rolls, used paper they ask about a lot of resources and I am always providing them." P1

"… like I said just some papers for cutting and drawing, card bot box for cereal that the school can use, rolls for toilets inner toilet rolls anything that you know the child can play with we just handover to the school." P2

"I sent paper that they said they will need it, used paper, plastics. We also have a list of things that are supposed to be bought like beach buckets and shovels, medication, towels, etc. so I provide that." P5

Concerning the provision of resources, parents are supporting the ECD centres with what the centres request from them. It seems all parents are providing resources to the centre where their children are learning.

The findings of this study point to the fact that parents are providing items like empty tins, containers, tissue rolls, used paper, among other things, which the centre uses in different ways for the learning and development of the children. Furthermore, parents indicated that they provide resources in the form of donations, fundraising and others purchase stationery for the centre. This is in line with the expectation in Makuna and Indoshi (2012) that parents and practitioners need to collaborate. Though this partnership is seen as important, it is argued that parents are often passive participants and rarely take part in making decisions about ECD programmes (Mukuna & Indoshi, 2012). The results of this study contradict the finding in Mukuna and Indoshi (2012) as it was evident that parents are going the extra mile to support ECD centres programmes.

The study further investigated the perspective of each parent on the provision of resources to EC centre, and the results are presented below.

4.4.1.3. Perspectives of parents on the provision of resources to the ECD centre

Parents have different perspectives of the provision of resources. Some parents thought the centre is asking for too many resources, some said more resources are required, some think it is a good idea to continue providing resources and others think the resources are quite beneficial. Specifically, others said:

"… it is good to provide resources, but I have reservations it is too much, for example they will say pay R550 for registration and it covers toilet paper and soap for the children, but they will still send you a list of things that we are supposed to buy and bring to the school and you will still see that that pack of tissue and soap is there. Before term ends, they will say please may you contribute more of these things. I think they should list these things once not asking again and again." P1

The researcher went on to probe P1, wanting to understand more: so, what do you do to provide?

"*Yaah I give them because you do not want to quarrel with the people who are taking care of your child when you are not there. But deep down my heart it will be too much for me."* P1

"*The school and the parents should partner, if there is a committee they need to really mobilised, like to my child's school there is a parent class rep on the WhatsApp group, one parent leads, where parents can mobilise resources that the class need. So, I think it's all about having a good understanding of what is needed at the school."* P2

"I think it is a good idea to provide the centre with resources but they should not ask for too many things that are not necessary. For example, they will say bring a bottle of Panadol that will stay at school in case the child gets sick. So, every child is going to bring a bottle and they will be too many, why not just buy their first aid kit which they can use for every child." P5

Lack of resources is usually a barrier to involvement of parents in early childhood development centre activities as reported in Dighe and Seiden (2020). It appears that this is not the case for the study area, South Africa's East London education district. In some instances, the desire to be supportive and the understanding of the significance of the help outweighs the poverty and lack of resources, enabling parents to help as much as they can. Over and above other resources and support, finance is another controversial area as in some instances parents may feel that the fees they pay cover everything. The sub-section below presents results on parents' views of financial support activities.

4.4.1.4. Views of parents on financial support for activities at the ECD centre

All the parents support the idea that it is good for the ECD centre to have activities that require financial support from the parents. All parents seemed to be ready to pay for the learning and development of their children. Some indicated that the activities that need financial support are good because they give the children special exposure. However, some said they feel too much this financial support should not be requested, not every week for example. Some of the expressions of the parents about the financial support are as follows:

"Yes, it is a good idea, I don't have problem with that because by doing a lot of the activities the child will be also learning. It only becomes a problem to me when they ask things double than required like what I said before." P1

"*yaah look if it's part of learning so why not. I might be able to go with my child to the zoo, but there is much learning when they are going with other young children my child would learn more so as for me, I wouldn't mind. It will be good to organise those things more often.*" P2

The researcher went on to probe P2 wanting to get more clarity, and asked – even if the money is a lot?

P2 had this to say:

"Remember like what I said it's all about what you perceive as benefit for me I think it is good for the child to be exposed to a number of things as for me if they say we are flying to some place I wouldn't mind to pay for it. It would be a pity if they take the child there and just sit under a tree, not showing them let's say the animals they flew to see, they should be learning that would be happening. It's a matter of seeing if they are doing what they are supposed to do with the money." P2.

All the participants supported the idea of financial support to the children at the centre. It seems all parents understand that for most activities to happen at the centre they require financial support.

When parents who participated in this study were asked about their perspective on the provision of resources some indicated that they feel that the practitioners are asking for too many resources. Regarding views on financial support for the activities at the centre, they indicated that they are ready to pay for the learning and development of

their children, unlike in the case of Ethiopia (Dighe & Seiden, 2020). This indicates that some parents help with the provision of resources without any complaints but there are some parents who are always reluctant to provide resources, always thinking the centre is gaining too much from them. This puts to test the value of education from the parents' perspective, who need to ensure their children get best education, more so at an early stage.

Literature indicated that when parents communicate with the practitioners, they usually want to exchange information about the child's behaviour, learning, or safety-hygiene matters, while practitioners contact parents to provide information about the education programmes and activities (Petrogiannis & Penderi, 2014; Kruger & Michalek, 2011). This study's findings support such literature and in the majority of cases parents are very receptive to the communication from teachers, wanting to ensure that their children get the best out of the ECD centre. There are however parents with the view that centres are there to profiteer through their children – something which cannot be dismissed given how centres have dramatically increased (and in some cases some being unregistered). Registration and regulation of centres is in some instances controversial – some centres expand and take in students up to Grade 1 or even up to Grade 3, yet they are registered for Edu-care and governed by the Department of Social Development, not with the Department of Basic Education. The encroaching on different territories by ECD centres is problematic and, in some instances, it is argued that the motive is profiteering.

Having looked at resources, the next section presents results pertaining to communication between centres and parents. For the above to happen, there should be effective communication between the centre and parents. The section below presents results on how such communication takes place and how it is viewed by the parties involved.

4.5. SECTION D: Parents and practitioners' communication in Early Childhood Education provisioning

Communication is the bedrock of all partnership initiatives, without which nothing succeeds. This section discusses modes of communication used by the centre (practitioners and principals) and the ratings of different communication aspects.

Modes of communication used include: Telephone and message book combined tops the list (31 respondents, which is 33%), followed by message book only (15.05%), telephone (10.75%), telephone/message book/emails (6.45%). Other modes include WhatsApp and SMS with very few respondents identifying them.

Table 4.12 presents the rating of communication-related statements by the respondents.

Table 4.12: Communication of parents and practitioners in early Childhood centres

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
D. 1. face to face discussions, when there is a problem	Count	0	1	33	58
	Row Total N %	0.0%	1.1%	35.5%	62.4%
D. 2. I do remind parents about special events at the ECD centre	Count	0	1	51	40
	Row Total N %	0.0%	1.1%	54.8%	43.0%
D. 3. talking informally to parents regularly	Count	0	5	56	31
	Row Total N %	0.0%	5.4%	60.2%	33.3%
D. 4. Parents are able to speak with me about their child	Count	0	0	45	47
	Row Total N %	0.0%	0.0%	48.4%	50.5%
D. 5. I have contact number for each parent	Count	0	3	29	60
	Row Total N %	0.0%	3.2%	31.2%	64.5%

Table 4.12 illustrates how parents and practitioners communicate in the learning and development of the children. Five statements were given and respondents had to indicate if they strongly disagree, disagree, agree or strongly agree. The majority of the respondents, 91 (35.5%+62.4%), indicated they strongly agree with the statement that they conduct one-on-one discussions with parents mostly when there is a problem. Only one respondent (1.1%) disagreed with this statement. Furthermore, the majority, 91 (54.8%+43.0%), at least agree with the statement that they do remind parents about special events at the ECD centre. Again, only one (1.1%) disagreed with the statement.

When asked if they regularly talk informally with parents, the majority of the respondents, 87 (60.2%+33.3%), at least agree that they talk to parents which shows that there is communication between parents and practitioners in ECD centres. Only a few, 5 (5.4%), disagreed with this which shows that there are other practitioners who are not aware of the importance of communicating with parents if there is need. All the respondents, 92 (48.4% +50.5%), agreed to the statement that parents are able to speak with them about their child. This shows that the practitioners do make themselves available to speak to parents when they want to. When asked if they have contact numbers of the parents, most of them, 89 (31.2%+64.5%), indicated that they do, while only a few, 3 (3.2%) indicated that they do not have contact number.

The study finding indicated that parents and practitioners mostly use the telephone and message book to communicate with each other. Most of the parents indicated that they communicate with practitioners on a regular basis. These findings show that practitioners do make themselves available to speak to the parents, and likewise, parents do the same. This is in line with what Hardley and Rouse (2018) argued, which is that communication is the foundation for a good parent and practitioner partnership. In addition, a relaxed atmosphere of mutual respect between parents and practitioners may lead to the most meaningful conversations and boost confidence of the children as they see adults in their life freely and frequently communicate. Furthermore, the findings in this study, as confirmed by previous researchers, were that parents who receive messages from practitioners tend be more involved in the children's education than parents who do not have any communication with the practitioners (McDermott, 2012). The more contact parents have with the practitioners the more interest they take in their child's activities inside and outside the centre (McDermott, 2012). It is important for each party to have a keen interest in starting and responding to communication by the other party – it is not a prerogative for any single party.

Epstein (2011) argued that the practitioners should "write English clearly, and documents should be translated into written major language spoken by the children, parents, and provided interpreters for parents who speak different languages at meetings and conferences." This is also supported by Cano et al. (2016) who emphasised that if communication is clear parents and practitioners will know their responsibilities.

The items regarding communication between the centre and parents were added together to compute a total communication score. The summary of the score statistics are presented in Table 4.13 below. The score is almost the same between principals and practitioners on average, with principals having a slightly higher mean score (17.48 compared to 17.16).

Table 4.13: Descriptive statistics – Communication in early childhood education provisioning

Practitioner/Principal		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Principal	Communication score	31	15	20	17.48	1.749
	Valid N (listwise)	31				
Practitioner	Communication score	62	0	20	17.16	2.830
	Valid N (listwise)	62				

This total score of communication was subjected to a rank test in order to compare ranking across the categories of each of the demographic variables. The rank test results are presented in Table 4.14 below.

Table 4.14: Kruskal-Wallis equality-of-populations rank test – Communication in early childhood education provisioning

Variable	Categories	Obs	Rank Sum	Chi-Square
Position	Principal	31	1479.50	0.034
	Practitioner	62	2891.50	(0.8545)
Marital Status	Single	54	2491.00	6.153
	Married	30	1571.50	(0.1880)
	Divorced	3	91.00	
	Widowed	4	113.00	
	Engaged	1	11.50	
First Language	English	27	1221.00	3.233
	IsiXhosa	48	2138.50	(0.5196)
	Afrikaans	16	870.50	
	Shona	1	70.50	
	Ewe	1	70.50	
Race	Black African	51	2411.00	0.061

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	Coloured	19	906.00	(0.9700)
	White	23	1054.00	
Highest Qualification	No formal Education	1	70.50	8.971 (0.0618)
	Primary Education	18	698.00	
	Matric	55	2443.00	
	Post-Matric certificate	14	805.00	
	Degree	5	354.50	

A statistically significant difference in rank is observed at 10% under highest qualification (chi-square =8.971; p-value=0.0618), all others have a chi-square that is not statistically significant. The extent of communication is the same across the respondents, only differing across education – further attesting to the significance of education in provisioning of a quality ECD programme. Those with at least matric level as highest qualification do rank communication questions highly – they appear to be best communicators.

The views and experience of parents were solicitated and the results are presented next.

4.5.1. Parents and practitioners' communication in early childhood education

This section presents the qualitative viewpoints as obtained from interviews with parents.

4.5.1.1. Communication with the practitioners at the ECD centre

When asked how they communicate with practitioners in the ECD centre, parents reported different types of communication modes. Some indicated that they communicate through face-to-face contact, message book, WhatsApp, SMS, telephone and meetings. Some of the input from parents communicate is quoted below:

"*I Communicate with the teachers face to face, sometime I call them, sometimes when I am having a pressing need, I call the principal.*" P1

"The official one is the message book; I write a message and they sign to indicate that they have read it. They write a Message and I sign they also have phone numbers that they gave to all parents. So depends with time I can use a call, message, WhatsApp like what I said on dropping and picking the child teachers and the assistants are there to talk to parents so if there is something that you want to say you can communicate they are available for that. So, communication is in different forms." P2

"We have access to all forms of communication; from email; letter; phone call; SMS; WhatsApp & office visit at any given time (Normal working hours)." P6

Most parents indicated that it is not difficult for them to communicate with practitioners since there are different ways of communicating, it is not like they are restricted to only one means of communicating.

Effective communication between parents and practitioners can be essential in helping ECD leaners experience success in their educational development. Previous researchers indicated that building parents and practitioners' partnerships is a powerful avenue for increasing the satisfaction of parents and the community with schooling and for improving ECD centres (Epstein, 2005). It came to light that when parents and practitioners have good and frequent communication, they can forge the partnerships that produce benefits for the educational development of the children. Additionally, as the communication between parents and practitioners increases, understanding improves, suggestions about how the child can improve are shared, and positive attitudes between the parents and practitioners are more easily maintained (Epstein, 2005). Communication is very important between parents and practitioners, there are common examples of parents and practitioners' interactions, when they are able to share information, which includes notes and phone calls, newsletters, parent-teacher conferences, home visits and weekly folders. It is also good for the health and safety of children as any untoward behaviours and unusual behaviours are easily identified through the constant communication.

4.5.1.2. Opportunity for parents to come to the centre and talk to practitioners

Participants indicated that the centres are open to communicate with parents whenever they wish to do so. Parents can talk to practitioners at pick-up and drop-off time and they are allowed to make an appointment with the practitioner to discuss

things in detail. This is verified by the statements from some of the parents during the interviews:

"… yes, parents can come and speak to practitioners for example when you pick and drop your child, but there are no specific times that the teachers they sit down and speak with parents but only in meetings." P1

"At dropping and picking up the children, there is always a teacher or assistant teacher to talk to. The gate is always open" P2

The researcher went on to probe P2, 'is it possible to speak to the teachers besides pick-up and drop-off times'? And he had this to say:

"There are no consultations times but I believe that it's all about that particular teacher's time from 7am to 12:30 they are busy so maybe you can just make an appointment after school. They have open lines for communication. The opportunity to talk to them is available." P2

"Yes, you can talk to them in the morning and in the afternoon when picking up the child. And also, you can set an appointment, but there are sometime that they indicated in the message book that these times they will be very busy with the teachings they will not be able to attend to parents unless it is urgent." P5

When the researcher asked if the participants had adequate opportunities to participate within the ECD centre, most participants indicated that they all have the opportunity to participate. Communication is key to sustainability and effectiveness of ECD (Rossiter 2016)

4.5.1.3 Challenges faced in trying to communicate with practitioners

The researcher asked the participants about some of the challenges face in trying to communicate with practitioners. Some indicated that they do not have any challenge, while others indicated that they have challenges such as that practitioners appear to be too busy when they try to start a conversation with them. It seems practitioners are not available. This is evident by the statements of different parents below:

"Sometimes teachers are in a hurry and they do not take enough time to attend to our queries as parents." P3

"Sometimes to call the class teacher you want to ask something about the child, her phone will be off. When you get there personally, let's say you want to pick the child, the teachers sometimes they will be very busy and you end up going back home without communicating to the practitioners." P5

"Some of them are under qualified and difficult to have adequate information sharing". P8

However, some parents indicated that they did not have any challenges, but noticed that other parents are the ones causing challenges when it comes to communication with practitioners. This was the response by P2:

"... no... no... challenges, but parents sometimes they do not know how to communicate on WhatsApp. The teacher will send pictures on the WhatsApp group showing parents what the children were cutting some parents will attack the teacher there on WhatsApp asking why my child is not there what... what.... But maybe it would be a few photos and others will be still coming. So, the challenges are always from us parents that we do not know how to communicate sometimes." P2

The researcher went on to probe that: 'so, you are fine when your child is not featuring on a photo from the centre?' And P2 has this to say:

"I would enquire about it, but I would question it as if I am suggesting something but I can communicate with the teacher privately to her inbox. You know when you ask on a general group it's not nice, it's better to ask the teacher like my child seemed not to be appearing on the picture. Or the child is always in the solitary corner, may be the child is always in the naughty corner which needs to be communicated to the teacher. It's all about the proper communication with the teacher it's all about the proper language." P2

The researcher asked the participants how often they contact the practitioners, and for what. The various responses indicated that they contact practitioners when necessary, more often, once a week, regular, as often as they can, anytime if need be and when there is an emergency. The parents' responses are indicated below:

"Maybe once a week, replying to their notifications and sometimes telling them about what they should be careful about when it comes to my children." P3.

"As often as I can; checking on the welfare of the children & stuff. If there are issues pertaining to the centre; the child or any issues raised by the parents." P6.

"I contact them anytime if need be." P7

"When necessary, I would write a letter in my daughter's communication book for appointment to check my child's progress." P9

"Only when there is an emergency or only when you seem not to understand the homework given to the child." P10

Literature has shown that parents and practitioners should also practise in-person communication (Rossiter, 2016). Practitioners have to know that whenever they engage in one-on-one communication they are using in-person communication. Furthermore, practitioner conferences, and events that happen after school are called in-person communication. More so, this type of communication does not always have to be at the ECD centre. Home visits are also ways practitioners can use to communicate with those parents that have a tight work schedule.

When parents were asked about the mode of communication that they use, they mentioned face-to-face communication, message book, WhatsApp, SMS, telephone and meetings. Parents also mentioned that they did not have any challenges in communication with the practitioners. This contradicts Hardley and Rouse (2018) who reported that communication and collaboration between parents and ECD practitioners has proved to be one of the most difficult aspects. They indicated that although parents may show willingness to participate in the communication with practitioners, there is some difficulty in understanding the purposes and the rationale of the processes. In many cases, parents will have conflicting ideas with practitioners, especially when a problem arises with a child. For example, if practitioners try to explain the challenges which the child is facing at the centre, the parents sometimes tend to brush the practitioners off, telling them that they already know about what is going on with their child. More so, parents are said to sometimes only care about their career and when they are invited to the ECD centre they are always have an excuse. It is further indicated that parents seem to focus on practitioner' practices and lack of communication and collaboration (Hardley & Rouse, 2018).

In a study by Morrison, Storey and Zhang (2015) it is claimed that strategies exist to assist open communication between parents and ECD practitioners. These include: having mutual respect for each other, collegial meetings, reciprocal visits between

settings for example practitioners should be visiting parents at their home. In addition, there should be equal willingness from both sides to collaborate and communicate. There should be formal and resourced processes that support collaboration. It was said that newsletters to facilitate information sharing are also important in boosting communication between parents and practitioners which in turn contributes to developed child profiles.

Communication is essential for professionals to work in partnership; however, the diversity of professionals working within the early childhood sector may lead to challenges, as professionals with different backgrounds may not share a common language or way to describe children's learning and development. Morrison, Storey and Zhang (2015) suggested that communication challenges can be overcome by professionals who are committed to achieving the best educational outcomes for children, and are willing to share specialist knowledge.

4.5.1.4. Feedback about child behaviour

When asked if they receive regular and adequate feedback about the child's behaviour, all the participants indicated that they receive feedback about the behaviour of their children. Participant P2 had this to say:

"Yes, the behaviour is always shown on the chart if I have any question I can always ask, what had happened for the child to be on that behaviour colour." P2.

The researcher wanted clarity on this and went on to probe P2: 'May you explain further how the behaviour on the chart works?' P2 had this to share:

"The behaviour of the children is always displayed on a chart. There are colours from red, green, yellow, blue and purple. If the behaviour is very bad the child's name will be on red and the teacher needs to contact the parents because the behaviour of the child was bad. Then orange the behaviour is also bad but the teacher does not contact parents, green is good then yellow the child can be given a present for good behaviour the child portrays good behaviour in class and in all the activities that they were doing in that particular day. A purple is very exception when the child is really doing exceptional things. So, this is a way of communicating to parents. So, it's a way of communicating to parents how your child is behaving that is it positive or negative behaviour." P2

Parents established that the centre is always open for communication with them, that they can talk to practitioners at pick-up and drop-off time and they are also allowed to make appointments with the practitioners. This is in line with what is reported in Hardley and Rouse (2018), that communication between ECD practitioners and parents can take various forms such as written communication in the form of letters, notices and even reports. For example, at open days, ECD practitioners can provide parents with the opportunity to visit the day care and have an opportunity to chat with the ECD practitioners and peruse their children's learning and development portfolio. Ways of communication with parents include: informal contact such as phone calls and glad notes, which is a way of complementing a learner. More so, ECD practitioners can send videos of the child in class to show the parent how the child was doing that day or how the child was performing in certain activities at the centre (Hardley & Rouse, 2018).

Furthermore, Epstein (2011) emphasised that families and schools communicate with each other in multiple ways. Schools send home notes and flyers about important events and activities. Parents give teachers information about their child's health and educational history. A school website is an additional mode of communication with parents and families. Other strategies include: language translators to assist families as needed, regular schedule of useful notices, memos, phone calls, newsletters, and other forms of communication (Durisic & Bunijevac 2017). This is the same as what parents and practitioners who participated in this current study said they are doing – they have different types and means of communicating for the educational development of the children.

Technology-based communication is another way of communication between parents and practitioners. Parents and ECD practitioners can use technology through class websites, emails, texts, video conferences etc.

Over and above communicating progress of the child, resources needed and other matters, it is also important for parents and the centre (principals and practitioners) to work together in decision making that influences the functioning of the centre. This affects the day-to-day and future running of the centre, and thus sustainable education provisioning. Section E presents the results relating to partnership in decision making.

4.6. SECTION E: HOW PARENTS AND PRACTITIONERS WORK TOGETHER IN IMPORTANT DECISION MAKING

Table 4.15 indicates how parents and practitioners work together in important decision making. Eight items were given, and respondents had to indicate if they agree or disagree with the statement. The majority of the respondents, 88 (45.2%+ 49.5%), at least agreed to the statement that most parents let them know of the child's special or individual needs. This shows that parents are working together with practitioners. Only a few, 5 (5.4%), disagreed. Most of the respondents, 92 (36.6%+ 62.4%), indicated that they do have parents' meetings at their ECD centre and only one (1.1%) indicated that there is no parents' meeting at their centre.

Table 4.15: Collaboration for important decisions

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Section E1. Most parents let me know of child's special or individual needs	Count	0	5	42	46
	Row Total N %	0.0%	5.4%	45.2%	49.5%
E2. We do have parents' meetings at our ECD centre	Count	0	1	34	58
	Row Total N %	0.0%	1.1%	36.6%	62.4%
E3. Parents fully attend the parents' meetings	Count	2	36	42	13
	Row Total N %	2.2%	38.7%	45.2%	14.0%
E4. We involve parents in all decision making	Count	1	24	47	21
	Row Total N %	1.1%	25.8%	50.5%	22.6%
E5. We work with parents to decide how to allocate funds	Count	2	45	35	11
	Row Total N %	2.2%	48.4%	37.6%	11.8%
E6. Parents are involved in the governance of the ECD	Count	5	28	48	12
	Row Total N %	5.4%	30.1%	51.6%	12.9%
E7. There is parents committee at the centre	Count	6	22	50	15
	Row Total N %	6.5%	23.7%	53.8%	16.1%
E8. Parents are involved in the practitioner recruitment process	Count	11	34	42	6
	Row Total N %	11.8%	36.6%	45.2%	6.5%

Some respondents, 55 (45.2%+14.0%), agreed with the statement that parents do attend the parents' meeting; others, 38 (2.2%+38.7%), disagreed with this. This shows that parents are being invited to the meetings, and some attend and others do not attend for various reasons. When asked if they involve parents in all decision making, 68 (50.5%+ 22.6%) agreed with this statement and 25 (1.1%+25.8%) disagreed. This shows that the practitioners invite parents for certain events but for other events they do not invite parents to be involved in decision making. The respondents indicated that they do not work fully with parents regarding decisions about the allocation of funds at the ECD centre. There was an almost 50-50 response, with 46 (37.6%+11.8%) respondents agreeing and 47 (2.2%+48.4%) disagreeing.

The majority of the practitioners, 60 (51.6%+12.9%), indicated that parents are involved in the governance of the ECD centre. Some, 33 (5.4%+30.1%), disagreed with this. The majority of the practitioners, 65 (53.8%+16.1%), indicated that there is a parents committee at their centre, whilst others, 28 (6.5%+23.7%), indicated that they disagree with this. When asked if parents are involved in the practitioner recruitment process, some, 48 (45.2%+6.5%), agreed with this statement and others, 45 (11.8%+36.6%), disagreed. This shows that the centres recruit their practitioners in different ways, some feel that parents should be involved whilst others do not see the importance of involving parents in this.

The findings of this study are that most of the practitioners, 88 (45.2%+49.5%), said that parents let them know of the child's special or individual needs. This shows that parents are working together with practitioners. Further, 92 (36.6%+62%) indicated that the practitioners always have meetings with parents at the centre. When asked if they involve parents in all decisions, is the outcome was that 68(50.5%+22.6%) said they involve parents in some decisions at the centre and 25 (1.1%+ 25.8%) do not. In that vein, Epstein (2011) pointed to the necessity of clarifying the responsibilities of parents and those of the ECD practitioners. Parents have the responsibility of the upbringing of their children and the ECD practitioners are responsible for the education. This is as outlined in Bronfenbrenner (2005), that ECD education does not only depend on the role of the ECD practitioners, it relies on parents as well (Hafizi & Papa, 2012). Therefore, to create this type of system it is crucial for parents and ECD practitioners to build partnerships that are underpinned on communication (Sims & Brettig 2018). This study showed interest in the nature, frequency and extent of

interaction between ECD practitioners and parents, that is collaboration, which is crucial in children's educational development (Benjamin, 2015).

According to the NAEYC (2005), both parents and ECD practitioners need to see the importance of each other. This will mean they will be able to complement each other's contribution to the learning and development of the child (Kernan, 2012).

Table 4.16 below indicates how practitioners rated the different statements about why some parents do not get involved. Respondents were asked to rate the statements between 1 and 5, with 1 the least likely, 5 being most likely. A majority of the practitioners, 62 (19.4%+47.3%), rated the statement that parents do not get involved sometimes because they have other family commitments at 4 and 5. Others, 14 (10.8%+4.3%), rated this statement as the least likely at 1 and 2. Only 17 (18.3%) were in between either more likely or least likely which shows that they are unsure why some parents are not being involved.

Table 4.16: Reasons why some parents do not get involved, ranging from 1-5

		1	2	3	4	5
a) 1. Have other family commitments	Count	10	4	17	18	44
	Row Total N %	10.8%	4.3%	18.3%	19.4%	47.3%
a) 2. Think their child would misbehave if they see them at Centre	Count	15	8	29	18	23
	Row Total N %	16.1%	8.6%	31.2%	19.4%	24.7%
a) 3. Not sure of what is expected of them and choose not to be involved	Count	12	10	32	12	27
	Row Total N %	12.9%	10.8%	34.4%	12.9%	29.0%
a) 4. Do not think there are advantages in being involved	Count	10	16	28	25	14
	Row Total N %	10.8%	17.2%	30.1%	26.9%	15.1%
a) 5. Dissatisfied with the opportunities the ECD centre offers for parent involvement	Count	30	16	20	18	9
	Row Total N %	32.3%	17.2%	21.5%	19.4%	9.7%
a) 6. Think the ECD centre does not offer opportunities for parental involvement	Count	39	13	25	11	5
	Row Total N %	41.9%	14.0%	26.9%	11.8%	5.4%
a) 7.Are in full-time employment	Count	1	2	16	36	38
	Row Total N %	1.1%	2.2%	17.2%	38.7%	40.9%
	Count	14	15	26	16	22

a) 8. Separated therefore the is no communication on who should attend to the needs of the child at the ECD centre	Row Total N %	15.1%	16.1%	28.0%	17.2%	23.7%
a) 9. Work long hours therefor they are not able to attend meetings during the day.	Count	6	6	19	25	37
	Row Total N %	6.5%	6.5%	20.4%	26.9%	39.8%
a) 10. Are ignorant of what is happening at the ECD centre	Count	24	14	22	12	21
	Row Total N %	25.8%	15.1%	23.7%	12.9%	22.6%

A significant number of the practitioners, 41 (19.4%+24.7%), rated the statement, that parents think their child would misbehave if they see them at the centre, highly at 4 and 5. Only a few, 23 (10.8%+4.3%), rated this at least likely, 1 and 2. Some were in between, with 29 (31.2%) of respondents rating the statement at 3, indicating they are unsure why parents are not getting involved. A significant number, 39 (12.9%+29.0%), rated the statement highly that parents do not know what they are expected to do and they choose not to be involved.

Only 22 (12.9%+10.8%) rated this statement at 1 and 2 which means they feel this is least likely to be the reason why other parents are not getting involved. In addition, a few (32 (34.4%), were neutral (unsure what the best reason is), and rated this statement at 3. Moreover, the highest number (39 (26.9%+15.1%) of the practitioners indicated that parents do not think there are advantages in being involved, only a few, 26 (10.8%+17.2%), indicated that they think it is the least likely the reason why parents are not being involved, and 28 (30.1%) were neutral, rating this statement at 3, which implies they were not sure whether to rate this statement high or low.

A majority of the respondents, 46 (32.3%+17.2%), rated as least likely the statement that parents are dissatisfied with the opportunities for parental involvement. Some, 27 (19.4%+9.7%), rated it as the most likely reason for parents not being involved. Only a few, 20 (21.5%), were neutral about this statement. The majority of the respondents, 52 (41.9%+14.0%), indicated as the least likely reason for parents not being involved, that parents think the ECD centre does not offer opportunities for parental involvement. A few, 16 (11.8%+5.4%), rated this statement as the most likely reason for parents not getting involved. It is observed that 25 (26.9%) were in between as they were not sure what the least likely reason or the most likely reason is for parents not getting involved. A majority, 74 (38.7%+40.9%), indicated that the fact that parents are in full time

employment is the reason why they are not getting involved. It could be that they are very busy and not able to be involved in the learning and development of their child.

Of the respondents, only three (1.1%+2.2%) rated this statement as the least likely. Only 16 (17.2%) were in between either least likely or most likely. The majority of the practitioners, 38 (17.2%+23.7%), rated the statement that the most likely reason for parents not getting involved is that parents are separated and therefore there is no communication on who should attend to the needs of the child at the ECD centre. Only 29 (15.1%+16.1%) indicated this as the least likely reason why parents are not getting involved and only 28 (28.0%) were neutral about this. A majority of the practitioners, 62 (26.9%+39.8%), rated the statement that parents work long hours and therefore they are not able to attend meetings during the day as the most likely reason why parents are not involved. Only 12 (6.5%+ 6.5%) indicated this statement as the least likely reason why parents are not involved and only 19 (20.4%) were in between. The statement that parents are ignorant of what is happening at the ECD centre was rated as the least likely reason for parents not being involved by 38 (25.8%+15.1%) respondents. Only 22 (23.7%) were neutral and 33 (12.9%+22.6%) rated the statement as the most likely reason why parents are not being involved.

All items for the decision-making sub-scale and the reasons why parents do not get involved were added together to develop total scores (decision making score and parents non-involvement score respectively). The total scores were summarised and with the results are presented in Table 4.17 below. The means under principals versus practitioners' data are almost the same, with a notable difference being that practitioner scores range from a lower (10) point than the principal's one (22).

Table 4.17: Descriptive statistics – Decision making process

Practitioner/Principal		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Principal	Decision making score	31	17	31	23.74	3.444
	Parents non-involvement	31	22	50	33.58	7.522
	Valid N (listwise)	31				
Practitioner	Decision making score	62	16	32	23.05	3.550
	Parents non-involvement	62	10	45	32.16	6.494
	Valid N (listwise)	62				

The variables computed were subjected to a rank test and the results are presented in Tables 4.18a and 4.18b below.

Table 4.18a: Kruskal-Wallis equality-of-populations rank test – Decision-making score

Variable	Categories	Obs	Rank Sum	Chi-Square
Position	Principal	31	1584.50	1.080
	Practitioner	62	2786.50	(0.2988)
Marital Status	Single	54	2677.00	2.206
	Married	30	1284.50	(0.6980)
	Divorced	3	116.00	
	Widowed	4	175.00	
	Engaged	1	25.50	
First Language	English	27	1210.00	2.313
	IsiXhosa	48	2335.50	(0.6784)
	Afrikaans	16	767.00	
	Shona	1	9.50	
	Ewe	1	49.00	
Race	Black African	51	2487.50	7.104
	Coloured	19	1076.00	(0.0287)
	White	23	807.50	
Highest Qualification	No formal Education	1	86.50	6.156
				(0.1878)
	Primary Education	18	890.00	
	Matric	55	2646.00	
	Post-Matric certificate	14	629.50	
	Degree	5	119.00	

In Table 4.18a only race has a chi-square that is statistically significant, indicating that the scores of decision-making variables vary significantly across the race groups. Black African race has the highest rank sum, implying that they rated highly (agree mostly) with the statements of involvement in decision making. Table 4.18b indicates that only marital status has a chi-square value which is statistically significant, implying

individuals of different marital status have different reasons for why parents do not get involved. The majority of the reasons listed in the sub-scale deal with family matters, therefore opinions are likely to differ between those that have family (married) and those without (single, widowed, divorced). Single practitioners and principals mostly agreed with the statements as reasons why parents do not get involved, such as being too busy with other things, or ignorant of what is happening at ECD centre.

Table 4.18b: Kruskal-Wallis equality-of-populations rank test – Parents' non-involvement

Variable	Categories	Obs	Rank Sum	Chi-Square
Position	Principal	31	1491.00	0.077
	Practitioner	62	2880.00	(0.7817)
Marital Status	Single	54	2516.50	8.829
	Married	30	1373.50	(0.0655)
	Divorced	3	41.00	
	Widowed	4	296.00	
	Engaged	1	51.00	
First Language	English	27	1213.50	6.038
	IsiXhosa	48	2462.50	(0.1964)
	Afrikaans	16	678.50	
	Shona	1	13.50	
	Ewe	1	3.00	
Race	Black African	51	2555.50	1.716
	Coloured	19	862.00	(0.4240)
	White	23	953.50	
Highest Qualification	No formal Education	1	67.50	4.540
	Primary Education	18	659.50	(0.3378)
	Matric	55	2783.50	
	Post-Matric certificate	14	660.00	
	Degree	5	200.50	

Parents were asked related questions in an interview, and the views are presented in the next sub-section.

4.6.1. Parents and practitioner's joint decision making

There researcher asked the parents how they work together with practitioners in important decisions like allocating funds.

4.6.1.1. Parents working together with practitioner in decision making of allocating funds

Some participants indicated that they do not have the opportunity to have a say in how funds are allocated. Some participants had this to say:

"We do not work together; they do not ask parents on what they should allocate funds. They only explain what they call the registration fee is for." P1

"No, we do not discuss the funds the school is the one who manages." P2

The researcher probed P2, 'what did they say about the registration fee?' And P2 shared that:

"They will explain that if a child is coming to that day-care for the first time, they will need money for administration purposes as well as for the stationery and toiletries. So, they said the registration fees covers a number of things." P2

"They do not involve parents in decision making." P7

However, other participants indicated that there is a school governing board that discusses the allocation of funds and the practitioners do not discuss it with every parent. Some indicated that the centre calls for a meeting if there is something that needs to be discussed. This is expressed below:

"There is a school governing board and parent's teacher association." P3

"We have a committee responsible for the daily running of the centre. This committee as mandated by the parents & practitioners convenes meetings regularly where decisions are made." P6.

"Normally they call for meetings whereby decisions are made with both sides." P8

"They have a parent meeting and every parent gives input and we all make a final decision at the end." P9.

The results of this study indicated that parents are not given the opportunity to have a say on how funds should be allocated at the centre. However, the participants indicated that there is a school governing board that discusses and decides about the allocation of funds. Some parents indicated that they cannot get involved because they are fulltime employed, they are single mothers, they are too busy and always working. This shows that sometimes we do not have to blame the practitioners for not involving the parents. In some instances, parents are the ones who have excuses that they are busy and they won't be able to attend to what the practitioners will be asking them to do.

Zartler and Richter (2014) argued that ECD centres can include parents as participants in ECD centre decisions, ECD activities, and advocacy activities through parents and practitioners coming together. Furthermore, parents can serve in ECD committees or in leadership positions to assist with ECD decisions in developing ECD health policies, emergency plans, crisis, safety plans, health and safety messages, health curricula, food and beverage selections for the centre, breakfasts and lunches, health services and referral procedures, as well as other plans and programmes (Zartler & Richter, 2014; Forry, Tout, Rothenberg, Sandstrom & Vesely, 2013).

4.6.1.2. *What prevents parents from being more involved in decision making?*

When the researcher asked the participants what prevents them from being more involved in decision-making processes at the ECD centre, the participates gave different reasons. Some said they are too busy and therefore they are not able to attend to some decision-making meetings at the centre. This is revealed in statements below:

"I am full-time employed single mother." P8

"I am busy sometimes working at home." P9

"As a parent you are busy and working." P10

Furthermore, some participants indicated that they are not given the opportunity to contribute in the decision making, and some indicated that the practitioners are not that open to the parents. This is alluded to by the statements below:

"I think it's because they are not really open on how us as parents can be involved." P1

"The door for that is not open." P4

"It seems they want to do things on their own and not involve parents too much." P5

"I have never been given the opportunity to be involved in decision making." P7

Another parent indicated that there are some decisions where parents are consulted or told to give their opinions. This was expressed in the statement below:

"Look there are some decisions that they consult the parents for example in the meetings teachers tell us parents how they do their things, but they always tell us and ask for our opinion so the opportunity to influence is there. They tell us how they do things so as parents you are free to comment." P2.

Centres are willing to involve parents and so are parents (Samman et al., 2016) but in some cases there are hinderances – such as lack of know-how and resources (Rossiter, 2016).
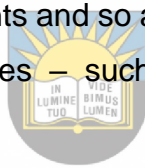
4.6.1.3. Involvement in decisions that affect your child

When the researcher asked the participants how they want to be involved in decisions that affect their children, most participants indicated that they expect the practitioners to contact them more often to share information about the child. Some parents indicated that they expect the practitioner to call them and explain. Imperative to note is that expectation of communication should not be one way, parents should also start the conversation with practitioners as the ECD is not about doing parents a favour, it is about ensuring the best possible development of the child (NCCA, 2009). The participants had this to share:

"I expect the Practitioner to contact me most of the time when they have any question concerning my child." P1

"I expect the teachers to share any information that concern my child." P2

"I want them to call me most of the times if something happens to my child, or write a letter, or WhatsApp me." P5.

4.6.1.4. Parents in the governance of the ECD centre

The researcher asked the parents if they are included in the governance of the ECD centre. There were mixed responses, with some indicating that parents are not included, but some indicated that parents are included. Four out of ten (P1, P4, P5 and P7) indicated that parents were not included, which is evidenced by what they had to say below:

"They are not. But as for now I am not sure, because last year they call for a meeting where they wanted to select the governing board but I could not attend because it was scheduled at night, so I don't know if this is now functioning." P1

"No, they are not." P4.

"NO." P5

"No." P7

Participants like P2, P3, P6, P9 and P10 stated that parents were being involved in the governance of the ECD centre. The participants had this to say:

"Yes, parents are involved there is a class rep among the parents. Who talk to the teacher representing all parents? For example, the teacher will request the parents to close the gate when they come and pick the children, the teacher will speak to the parent class rep and the rep will communicate to all the parents on the group." P2.

"Yes, through SGB committee and dad committee." P3

"Yes; they comprise 90% of the committee and are free to volunteer to be part of the governing of the centre. Separate & apart from the committee, parents are requested to help & make sure we maintain the standards of the centre even without being a member of the committee." P6

"Yes, there are some parents in the school board. They attend all meetings in the ECD Centre." P9.

"Yes, because some of the parents are in the governing board that helps in making decisions." P10.

It was established in this study that parents sometimes do not get involved in decision making because they have other family commitments. Some indicated that they as

parents are not sure what they are supposed to do and they choose not to get involved. However, it is evident that differences in social situations and economic status can provide barriers to parent involvement in the decision making at the ECD centre.

Unless the ECD centres specifically organise opportunities to involve single parents and parents who stay far from the ECD centre, they are usually less involved within the centre. ECD centres in affluent communities tend to have more positive parent involvement (Magwa & Mugari, 2017) than those in poor ones. Furthermore, parent's Social Economic Status (SES) has been established as a significant predictor of parent involvement. In that regard Magwa and Mugari (2017) reported that low ECD involvement in decision making tended to be higher among parents from low socio-economic status.

More so, the demands of time and life on parents seem to hinder them from being involved in decision making in the ECD centre. Time seems to be a major barrier impeding parents from participating in ECD activities or assisting their children's ECD work at home. With the increase in single parent households and the dramatic change in the work force with regard to mothers of ECD aged children, time has become a valuable commodity for parents who struggle to make ends meet (Menon, 2013). Single parents are also less likely to be involved in their children's development experiences because they do not find it easy playing dual roles (Lin & Li, 2018).

According to Epstein (2011), decision making refers to including parents in ECD decisions and to developing parent leaders and representatives. Parents participate in school decision making when they become part of school governance committees or join organisations, such as the parent/teachers' association (Durisc & Bunijevac 2017). Other decision-making activities include taking on leadership roles that involve disseminating information to other parents which includes: active PTA/PTO or other parental involvement as an important factor for successful education organisations, advisory councils, or committees for parent leadership and participation, independent advocacy groups to lobby for school reform and improvements, networks to link all families with parent representatives (Durisic & Bunijevac 2017).

4.7. SECTION F: STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE PARENTS AND PRACTITIONERS' INFORMATION SHARING

This section presents results on the strategies considered as enablers to information sharing between parents and practitioners. Given that information sharing is critical for the success of partnership in ECD provisioning, Table 4.19 presents results relating to the rating of several items posed in the questionnaire as part of this sub-section.

Table 4.19: Enhancing parents and practitioners' information sharing

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
F1. I encourage them to come to me for information	Count	0	2	59	32
	Row Total N %	0.0%	2.2%	63.4%	34.4%
F2. I talk to parents at parent/practitioner meetings	Count	0	4	61	28
	Row Total N %	0.0%	4.3%	65.6%	30.1%
F3. I share children's work with parents	Count	1	2	60	30
	Row Total N %	1.1%	2.2%	64.5%	32.3%
F4. I display children's work in hallways and change regularly	Count	0	9	42	42
	Row Total N %	0.0%	9.7%	45.2%	45.2%
F5. I provide information verbally and in writing	Count	0	9	53	31
	Row Total N %	0.0%	9.7%	57.0%	33.3%
F6. I keep a daily notebook recording the child's physical care (bottles, meals, nappies)	Count	3	17	50	23
	Row Total N %	3.2%	18.3%	53.8%	24.7%
F7. I keep a daily notebook recording the child's achievements such as smiles, new words, friendships	Count	3	20	45	25
	Row Total N %	3.2%	21.5%	48.4%	26.9%
F8. We do workshops on children's learning and development	Count	0	18	61	14
	Row Total N %	0.0%	19.4%	65.6%	15.1%
F9. We arrange social events for parents to help them to meet and build support networks	Count	1	18	56	18
	Row Total N %	1.1%	19.4%	60.2%	19.4%
F10. I make better use of the feedback and information that I get from parents	Count	0	0	62	31
	Row Total N %	0.0%	0.0%	66.7%	33.3%

Table 4.19 illustrates the strategies employed by practitioners to enhance parents and practitioners' information sharing. Ten items were given where practitioners indicated whether they strongly disagree, disagree, agree and strongly agree. To the statement that, I encourage them to come to me for information; the majority of respondents, 91 (63.4%+34.4%), at least agreed. Only two (2.2%) disagreed with that. Furthermore, a majority, 89 (65.6%+30.1%) indicated that they talk to parents at parent/practitioner meetings, and only four (4.3%) disagreed with this statement. Most of the practitioners, 90 (64.5%+32.3%), indicated that they share children's work with parents, and only a few, 3 (1.1%+ 2.2%), at least disagreed with that.

It is evident that the majority of the respondents, 84 (45.25+45.2%), at least agreed that they display children's work in hallways, and only a few, nine (9.7%), indicated that they disagreed with this. Most of the respondents, 84 (57.0%+33.3%), indicated that they provide information verbally and in writing, and only a few, nine (9.7%), indicated that they were not doing this. The majority, 73 (53.8%+24.7%), at least agreed that they keep a daily notebook recording the children's physical care (bottles, meals, nappies), with only 20 (3.2%+18.3%) at least disagreeing with this. Most of the respondents, 70 (48.4%+26.9%), at least agreed that they keep a daily note book recording the child's achievements such as smiles, new words, friendships, and only a few, 23 (3.2%+21.5%), disagreed with this. Most of the practitioners, 75 (65.65%+15.1%), at least agreed that they hold workshops on children's learning and development, and only a few, 18 (19.4%), at least disagreed. The majority of the respondents, 74 (60.2%+19.4%), at least agreed that they arrange social events for parents, and only a few, 19 (1.1%+19.4%), indicated that they at least disagreed with this. All the respondents, 93 (66.7%+33.3%), indicated that they at least agreed that they make better use of the feedback, and no one disagreed with this. The items making up the sub-scale were added together to compute a total strategy score, with the variable summarised in Table 4.20 below.

Table 4.20: Strategy score – Descriptive statistics

Practitioner/Principal		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Principal	Strategy score	31	27	40	31.84	2.934
	Valid N (listwise)	31				
Practitioner	Strategy score_	62	23	40	31.65	3.653
	Valid N (listwise)	62				

The summary statistics show that, between principals and practitioners, the scores do no differ much, just that there is more variability (standard deviation) among the practitioners than principals. There is convergence of strategies between the two groups, which is important for sustainability and effectiveness of ECDs as the two groups are supposed to work together, pulling in one direction.

The total score variable was subjected to rank test, in relation to the demographic variables in the study. The results are presented in Table 4.21 below.

Table 4.21: Kruskal-Wallis equality-of-populations rank test – Strategies to enhance information sharing

Variable	Categories	Obs	Rank Sum	Chi-Square
Position	Principal	31	1553.50	0.619
	Practitioner	62	2817.50	(0.4316)
Marital Status	Single	54	2527.50	4.662
	Married	30	1468.00	(0.3238)
	Divorced	3	79.50	
	Widowed	4	200.00	
	Engaged	1	3.00	
First Language	English	27	1255.50	4.174
	IsiXhosa	48	2340.50	(0.3829)
	Afrikaans	16	684.00	
	Shona	1	81.50	
	Ewe	1	9.50	
Race	Black African	51	2441.50	2.821
	Coloured	19	1016.00	(0.2441)
	White	23	913.50	
Highest Qualification	No formal Education	1	68.00	7.729
	Primary Education	18	651.50	(0.1020)
	Matric	55	2519.50	
	Post-Matric certificate	14	830.50	
	Degree	5	301.50	

No demographic variable has a statistically significant effect on the strategies for enhancing the information sharing variable as all chi-squares are not statistically significant (p-values are greater than 0.05). This means that demographics fail to differentiate views on strategy – there is shared strategy which brings harmony between practitioner and principal actions in involving parents.

Most practitioners in this study indicated that they encourage parents to come to them for information that they want. Some practitioners indicated that they share examples of work. Most of them indicated that they display children's work in the hallway. More so, they provide information verbally and in writing, and they also indicated that they keep daily recording of the children's physical care. This in line with Fitzpatrick (2012) who indicated that practitioners should aim to provide parents with daily digital photographs offering evidence of their child's learning, as such a system is easy to organise once the equipment is available and software installed. However, practitioners should be careful when taking photographs of children because some parents do not want their children to be photographed. Replaying the images on a 'loop' or slide show on the computer screen at the end of each day or session will also be popular with both children and adults (Fitzpatrick, 2012). The photographs will enable the children to revisit their experiences during the day and to share these with parents. Parents become more excited when they see what their children were doing for the whole day; if there is no evidence of what they were doing they feel the practitioners are doing nothing for the educational development of the children.

Literature has indicated that practitioners could provide photographs that focus on an area of learning or provision, a key group of children or a particular learning story OECD (2012) where it is indicated that parents are supposed to know the child's practitioner and also showing interest about the child's experiences. Telling the practitioner about the child's achievements is also a good way of sharing information. Furthermore, sharing the family traditions and culture, will have a positive effect on the child's mood or behaviour. Practitioners are encouraged to talk informally with parents, share examples of the child's work, giving information verbally, and sharing records with parents, interpreting report cards, holding workshops and arranging social events (OECD, 2012). All these strategies support the sharing of information between the parents and the practitioners.

It is said that practitioners are supposed to involve parents by sharing information because parents may not know how and when to contact practitioners (Doe, 2015). To increase partnership between parents and practitioners, it is suggested that ECD practitioners and parents should know how to share information. ECD practitioners are supposed to be open-minded and be able to explain to parents when making decisions (Doe, 2015).

The OECD (2012) indicated that ECD practitioners are supposed to engage parents to meet the needs of children, parents and that of the centre (OECD, 2012). Parents and practitioners are to form some organisations so that they are able to share information about the needs of the children. When parents and practitioners come together there is open communication. Doe (2015) asserted that ECD practitioners have to act as facilitators not specialists to draw more parents on sharing information in early childhood centres. After all, the development of children cannot take place in isolation of their parents (Doe, 2015).

Past studies show that practitioners can use displays as a way of sharing information with parents, such as a permanent board designated for parents' information can be an effective way of sharing up-to-date news about events in the centre and the community. Copies of ECD centre newsletters and guidance leaflets could be made available there. Other displays celebrating children's work around the nursery should be annotated to make clear to parents the significance of their children's play and learning (Fitzpatrick, 2012).

The study further gathered qualitative data from parents through interviews, asking them of the same strategies. The results are presented in sub-section below.

4.7.1. Strategies to enhance parents and practitioners' information sharing

4.7.1.1. Practices by parents

The study inquired from the parents about the strategies to enhance parents and practitioners' information sharing that they are practising. Some indicated that they are using technology (WhatsApp), others message books, idea books, letters, meeting and others indicated communicating face to face. Some parents had this to say:

"I am using WhatsApp sometimes to communicate with the teacher, but I feel there should be a WhatsApp group so that people can be able to communicate once. Because I feel parents will be having a lot of questions to ask but they will be just thinking that maybe I am the only one experiencing this therefore they are not able to ask." P1

"The message book that the school is doing and make sure that you have the teachers' number and always talking to the teacher and always be available and always getting inside the school yard when dropping your child." P2

"Not only do we have meetings with parents; we have a WhatsApp group that updates information consistently. Parents without WhatsApp, receive SMS; calls to make sure that everyone receives information." P6

"WhatsApp groups and letters" P8

"A communication book and social media e.g., WhatsApp and parents' meetings." P9

"Through idea box." P10

4.7.1.2. Information that parents share with practitioners about the interest of the child

The researcher asked the parents what information they can share with the practitioners that will help them to get a clear picture of what the child's interests and strengths are. Most of the participants indicated that they share information about the interests of the child, what the child likes most and what the child does not like. Some parents indicated that they share information about the sport that the child enjoys, behaviour of the child and personality. This can be determined by the different responses from the parents:

"… I tell the teachers that my children are very active, there they must not worry too much lest say if the child is just walking up and down in the class, my children are like that. And I also open to them that my children are used to me shouting at them so there for sometimes you have to speak on top of your voice for them to listen as long as you don't beat them." P1.

"… uuum I think…., if I say my child loves out door therefore the teacher will know that jungle gyms will work well with the child, so I make sure I communicate with the teacher about what my child wants. And also telling the teacher what the child is allergic to for

example my child is allergic to sun burns therefore the teacher will be aware that if they are doing activities where there is sun, my child has to be on the shade." P2

"Share information about the sport that my child likes, what she is doing at home etc." P5

"About my child's behaviour, personality and the way they conduct at home." P8

4.7.1.3. Accessing information about the child

The researcher asked the parents if it is easy to access information about their child, and how to do that. Most parents indicated that it is easy – some said they speak to the practitioner if there is something that they want to know, some said they send messages to the practitioner, and some indicated that the school keeps a file where they can check the behaviour and performance of the child. Parents had this to say:

"Yes, it is easy. We can send messages to the teacher on her WhatsApp and we can also book appointments then we see her when she is free." P3

"Assuming from the ECD, it's not easy, I only come to know more about my child from the report and if there are any problems. I do also engage my child every day on what could have transpired at school." P4

"the centre keeps a file with all his information as well as recordings of observations of behaviour & attitude changes so as a parent you are allowed to ask for the file anytime and see how your child is doing." P4

"Yes, it is easy and we do that through communication books and through phone." P9

When parents were asked if the practitioners share information about the curriculum that they are teaching the children, most of the parents indicated that practitioners are sharing curriculum information. Parents stated that some practitioners send what they are teaching the children, others inform the parents what they will be teaching from the beginning of the year.

The parents who participated in this study indicated that they share information like the child's interest and strength as well as what the child likes most and what the child does not like. Some parents indicated that they share information about the sport that the child likes most, the behaviour and the personality of the child. Parents indicated that they can easily access information about the child. Parents confirmed that they

should understand the best way in which to communicate with practitioners. They should know what is comfortable for the practitioners because, as some said, if you send a message, they do not respond but if you call, you are able to talk to them. This is supported by Doe (2015) who indicated that practitioners are supposed to involve parents by sharing information because parents may not know how or when to contact practitioners. To increase partnership between parents and practitioners, it is suggested that ECD practitioners and parents should have a clear understanding of how to share information (Doe, 2015).

Therefore, it is good for the parents to know the child's practitioner and show an interest in hearing about the child's experiences. More so, they should to the practitioner regularly when dropping off or collecting a child. Where this may not be possible it is a good idea to make an appointment. More so, parents should tell the practitioner about the child's achievements at home. Parents can also share their family traditions and culture so that the practitioner can help the child to feel they belong in the setting. Parents should let practitioners know about their childrearing practices, especially when these may differ from those in the setting (Fitzpatrick, 2012).

Furthermore, the wellbeing of children is dependent on the wellbeing and culture of parents and practitioners, and therefore parents and practitioners should be guided by policies (Kernan, 2012).

4.7.1.4. What should be done for better information sharing?

The researcher asked the parents what they think should be done for better information sharing between parents and practitioners. Some indicated that parents should understand what they think is the best way to communicate with the practitioner, knowing what is comfortable for the practitioner because some said if you send a message, they do not respond but if you call you are able to talk to them. The parents had this to say:

"To understand what the means of communication is comfortable with the teachers, because some time if you send a WhatsApp, they do not respond but if you call you get your answer quick, so may be others are not comfortable on writing something down." P1

"It's all about attitudes in communication but this platform that we are using are very helpful. I understand that there are other parents that do not have WhatsApp but it's always about the attitude to communicate." P2

"There should be days in which parents are invited to come to the ECD and see their children involved in activities at the ECD or in class. Also, there should be discussions on the curricula and activities between parents and practitioners." P4

"Parents must not just be involved; they must avail themselves. Practitioners do their best in communicating but parents are not always compliant; parents must give their all; this is not for the practitioners' future but for our children's future!" P6

Literature has pointed out that practitioners send children's work home at the end of term. They display children's work in hallways. Practitioners are supposed to display the diversity to the parents (Murray et al, 2015, Narvanen & Markstrom 2015, Fitzpatrick, 2012). Practitioners are supposed to share academic progress and growth based on classroom observations, testing data, assessments, portfolios, and assignments. It is good to learn from parents or guardians so you can be better informed about students' strengths, needs, behaviours, and learning styles. That provides an opportunity for information sharing, with such collaboration set to prepare learnings for the future. Practitioners can discuss enrichment or intervention strategies to support learners' learning.

It is of paramount importance for the practitioners to understand families' background, cultures, concerns, goals, needs, and views of their children. Furthermore, having respect for families' strengths and efforts will help solidify partnership, which is enhanced also by understanding a child's diversity. Practitioners should have an awareness of own skills to share information on child development. Practitioners should have conferences with every parent at least once a year, with follow-ups as needed. There will be need for language translators to assist families as needed. In addition, weekly or monthly folders of student work sent home for review and comments help parents with points of discussion and engaging children in their work.

Ways of maintaining contact between practitioners and parents include parental evenings, face-to-face meetings, phone calls, printed letters, e-mails, text messages, and school web pages (Kuusimaki, Uusitalo-Malmivaara & Tirri, 2019, Carr, Palmer &

Hagel, 2015; Palts & Kalmus, 2015). At its best, a parent-practitioner partnership is built with a respectful two-way communication with frequent, trusting interaction strengthening the idea of striving toward common goals (Epstein et al., 2009).

4.7.2. Developing an operation framework that could be suggested to enhance parents and practitioners' partnership

It emerged that parents and practitioners have a common goal that is to facilitate the best educational experience possible for the ECD learners. Findings in this study have shown that message books and communication applications such as WhatsApp have made communication between parents and practitioners more efficient. A partnership between parents and practitioners implies that all parties work together as equals with specific rights and responsibilities toward a common goal. Therefore, each party contributes their own specific skills and knowledge toward meeting the objectives. Unfortunately, much of the parents and practitioners' communication is one-sided and practitioner directed. Information is shared but *power* is not shared. This approach is not conducive to creating a genuine partnership. The majority of parents and practitioners' crises are a direct result of poor communication between the two parties.

In the parents and practitioner's partnership, it crucial to know that everyone is different in their knowledge. Parents because of their proximity to the child have more information on how their child grows up and the history behind the development of the child. The practitioners are well versed in the teaching of new skills to the child and they have great knowledge about the policies and procedures. Parents and ECD practitioners are supposed to share information in a collaborative way. Practitioners are supposed to share information on how the child is behaving at the centre as this will help the parents at home as well. Parents are encouraged to support their child in any way, praising the child, doing homework with the child, providing resources that will be required at the centre and to be involved in the activities that take place at the centre.

Learners who are always stressed academically perform poorly, therefore parents are encouraged to give children all the support that they need. If the child's home and the ECD centre are comfortable for the child, the child is able to do well. That is why it is important for parents to partner with the ECD practitioners to support educational development of the child. Regular communication between parents and ECD

practitioners is crucial. It is important to inform the ECD practitioner if the child is not feeling well or is affected by the death of a family member. On the other hand, practitioners are supposed to inform parents of any situation that would have happened at the centre, performance of the child, new stressor at school etc.

If parents and practitioners come together the child will do well in educational development. The working together of parents and ECD practitioners thus impacts the child's success. Those children whose parents are positively involved show a higher level of educational success. It is of great importance to encourage practitioners to be open for communication. Parents normally know what is happening in the classroom and how their children are performing. It is important for the practitioners to share information about their classroom activities for that day and they can be electronically, in print, or both.

Parent and practitioner's interviews are a good opportunity to communicate with your child's practitioner and to trace where the child is lacking in the educational development. As for the ECD practitioners, it is important that they take time to think about the things they would like to discuss with parents. Communicating with the child's ECD practitioner can also be done through emails, commenting in a message book, WhatsApp messages, phone calls etc.

Furthermore, good communication between parents and ECD practitioners is very important for the child's educational development. If parents and practitioners share more information about the child, the more they will be able to know how they can help the child academically. There are many opportunities how parents and practitioners can share information, such as through parent conferences and parent and practitioner organisations. Parents should talk informally with the ECD practitioners at the drop-off and pick-up times or by email or phone call.

Parents are supposed to have everyday contact but in addition they can learn about the centre through their annual report, and through social events such as cultural or music events. The centre can also organise parent seminars on topics like how they manage the behaviour of the children and how they avoid bullying at the centre. Parents can at any stage ask the ECD practitioners for information or feedback.

Not all parents are able to be involved in ECD centre activities as some their work schedules do not permit it, but they can still assure their child that the ECD centre is important to the family. Discussing the good news about the centre with the child, being friendly at the events that happen at the centre, and being positive about the centre and its staff makes it obvious that parents value education development and are interested in what's happening at the centre.

Table 4.22 below depicts the Parent-Practitioner Partnership Framework that has designed based on the findings of this study. The first column shows the sub-research question set out in Chapter One. There next two columns provide what is suggested to each partner for effective partnership. The framework then summarises the possible outcomes linked directly to the suggestions made to the partners (parents and practitioners). This implies that the framework can be used by parents, practitioners (the ECD centre) and authorities to ensure quality ECD provisioning.

Table 4.22: Parent-Practitioner Framework

Research questions	Suggestions to practitioners	Suggestions to parents	Benefits to the children and ECD provision
In what ways do parents and practitioners work together in supporting learning and development in early childhood education provisioning?	• There should be a termly/ weekly outline of what is being done with the children • Giving children work to do from home • Open days/ open shows	• Parents should do activities that stimulate learning • Have time to ask the child practitioner what they are teaching that week and help the child at home • Parents need to attend open days at the centre	• Learning and development of the child improve • Coordinate support and stimulation from home and school • Seamless environment for the child
How do parents and practitioners view the way they work together on provision of resources in early childhood education provisioning?	• It is the responsibility of practitioners to tell the parents what kind of resources are needed at the centre • Letting parents know on time, of the activities that they want to do e.g., fundraising	• Parents should make an effort to know what is needed at the centre. • Supply the resources that are requested by the centre	• A child will be learning at an ECD that has enough resources (nutrition, learning materials, skills development material/tools; safety tools/equipment)
How do parents and practitioners communicate in early childhood	• Devise communication mode e.g., communication	• Parents should utilise the devised methods	• Safety of the child - if parents and practitioners communicate

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education provisioning?	book; e-based group (e.g WhatsApp/Telegram) • Practitioners should be flexible to communicate • Share modes of communication that are comfortable for them • Reply to communication from parents	• Share information • Reply/ acknowledge communication	timeously and effectively, they are able to discuss the problems of the child or anything important (e.g., change of person to pick up the child)
How do parents and practitioners work together in decision making in early childhood education provisioning?	• Practitioners should have a platform for consultations • Acknowledge the participation of parents • Engage parents in the allocation of funds • ECD centre should have governing bodies (GB)	• Participate in the GBs • They should consult with the practitioner more often • Participate in parents and practitioner meetings	• There will be a vibrant environment for the children at the centre
What are the strategies to enhance parents and practitioner's information sharing in early childhood education provisioning?	• Practitioners should communicate to parents the mode of communication that is flexible to them as well as the times that they are free to communicate • Understand the child's family culture • Always communicate to parents about the child's educational development • Sharing information about the curriculum	• Parents need to be flexible in using the different modes of communication • Sharing information about their culture • Being open to the practitioners about the challenges of the child	• Quick in the solving of issues that concern the child • If a practitioner has more information about the child it is easier to help that child

4.8. CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter focused on the results from data analysis of both the quantitative and qualitative data and results were presented in that order and discussed by relating to

literature (both theory and empirical) and practice. The explanatory sequential mixed methods approach enabled the research to obtain a balanced view from the key stakeholders in early childhood development, the key 3Ps (parents, principal and practitioners). It is encouraging to note the consensus in the majority of cases among the three stakeholders on matters of importance to the effective function of early childhood development centres. There is evidence of appreciation of another's work and effort, and understanding of one's responsibility in the overall framework of early childhood education provisioning. The challenges highlighted are common across the stakeholder groups, and the proposed strategies are acceptable across the board. The next chapter concludes the thesis.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. INTRODUCTION

Chapter 4 presented the analysis of the data and the discussion of the findings. This chapter discusses the summary, and presents the conclusions and the recommendations of the study. This study set out to assess the partnership between parents and practitioners in early childhood education provisioning in the East London education district of South Africa. The study was divided into five chapters: Chapter One comprised the introduction and background of the study; Chapter Two presented the literature review and theories; Chapter Three discussed the methodology utilised for the study, Chapter Four contained the data analysis and the discussion of findings; and, as stated, this chapter, Chapter Five contains a summary and the conclusions and recommendations of the study. This study has shown that parents and practitioners are working together for the educational development of the children. A summary of each chapter is provided next, followed by the conclusion and study recommendations.

5.1.1. Study chapters summary

5.1.1.1. Chapter One: Introduction and background

This chapter introduces the study, indicating the relationship of the parents and ECD practitioners in early childhood development is very important because it determine the educational development of the children in the future grades (African Union, 2014). It is reckoned that the partnership between parents and ECD practitioners creates a brighter future for the children later in life. Chapter One also states the main purpose of this research, which was to explore the partnership of practitioners and parents during the early childhood education provisioning in ECD centres in East London district

5.1.1.2. Chapter Two: Literature Review

In Chapter Two the conceptual and theoretical framework was discussed in which the partnership between parents and ECD practitioners was dealt with in detail. The Epstein theory of parental involvement was discussed as well as the ecological

systems theory of Bronfenbrenner and how each underpin this study. In addition, the chapter discussed the early childhood development education sector in South Africa.

5.1.1.3. Chapter Three: Methodology

The proposed methodology is in line with the context of literature reviewed in Chapter 2. The pragmatism approach was selected as the most suitable, with a mixed-methods approach naturally flowing as the suitable approach given the nature of the problem and research questions posed in Chapter 1. The explanatory sequential mixed methods approach used was the triangulation technique. The reason for choosing a pragmatism paradigm in this research study is that it is the foundation of both qualitative and quantitative research. The study used in-depth interviews to collect data from parents and the questionnaire for ECD practitioners

5.1.1.4. Chapter Four: Analysis of the results and discussion of findings

In this chapter the results presented are based on the data analysis. Both quantitative (drawn from questionnaire administered to principals and practitioners) and qualitative data (form interviews with parents) were analysed and results are presented in that order. The explanatory sequential mixed methods approach enabled the research to obtain a balanced view from the parents and ECD practitioners. It is encouraging to note that in the majority of cases among the ECD stakeholders there is consensus on matters of importance for the successful functioning of early childhood development centres. There is evidence of appreciation of each other's work and effort, and understanding of one's responsibility in the overall framework for early childhood education provisioning. The challenges highlighted are common across the ECD stakeholder groups, and the proposed strategies are acceptable across the board.

In this chapter, the main findings of the study are discussed. One of the major findings of the study was practitioners reporting that parents are collaborating with centres in supporting learning and development in the early childhood education provisioning. The study also found that parents are often involved in the things concerning their children which the practitioners request them to take part in. The practitioners understand the parents and they share resources so that the children can learn and develop. For example, the practitioners share story books with parents as well as tapes of songs and rhymes. More so, practitioners indicated that they also have a newsletter in which they provide songs and rhymes. Results indicated that parents

and practitioners mostly use the telephone and message books to communicate with each other. Most of the parents indicated that they communicate with practitioners on regular basis. The majority of the practitioners indicated that most parents let them know of the child's special or individual needs. This also shows that parents are collaborating with practitioners. The results of the study also confirm that the practitioners always have meetings with parents at the centre. Most practitioners indicated that they encourage parents to come to them for information that they require. Some practitioners indicated that they share examples of work with parents.

5.2. RESTATING THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

Literature indicated the lack of sharing of information between ECD practitioners and parents (South Africa Department of Social Development, 2014). Furthermore, it is said that the ECD sector in SA is reported to be facing many challenges ranging from too many informal centres to poor teaching and learning practices, resulting in weak childhood development (South Africa Department of Social Development, 2014; Kernan, 2012). In the face of funding constraints, some of these challenges can be addressed through the parent-practitioner partnership – the status of such partnership is not clearly known.

More so, the South African Department of Social Development (2014) noted that the challenges of partnership between parents and practitioners are not the same across the country – there are good practices in certain provinces but some of the provinces' parents and practitioners have problems in partnering. Therefore, there is need to understand the parent and practitioner partnership at a local level, namely East London Education district in order to overcome generalisation. Results from such localised research allow digging deeper to gain data for clearer understanding of the problem and allow prescription of solutions that will work effectively. Moreover, if success cases are identified, these can be used as case studies in other regions and allow upscaling of good practices to the rest of the country and beyond. According to the South African Department of Social Development (2014), good examples do exist but unfortunately are not documented or investigated to share how they have come about.

There are benefits that are argued to accrue from parents and practitioner partnership, that unfortunately are observed to be lacking in the ECD sector of South Africa. The

benefits take the form of, among other things, safety and health practices, food and nutrition practices, monitoring and regulation of the qualifications of practitioners (South Africa Department of Social Development, 2014; Pitt, et al., 2013). Hung (2007) added that there is need for society to be supportive of the education of the children. For the ECD to be successful in children's educational development there is need for the ECD practitioners and the parents to work hand in hand (Machen, Wilson & Notar, 2005).

5.3. CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

5.3.1. Parents and ECD practitioners working together to support learning and development

It emerged from this study that practitioners and parents work together to support learning and development in the early childhood education provisioning. The findings of this study indicate that parents are often involved in a variety of events at the centre concerning their children that the practitioners request them to take part in. The practitioners participating in this study indicated that they invite parents to share information, and the parents are said to be involved in children's homework and helping in potty training. Furthermore, it was alluded that parents are helpful in children's homework. This is in line with Epstein's model of parental involvement which supports that practitioners should work with parents in the educational development of the children (Epstein 2011). Furthermore, Abdu (2014) supports that the partnership between ECD practitioners and parents could positively improve children's learning, and their social and emotional development.

5.3.2. How parents and practitioners view the way they work together on provision of resources in early childhood education provisioning

The results of this study show that the practitioners understand the parents and they are sharing resources so that the children can learn and develop. Practitioners are said to be sharing story books with parents as well as tapes of songs and rhymes. More so, practitioners indicated that they also have a newsletter where they provide information on what they will be teaching the children. This is supported in literature where it is indicated that the ECD practitioners should collaborate with parents to make sure that the children are receiving all the support necessary for their educational development (Makuna & Indoshi, 2012).

Parents participating in this study indicated that they share resources with practitioners by often taking resources to the centre when requested to do so. Past research indicates that though this partnership is seen as important, it is argued that parents at times do prioritise supporting ECD practitioners in decision-making issues (Mukuna & Indoshi, 2012).

5.3.3. Parents and practitioners' communication in early childhood education provisioning

It was revealed by this study that parents and practitioners mostly use the telephone and message book to communicate with each other. Most of the parents indicated that they communicate with practitioners on a regular basis. These findings show that practitioners do make themselves available to speak to the parents. This is supported by Hardley and Rouse (2018) who indicated that communication is considered the foundation for good parent and practitioner partnership. To add on to that, a relaxed atmosphere of mutual respect between parents and practitioners may lead to the most meaningful conversations. Furthermore, it is supported by previous researchers that parents who receive messages from practitioners provide more support to their children's educational development than parents who do not have any communication with the practitioners (McDermott, 2012). The more contact parents have with the practitioners the more interest they take in their child's activities inside and outside the centre (McDermott, 2012).

5.3.4. How parents and practitioners work together in important decision making in early childhood education provisioning

Regarding this question in this study, the majority of the practitioners indicated that most parents let them know of the child's special or individual needs. This shows that parents are working together with practitioners. The results in this study also indicated that the practitioners usually have meetings with parents at the centre. When asked if they involve parents in all decisions at the centre, they said they involved them in some decisions but not all. Furthermore, according to Epstein (2011), there is need to make it clear who is responsible for what, making it clear that it is the work of parents to raise their children and the ECD practitioners are responsible for proper educational development of the children. Furthermore, Bronfenbrenner (2005) indicated that learning and development should not be left to the ECD practitioners alone, parents

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also need to take part in the learning and development of their children (Hafizi & Papa, 2012). More so, to implement a proper system it is crucial for parents and ECD practitioners to build partnerships that are centred in sharing information about the educational development of the child (Sims & Brettig, 2018).

## 5.4. THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS

This research has implications to parents and practitioners' partnership in ECD centres. Parents and ECD practitioners are supposed to work together ensuring that the children receive the necessary educational development.

- Willingness to work together exists; however, it is not systematic nor is it well coordinated at a higher level as in other countries. Therefore, there is need for a written policy. The ECD policy is supposed to have some guiding principles on parents' involvement in the educational development of their children, for example the roles of parents and ECD practitioners at the centre. The Irish curricula can be followed as a guide, which provides clear guidelines on what each party should do to ensure partnership for better ECD provisioning. With available policy on parental involvement in the educational development of the child, there will be more opportunities for parents to be involved.

- There is need for formal training of the ECD practitioners. This implies that ECD practitioners should regularly have workshops to stay up to date on matters regarding their role. A nationwide programme to provide professional training, upskilling and reskilling of practitioners and principals is needed.

- There is lack of knowledge on how the teachers can include the parents in decision making, provision of resources, and communication. Therefore, there is need to train the ECD teachers so that they will have the knowledge on how to involve parents on the activities happening at the centre.

- The reason that some parents feel it is not important for them to partner with the ECD practitioners is their lack of education in this regard. Their lack of time and confidence in how to help their children has prevented them from being involved in the educational development of the children. ECD centres require some workshops that teach parents how to assist children and partner with ECD practitioners as parents need to act as role models for the children. These workshops will help the parents to know what is expected of them to give a

hand at the ECD centre. Epstein (2009) explained that it is crucial to encourage parents to take part in the educational development of their children. Workshops about parents partnering with practitioners are therefore recommended.

- Although there seems to be adequate communication between most parents and practitioners, there are still some who do not communicate often enough. There is the need to be open with each other about what the ECD practitioners expect from parents, what parents are supposed to do or help with. ECD practitioners are supposed to invite parents to the centre on a regular basis to stay updated of what takes place there, for example inviting them to the different activities; this will help the parents to know what is expected of them at the centre. ECD practitioners need to understand that parents differ in many ways, for example their values and beliefs, and therefore they cannot treat all parents in the same manner.

- ECD centres should have a management board like the SGB, with parents and ECD practitioners who regularly attend joint meetings and workshops to discuss both the expectations from the practitioners and from parents. The ECD practitioners must be equipped to explain to the parents what they expect them to do for the centre.
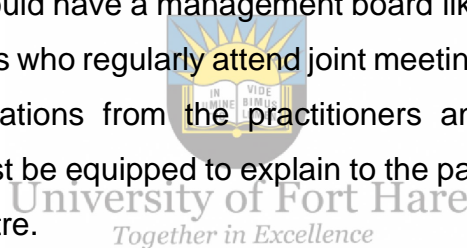
5.5. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The current study was done in the ECD centres in East London, therefore research should be conducted in more than one district around the ECD centres that are outside East London or those that are in the rural areas. The further research may use focus group interviews to assess the partnership between and parents and practitioners in the educational development of the children. The limited literature on the topic of parents and practitioners' partnership in ECD education provisioning can lead to more research on this idea. An area that is not covered in this study is the: Partnership of parents and practitioners in the more "neglected" regions like the rural areas of South Africa. Aspects relating to parents and practitioners in ECD centres include the expected behaviour of children. There should be further investigation into the strategies to educate ECD practitioners and parents on how to take care of children with challenges. Further, there is need to study how illiterate parents should be involved in the education of their children.

5.6 CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED IN THE RESEARCH PROCESS

Generally, the parents had very busy schedules and some did not have time for interviews; however, the researcher continued to sample until data saturation had been reached.

5.7. CHAPTER SUMMARY

The research shows that if parents are involved in the education of their children, it will reap positive results in the education of the child. Evidence exists that some parents do not take part in the educational development of their children. They do not have the opportunity to share information with the practitioners because they are always involved with work commitments. Furthermore, the ECD practitioners do not include parents in all their decision-making processes. A sound partnership between parents and ECD practitioners is vital as it helps the children to learn and develop.

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LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: CONFIDENTIALITY AND INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR PARENTS

University of Fort Hare
Together in Excellence

The University of Fort Hare PHD student Lilymore Mudziwapasi is conducting research regarding- **Assessing parents and practitioners' partnership in early childhood education provisioning in ECD centres in the East London education district.** We are interested in finding out more about the partnership between parents and practitioners in early childhood education. We are carrying out this research to help understand their partnership.

Please understand that you are not being forced to take part in this study and the choice whether to participate or not is yours alone. However, we would really appreciate it if you do share your thoughts with us. If you choose not take part in answering these questions, you will not be affected in any way. If you agree to participate, you may stop me at any time and tell me that you don't want to go on with the interview. If you do this there will also be no penalties and you will NOT be prejudiced in ANY way. Confidentiality will be observed professionally.

We will not be recording your name anywhere and no one will be able to link you to the answers you give. Only the researchers will have access to the unlinked information. The information will remain confidential and there will be no "come-backs" from the answers you give.

The interview will last around (30-45) minutes. We will be asking you a question and ask that you are as open and honest as possible in answering these questions. Some questions may be of a personal and/or sensitive nature. We will be asking some questions that you may not have thought about before, and which also involve thinking about the past or the future. We know that you cannot be absolutely certain about the

answers to these questions but we ask that you try to think about these questions. When it comes to answering questions there are no right and wrong answers.

INFORMED CONSENT

I hereby agree to participate in research regarding **Assessing parents and practitioners' partnership in Early Childhood education provisioning in ECD centres in the East London education district.** I understand that I am participating freely and without being forced in any way to do so. I also understand that I can stop this interview at any point should I not want to continue and that this decision will not in any way affect me negatively.

I understand that this is a research project whose purpose is not necessarily to benefit me personally.

I have received the telephone number of a person to contact should I need to speak about any issues which may arise in this interview.

I understand that my answers will remain confidential.

I understand that if at all possible, feedback will be given to my community on the results of the completed research.

…………………………..
Signature of participant   **Date**…………………

I hereby agree to the tape recording of my participation in the study

…………………………..
Signature of participant   **Date**…………………

APPENDIX 2: CONFIDENTIALITY AND INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR ECD PRACTITIONERS

The University of Fort Hare PHD student Lilymore Mudziwapasi is conducting research regarding- **Assessing parents and practitioners' partnership in early childhood education provisioning in ECD centres in the East London education district**. We are interested in finding out more about the partnership between parents and practitioners in early childhood education. We are carrying out this research to help understand their partnership.

Please understand that you are not being forced to take part in this study and the choice whether to participate or not is yours alone. However, we would really appreciate it if you do share your thoughts with us. If you choose not take part in answering these questions, you will not be affected in any way. Confidentiality will be observed professionally.

I will not be recording your name anywhere on the questionnaire and no one will be able to link you to the answers you give. Only the researchers will have access to the unlinked information. The information will remain confidential and there will be no "come-backs" from the answers you give.

I am kindly asking that you are as open and honest as possible in answering these questions. Some questions may be of a personal and/or sensitive nature. I will be asking some questions that you may not have thought about before, and which also involve thinking about the past or the future. We know that you cannot be absolutely certain about the answers to these questions but we ask that you try to think about these questions. When it comes to answering questions there are no right and wrong answers.

INFORMED CONSENT

I hereby agree to participate in research regarding: **Assessing parents and practitioners' partnership in Early Childhood education provisioning in ECD centres in the East London education district.** I understand that I am participating freely and without being forced in any way to do so. I also understand that I can stop answering these questions at any point should I not want to continue and that this decision will not in any way affect me negatively.

I understand that this is a research project whose purpose is not necessarily to benefit me personally.

I have received the telephone number of a person to contact should I need to speak about any issues which may arise.

I understand that my answers will remain confidential.

I understand that if at all possible, feedback will be given to my community on the results of the completed research.

…………………………..
Signature of participant   **Date**…………………

APPENDIX 3: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO VISIT ECD CENTRES FOR RESEARCH PURPOSES.

<div align="right">

Lilymore Mudziwapasi

University of Fort Hare

50 Church Street

East London

Email: LMudziwapasi@ufh.ac.za

lilymudzi@gmail.com

Mobile: 0717620915

09 July 2018

</div>

ATT: Department of Social Development

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO VISIT THE ECD CENTRES IN EAST LONDON FOR RESEARCH PURPOSES

My name is Lilymore Mudziwapasi, a PhD student in Education at the University of Fort Hare my student number is 200706070. I am undertaking a study aimed at: *Assessing parents and practitioners' partnership in early childhood education provisioning in ECD centres in the East London education district.* I hereby request to be granted the permission letter to visit the Early Childhood Development centres in East London district to conduct research among the parents, practitioners and ECD principals. The researcher will have interviews with parents and questionnaires will be given to the practitioners and ECD principles, asking about their partnership. The researcher will ask for their willingness to participate.

It is hoped that the findings of this research might benefit ECD centres in terms of how to enhance parents' involvement for the improvement of centres' operations and ECD provisioning in effective ways. On the other hand, parents might benefit from the study in terms of how they can be involved in the development of their children. Furthermore,

policy makers might benefit by improving understanding on how parents and practitioners' partnerships are evolving within ECD centres and how best practices can be set to ensure best ECD provisioning. ECD practitioners and their trainers might benefit in terms of what skills are needed to ensure partnership happens between parents and practitioners to the benefit of the children.

Yours Sincerely

Mrs Lilymore Mudziwapasi

APPENDIX 4: LETTER OF PERMISSION FROM SADSD

Province of the
EASTERN CAPE
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Beacon Hill Office Park - Corner of Hargroves Road and Hockley Close – Private Bag X0038 – Bisho – 5605 – REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA
Tel: +27 (0)43 605 5440 - Email address: linda.saki@ecdsd.gov.za - Website: www.ecped.gov.za

03 AUGUST 2018

Mrs. Lilymore Mudziwapasi
Faculty of Education
University of the Fort Hare
East London

Dear Madam

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: ASSESSING PARENTS'AND PRACTITIONERS PARTNERSHIP IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROVISIONING IN ECDCENTRES IN THE EAST LONDON EDUCATION DISTRICT.

The Department considered your application for permission to conduct a research study in East London, Amathole District. The application is hereby approved.

You are requested to adhere to the following conditions:

1. You will laisse with:
   - Ms Linda Saki: Assistant Director: Population Research in the Provincial Office to keep her abreast of progress and any issues that might arise when conducting your research. Contact details are: linda.saki@ecdsd.gov.za / 043-605 5440

   - Ms Ntsaluba, District Director at Amathole, to facilitate access to the identified respondents for the pilot study. Her contact details are: sekelwe.ntsaluba@ecdsd.gov.za/ 043 – 711 6607/ 082 411 5773

2. Interviews with the identified respondents must be conducted with the least disruption of service delivery.

3. The Department must be afforded a fair opportunity to respond to any issues that might arise from the research before publication.

4. After completion of your research, you must provide the Department (Population and Research Unit) with a written research report. The report will be used to inform departmental programmes.

5. The research be undertaken for academic purposes only.

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH MRS.LILYMORE MUDZWAPAS AUGUST 2018

6. Strictly adhere to ethical standards to make sure no harm comes to participants in the study.

7. You avail yourself, should the need arise, to make a presentation of the findings and recommendations to the Department.
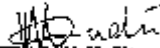
Please acknowledge and sign this document to indicate that you agree to and accept the conditions as stated above. Return the signed document via email to the Director: Population Policy Promotion E-mail: Linda.saki@ecdsd.gov.za

I wish you well with the research and look forward to the findings and recommendations.

Yours sincerely

MS N. BAART
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT
DATE: 21/08/018

MRS. L. MUDZIWAPASI
PHD CANDIDATE: FORT HARE UNIVERSITY
DATE: 16/10/2018

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH MRS. LILYMORE MUDZIWAPASI AUGUST 2018

APPENDIX 5: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview questions (FOR PARENTS)

1. Number of your children currently at ECD centre
2. Name of ECD centre
3. **WAYS IN WHICH PARENTS AND PRACTITIONERS WORK TOGETHER IN SUPPORTING LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROVISIONING**
    a. In what ways do you think that parents should be part of their children's early development within the ECD centre?
    b. As a parent are you doing enough in helping with the early development of your child within the ECD centre please may you share your experiences?
    c. What do you think needs to be changed for parents to be more involved in the development of their children within the ECD centres?
    d. What role do you see yourself playing in promoting parent and practitioner involvement within the ECD centre where your child is enrolled?
    e. What activities are you doing with your child to help him/ her learn and develop?
    f. What challenges are you facing with the practitioners (ECD teachers) in supporting learning and development of your child at the ECD centre
    PARENTS AND PRACTITIONERS' VIEWS ON PROVISION OF RESOURCES
    a. How do you view the way you work together with practitioners on provision of resources in early childhood education provisioning?
    b. In what ways do you assist the ECD centre in the provision of resources?
    c. What are your perspectives on provision of resources at the ECD centre?
    d. What kind of resources do you mainly assist with at the ECD centre?
    e. Do you think it is a good idea for practitioners to always bring up activities that requires financial support for your child? For example, going for outings

4. What are your views regarding fund raising at the Centre, which involve the child having to pay a certain fee?

5. **PARENTS AND PRACTITIONERS' COMMUNICATION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

   a. How do you communicate with practitioners at the ECD centre?

   b. Are there any opportunities for parents to come to the centre and talk with the practitioners?

   c. Do you think that parents have adequate opportunities to participate within the ECD centre?

   d. What are the challenges faced in trying to communicate with practitioners?

   e. How often do you contact practitioners, and why do you contact them?

   f. Do you feel you get regular and adequate feedback about your child behaviour and development?

6. **PARENTS AND PRACTITIONERS TOGETHER IN DECISION MAKING**

   a. How do you work together with practitioners in important decisions? For example, to allocate funds

   b. What prevents you from being more involved in decision-making processes at the ECD centre?

   c. How do you want to be involved in decisions that affect your child?

   d. Are parents included in the governance of the ECD centre? If, yes how?

7. **STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE PARENTS AND PRACTITIONERS INFORMATION SHARING**

   a. What are the strategies to enhance parents and practitioner's information sharing that you are practicing?

   b. What information can you share with the practitioner that will help to get a clearer picture of what are the child's interests and strengths?

   c. Is it easy to access information about your child, and how do you do that?

   d. Do practitioners share information about the curriculum that they are teaching the kids? What are you as a parent doing to support this?

   e. What do you think should be done for better information sharing between parents and practitioners?

~Thank you for your time~

APPENDIX 6: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ECD PRICTITIONERS AND PRINCIPALS

Questionnaire (For Practitioners and Principals)

INSTRUCTIONS

You are kindly requested to answer ALL the given questions. PLEASE do not write your name on the questionnaire. The information gathered will be kept confidential and will only be used for this research purpose. Your truthful answers to these questions will be greatly appreciated. Please put an (x) in the appropriate box or circle the appropriate answer, and where there is need for explanations please complete in the spaces given. It is likely to take you 25-30 minutes to answer the questions.

SECTION A

Demographic information

1. Name of ECD centre …………………………………………………….
2. Location of ECD centre …………………………………………………….
3. Your gender: Male   ☐   Female   ☐
4. Your age …………………………….
5. Marital status

    a. Single

    b. Married

    c. Divorced

    d. Widowed

    e. Other (Specify)

6. First Language ……………………………………….

7. Race

    a. Black African

    b. Coloured

    c. Indian/ Asian
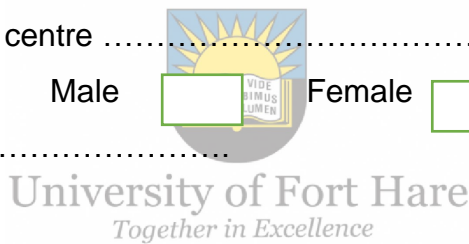
d. White

8. Highest academic Qualification

    a. No formal Education

    b. Primary Education

    c. Matric

    d. Post Matric Certificate

    e. Degree

9. Professional qualification ……………………………………………………

10. Years of ECD experience ……………………………………………………

11. Average age of the children in your (a) class ……………………

12. Total number of children in your (a) class………….

13. Total number of children at your ECD centre …………………….

SECTION B: Ways in which parents and practitioners work together in supporting learning and development

Rate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements

Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I let parents know what activities children do on a particular day				
I let parents know about topics that interest their children				
I invite parents to share information about their culture and traditions				

I organise information sessions
for parents

Parents are involved in children's
homework

Parents help with some basic
teachings like potty training

Parents do share some useful
learning material that they
know/have

a) In what ways are parents involved in your class?
………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………..

b) In what ways are parents involved in this ECD centre?

………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………
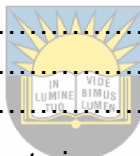
c) Is it important to involve parents in early childhood services?
    YES,   NO   DON'T KNOW

d) If 'yes' why is it important to involve parents? (Please rate the following
   statements 1-5 with 1 being the least important and 5 the most important

	1	2	3	4	5
Parents are their children's first educators					
Parents are interested and have a right to be involved					
Practitioners are more informed when parents share their knowledge about their child					
Practitioners like to support parents in their child-rearing duties					
Parent involvement is considered an indicator of a quality service					

SECTION C: Parents and practitioners' views on the way they work together on provision of resources

Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I give parents information about where to find out more information about the curriculum				
I share with parents' information about the child's next step				
I make leaflets, tip sheets, DVDs, and other resources available to parents				
I lend story books and tapes of songs and rhymes to parents				
I make learning kits with ideas for activities, and include items like chubby crayons and safety scissors				
I share easy-to-read books on child development				
I invite parents to spend time in the setting so that they can join in with activities and learn about what their children do				
We have a newsletter that provides useful information such as the words of songs and rhymes that the children are learning, important dates, updates on policies				
I do tap into parents' knowledge, skills and goodwill to ensure the best outcomes for all the children at the ECD centre				

SECTION D: Parents and practitioners' communication in early childhood education provisioning

   a) How often do you contact parents? …………………………………
   b) Why do you contact them?
       ………………………………………………………………………………
       ……………………………………………………………………………….

....

....

c) How do you contact/ communicate them?
- i. Telephone
- ii. Message book
- iii. Email
- iv. Other (specify)

Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I have face-to-face discussions, especially if there is a problem				
I do remind parents about special events at the ECD centre				
I talk informally to parents on a regular basis				
Parents are able to speak with me about their child				
I have contact numbers for each parent				

SECTION E: How parents and practitioners work together in important decision making

Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Most parents let me know of child's special or individual needs				
We do have parents' meetings at our ECD centre				
Parents fully attend the parents' meetings				
We involve parents in all decision making				
We work with parents to decide how to allocate funds				

Parents are involved in the Governance of the ECD				
There is a parents committee at the Centre				
Parents are involved in the practitioner recruitment process				

a) Why do you think that some parents do not get involved? (Please rate the following statements from 1-5, with 1 being the least likely and 5 the most likely reason. Is it because they**...?**

	1	2	3	4	5
have other family commitments					
think their child would misbehave if they see them at Centre					
don't know what is expected of them & deliberately choose not to be involved					
do not think there are benefits/advantages in being involved					
are dissatisfied with the opportunities the Centre offers for parent involvement					
think the ECD centre does not offer opportunities for parental involvement					
are in full-time employment					
Separated therefore the is no communication on who should attend to the needs of the child at the ECD centre					
Work long hours therefor they are not able to attend meetings during the day.					
are ignorant of what is happening at the ECD centre					

SECTION F: Strategies to enhance parents and practitioner's information sharing

Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I encourage them to come to me for information				

I talk to parents at parent/practitioner meetings				
I share examples of children's work with parents and families				
I display children's work and photographs in hallways and change these regularly				
I provide information and feedback verbally as well as in writing				
I keep a daily notebook recording the child's physical care (bottles, meals, nappies)				
I keep a daily notebook recording the child's achievements such as smiles, new words, friendships				
We hold workshops on children's learning and development, for example on learning through play				
We arrange social events for parents to help them to meet and build support networks with other parents as well as with practitioner				
I make better use of the feedback and information that I get from parents about their children				

a) What do you do to give extra support and encouragement to some parents?

…………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………

b) What strategies do you use to help parents to feel more confident in talking to you about their children?

…………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………...............

~Thank You ~

APPENDIX 7: ETHICAL CLEARENCE

University of Fort Hare
Together in Excellence

ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE
REC-270710-028-RA Level 01

Certificate Reference Number: MAP141SMUD01

Project title: **Assessing parents and practitioners' partnership in Early Childhood Education Provisioning in Early Childhood Development centres in East London Education District.**

Nature of Project   PhD in Education

Principal Researcher: Lilymore Mudziwapasi

Supervisor: Prof C Maphosa
Co-supervisor: N/A

On behalf of the University of Fort Hare's Research Ethics Committee (UREC) I hereby give ethical approval in respect of the undertakings contained in the above-mentioned project and research instrument(s). Should any other instruments be used, these require separate authorization. The Researcher may therefore commence with the research as from the date of this certificate, using the reference number indicated above.

Please note that the UREC must be informed immediately of

- Any material change in the conditions or undertakings mentioned in the document
- Any material breaches of ethical undertakings or events that impact upon the ethical conduct of the research

The Principal Researcher must report to the UREC in the prescribed format, where applicable, annually, and at the end of the project, in respect of ethical compliance.

Special conditions: Research that includes children as per the official regulations of the act must take the following into account:

Note: The UREC is aware of the provisions of s71 of the National Health Act 61 of 2003 and that matters pertaining to obtaining the Minister's consent are under discussion and remain unresolved. Nonetheless, as was decided at a meeting between the National Health Research Ethics Committee and stakeholders on 6 June 2013, university ethics committees may continue to grant ethical clearance for research involving children without the Minister's consent, provided that the prescripts of the previous rules have been met. This certificate is granted in terms of this agreement.

The UREC retains the right to

- Withdraw or amend this Ethical Clearance Certificate if
  - Any unethical principal or practices are revealed or suspected
  - Relevant information has been withheld or misrepresented
  - Regulatory changes of whatsoever nature so require
  - The conditions contained in the Certificate have not been adhered to

- Request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the project.

- In addition to the need to comply with the highest level of ethical conduct principle investigators must report back annually as an evaluation and monitoring mechanism on the progress being made by the research. Such a report must be sent to the Dean of Research's office

The Ethics Committee wished you well in your research.

Yours sincerely

Professor Lindelwa Majova-Songca
Acting Dean of Research

10 November 2017

APPENDIX 8: INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Researcher: How many children do you have at the ECD centre?

P1: 2

P2: 1

P3: 2

P4: 1

P5: 1

P6: 1

P7: 1

P8: 1

P9:1

P10: 1

Researcher: What is the name of the ECD centre?

P1: Handy and hand

P2: Little Georges and georgettes

P3: Little Eaglets

P4: Post and pans

P5: learn and play

P6: Friendly faces

P7: Rainbow kids

P8: child's play centre

P9: A W Barnes centre

P10: All Saints centre

WAYS IN WHICH PARENTS AND PRACTITIONERS WORK TOGETHER IN SUPPORTING LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROVISIONING

Researcher: In what ways do you think that parents should be part of their children's early development within the ECD centre?

P1: Teachers they send messages in the message books sometimes requesting us parents to help and assist our children on the part they are struggling at school, therefor as parents we should be able to give time to our children helping them at home with the things that the teachers requested from us.

P2: Parents should be involved from the word go because a child learns from home and also at school and most of the time the child is at home therefore the environment at home and at school should be conducive for learning. The conditions at school and home should be conducive for learning. Parents should be helping the child to do homework or task from school, the parents can also communicate with teachers so that there will be a conducive learning environment for the child**.**

P3: Parents should be involved quite a lot in the early years of their kids' development as this will help the kids develop well in later years. Doing homework with the kids and attending school meetings will help.

P4: They should be involved in what is taught and all the activities the children get involved in

P5: Parents should be able to ask a lot of questions from the teachers, asking how the child is performing in class not to wait until they see the report card at the end of the term. There should be a good relationship between parents and teachers so that the child can benefit from both sides.

P6: It is all summed up in one-word involvement both at home & at school daily, parents should take initiative to interact with the teachers to see how the child is performing.

P7: They should know what is being taught and be able to go through it at home

P8: Children trust their parents than anybody so parents should be more involved in children's life so that they can easily learn

P9: Parents' involvement helps extend teaching outside the classroom, it creates a more positive experience for the children and helps perform better in class

P10: The parents should also stimulate the child at home. For example, helping the child to learn the alphabet and how to write their name.

Researcher: As a parent are you doing enough in helping with the early development of your child within the ECD centre please may you share your experiences?

P1: Yes, I am helping a lot, I am always giving my child extra lessons at home. I do teach her at home.

P2: I don't know if I can say I am doing enough or not, it's quiet a relative term, what I can say as for me as a parent specifically and my wife we are doing enough because, we are trying to communicate with the teacher, if the child is not going to be at school, we communicate with the teacher in time so that the teacher won't be worried that where is this child, was the child dropped at school or what not. So, we try to communicate as early as possible, secondly if the teacher said there is something that they want for example papers, toilet rolls, card box for cutting we try to help with those ones so that the life of the teacher in the classroom is much easier. And when they sent something in the message book indicating that the child needs to do that and help the child so that the child won't be behind and clueless on other aspect that helps the teacher and also this helps the development of the child.

P3: Yes, I have been attending moms' meetings, being on the class WhatsApp group, checking the kids' diaries and notebooks every day and signing them off, abiding by the rules and regulations of what to bring to the school. I am doing a lot to better the development of my child.

Researcher Probes: **(P3)** do the practitioners appreciate your efforts.

P3: YES, they appreciate, sometimes they will send me a WhatsApp message to thank me after I have sent something to the school. And they are always encouraging us to attend meeting so as to take part in the betterment of our children.

P4: Well, within the centre my involvement is limited up to ensuring that all the activities which are available to my child I make her attend to them. However, I do not have much say on what is done there

P5: Yes, I am doing the best I can. I make sure I support the child in whatever is needed at the centre.

P6: Yes, I believe so; I am involved daily in the activities of the school; also, at home; helping in reading; revising class work & as well as home work

P7: I try by all means to encourage my child to attend school and make learning enjoyable by following her lead and not force her when she is not interested.

P8: Yes, every day I have a session with my daughter where she tells me what she has learnt and correct her where she is wrong

P9: yes; responsiveness is an aspect acceptance of your child's interest. Building trust and bond between the parent and the child.

P10: At the ECD centre they do fantasy play and this also done at home, so as parent yes, I am doing enough.

Researcher: What do you think needs to be changed for parents to be more involved in the development of their children within the ECD centre?

P1: I think there should be room to come and complain or discuss our challenges as parents. For example, for me last week I went to the teacher and ask her why it is my child cannot count from 1 to 50. She is 3 and she is old enough to count but she can't.

P2: I think it's all about attitudes because sometimes you see sometimes other parents drop their kids at the gate and they can say run inside, the teacher will just see this and maybe wanted to say something but the teacher cant, you can't be in a hurry for your child. At GG they have a chart which shows the behaviour of your child for the previous day, so as a parent you can pop in and check so if you drop your child at the gate you won't know what is going on, so the attitudes of the parents is the one that needs to change.

P3: Parents should be given the opportunity to understand all that will be going on at the ECD centre. For example, the practitioners should have consultation times for the parents because sometimes you will not be able to contact the teachers thinking they are too busy and as parents we do not want to disturb them. As parents we want the opportunity to be updated on what's going on at the centre if they are new developments parents we should be knowing. And if they are facing challenges

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parents, we should be aware so that if we have the opportunity to assist the centre, we can do that.

P4: There should be meetings to discuss the various activities and what is taught. Parents should be updated on what is taught and be encouraged to teach their kids as well at home

P5: Teachers should engage parents more often, to my surprise parents are not having any meeting with the teachers. The centre is the one that make decision of what should be done always.

P6: Parents must be educated about the importance of involvement from the onset & also be reminded that, a child development is not a government responsibility it is a parent responsibility

P7: constant communication of the centre with the parents is necessary so as to help the children in learning.

P8: parents need not to depend on teachers all the time they must also play a role in their children's life.

P9: parents should help to ensure that their child has all the support they need to develop to their full potential. It creates a more positive experience

P10: The parents should also be educated about what takes place at the ECD centre for example the curriculum.

Researcher: What role do you see yourself playing in promoting parent and practitioner involvement within the ECD centre where your child is enrolled?

P1: I went there to discuss what I expect my child to be good at. Sometimes I ask them why my child is not performing this way because I have standards that I want my child to reach but you will be seeing that the child is far from that, so discussing matters with the practitioners is the way to go.

P2: They say charity begins at home therefore it is my role as a parent to communicate with the teachers. It is my role to initiate communication. I am free to ask the teachers of the other things that they do at school. In terms of resources from my company I take paper that is written one side so that they can use it for cutting at home it will be Junk that you can throw away but to them they can use it, it's an asset to them, it can

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help your child and many others to develop learning. So, this help the school in the sense that they do not have to buy those kinds of resources because they already have them.

Researcher: (Probes) how many years does your child have at that ECD?

P2: My child started when she was 7 months now, she is turning 5 years this year, she started when she was at another ECD centre that is called pots and pans. So now she moved to this ECD because she now grade RR. I have been also involved, the parents and teachers' relationships are very crucial. If the teacher and parents communicate the child also sees that all these people are trying to protect me if the child sees that the parent have not spoken or see my teacher it becomes a challenge. From the ECD that my child was going before this one we even buy presents for the teacher because the child will be telling you that it's my teachers' birthday, and from doing that the child will also be learning to love, a present for the principal or a present for the teacher at the end of the year. It's not compulsory for all parents but if you can afford why not do it. It's not that you are buying favours from the teacher but you will be showing and teaching your child love.

Researcher: (Probes) so are you the one who picks our daughter from the school?

P2: Yes, but my wife also picks and drop the child sometimes. But since it's on my way to school I am usually the one to drop and pick her.

P3: I participate in things that requires the mothers to take care of the kids, meetings like mom's date nights. With this I get the opportunity to discuss about kids with other parents and also discuss the challenges which other kids are facing and we are able to discuss how we can solve some other things together with the teachers.

P4: I look forward to engaging with the practitioners on what can be considered to be the curriculum of the ECD. Knowing what is covered there, will make it easier for me to also engage my child at home.

P5: I make sure I communicate with the practitioners if there is something that i do not understand that is taking place at the centre. I ask the principal if there is somewhere where they need some help and if I am able to assist, I can do so sometimes, it could be assisting them with some material or resources.

P6: I am currently the parent to practitioner liaisons officer responsible for all forms of communication

P7: I am a support structure where necessarily needed by my child or ECD centre for the better learning and development of my child and effectiveness of the centre

P8: team player, where I would emphasize to parents to be involved in their children's life

P9: supporting the learning and the development of the child, share information with the teachers. Make decisions and advocating different approaches and causes of action.

P10: a parent and practitioner meeting help in promoting the centre, because the centre will have good reviews.

Researcher: What activities are you doing with your child to help him/ her learn and develop?

P1: At home I have a lot of equipment to help my child. I have a board to write, chalk, crayons, books, puzzles and may other things that can help my child to learn. I am always teaching her stuff of her age. I read books for her and also teaching her counting.

P2: the starting point is that we start with the activities that they are doing at school, because more often they have themes, for instance they will say this week we are learning about pets we have a pet at home so we start to play with that pet, discussing how good is it because it's a dog it protects us, you know we play with it. So, we start with what is in the message book what they are doing that particular day, but also a number of activities like soccer star they play with a ball and what not so at home I always find time to play ball with my child. With playing with her I also see the skills and what she is struggling with. We do different skills, running, hope step and jump and what not, to see the motor skills of my child if they are developing because I can't wait for the report results at the end of the term that your child can't balance with one leg or your child can't do hope step and jump. teaching her name form example I have taught her how to write her name before they have start teaching them at school I have also teacher her how to play with letters, how to draw all those different kinds of things that I can do with my limited experience or training in that particular space as a parent

I try to put those things together. I just ensure that what they are learning at school they are also learning at home.

Researcher: (Probe) Do you sometimes read books for her?

P2: Every night I make it a point that…. She has got different books some aaaaah like scriptural they are based on Christian values some are like based on the cartoons that she watches and what note so we have good bedtime stories books. We try by all means that we read something for her most of the times before she goes for bed. But I have also found out that it's not good to only read for her when she is going to bed but also on weekends under the shed of a tree because we have a yard that have trees and sheds to just sit on the swing or lazy bench and read for mu child and she also read for me, she does not read the specific words but she will be just seeing the pictures and tell a story from the pictures and she also get excited in reading.

Researcher: (Probe) so as you will be reading for her, have you notice if she is learning more from you or from school?

P2: I see it not as a competition that more from there but there is a lot of complementarities that is what she is learning at school we try to compliment it. So, I would claim that which of the two is really doing better. But I see that the school is more focused because they have the timetables that this day, they want to do a, b, and c like there is more organised learning than at home because at home one day we are doing this and the following day that and at school they take time on one thing drilling it. At home I might not have time to do a lot of thinks with her because she will be watching cartoons and playing with her little brother so some days, I might not have time with her. But at school that where she has a lot of time.

Researcher: (Probe) so are you happy with the development of your child?

P2: Very much happy, because when I am walking with her, she is able to tell me that this is a green apple, red apple so you will be happy when your child is knowing shapes and colours, doing a number of things and asking you different kinds of questions and you will see that the child is really developing so there is great development beyond expectation because at her age a child is like doing a lot of amazing things that maybe I wouldn't be able to do them at that particular age myself.

P3: I read stories for them, help with complying with the rules of the centre, I teach them to cut papers and also doing some colouring with them. Basically, I will be assisting with what they are doing at school and repeat it at home so that they can understand better.

P4: We bought books which are relevant to her, I do teach her counting, reading and attempt some questions as per the books.

P5: I make sure that as soon as she is from school, I open her homework book and see if there is something that she is supposed to do. If there is something, I make sure I assist my child. I also give her some child movies to watch after school, for example if they are being taught about Easter, I can give her movies about the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ so that she can watch and when the teachers explain this at school my child won't get lots.

P6: Home reading; Home work; practical activities etc.

P7: we read, draw and write together

P8: play mathematics games, Alphabet games.

P9: reading, writing and playing games e.g swinging

P10: colouring activities, outdoor activities, tracing and counting activities

Researcher: What challenges are you facing with the practitioners in supporting learning and development of your child at the ECD centre?

P1: There is conflict between me and the teachers in the sense that the way they pronounce some words to my child is different from the way I pronounce the words. For example, my child is always saying no mummy that's not the way my teacher says it for example if she is doing the alphabet to say "H" they say hhhch me I say ehhch. So, it becomes a challenge now.

P2: I wouldn't say there are really challenges like I have outline that there is clear communication so to me they are doing the best but you may expect a lot for her to do a lot of things, what I have notice is that these centres they also struggle with resources so to me they are doing the best, you may expect your child to do a lot. My involvement could be to provide resources, so that challenge also cut across to the parents otherwise they have to charge more school fees

Researcher: (probe) so as for you, you are fine if they increase school fees?

P2: as long as is reasonable because you see you value what you are getting but if you really don't see you wouldn't want to pay extra rand, but if you see the development you will pay so as for me, I am seeing the development so I wouldn't mind paying extra rand, because the work that they are doing is good. But again, it's not about more money it's also about access, if the parents can't afford it shouldn't be increased. As for me I would want the fees to be increased because I can afford and I am seeing a great development.

P3: Some practitioners at the ECD centre are racist, they are not patient with kids and I feel that this is a very big challenge because I took my kids to that centre thinking that it is the best only to find out that some teachers are racist.

Researcher probes: (P3): what makes you think they are racist?

P3: sometimes my kids will come home with wet clothes and it will be cold, and i will be wondering why they did not change them but there will be spare clothes in the bag for them to change.

P4: Well, at the moment I do not have any issues of concern which I can report on

P5: I face some challenge that they seem not to follow the procedures which they say they do. Sometimes I will find that in my child's homework book there will be nothing to do but from the start they told me that they will be sending homework every day. I become worried to an extent that I am doubting if they are learning sometimes. It seems there is lack of consistence at this centre.

P6: Currently none.

P7: none.

P8: Not letting the child to write more often

P9: it is hard to have a proper communication due to their busy schedule

P10: some of the practitioners are not qualified so they do not know how to stimulate the child both physically and mentally.

PARENTS AND PRACTITIONERS' VIEWS ON PROVISION OF RESOURCES

Researcher: How do you view the way you work together with practitioners on provision of resources in early childhood education provisioning?

P1: The way we work together in providing resources is good but there are also some challenges in the sense that I think sometimes they ask too much from us and they are not trustworthy sometimes. They are always asking for things to bring at school. Then if you provide some thing this week next week, they will say bring something, I think they forgot that they ask you.

P2: I see excellent because they do communicate what they need resources for. So, the partnering there is very excellent**.**

Researcher: (probe) is there where they ask for resources too much?

P2: Uum uumm as for me I see it as adequate request.

P3: Working relationship with other teachers is very good, some teachers are very energetic and they are very dedicated on what they are doing they are very passionate with working with kids.

P4: At the moment there is no synergy, I teach my child what I think is relevant to her as I do not know what resources they are expected to be using from the ECD's perspective.

P5: I think they ask too much of the resources, they ask a lot of things that I have to buy and send to school. I think it is better to put the amount on the school fees. Because now will see that the amount of money spent on buying other things after paying school fees is too much. When you look for a place at that day-care you will be thinking that the fees are fair enough only to find out that there is a lot of things to provide after that.

P6: At the moment great

P7: at times communication is made late about what is needed at school and it puts pressure for me as a parent to make the provision so that my child will not feel out of place at school.

P8: Very well, we have our meetings every second week of each month

P9: providing learning equipment and learning styles.

P10: a parent can take a picture to the practitioner and it can help in their daily activities

Researcher: In what ways do you assist the ECD centre in the provision of resources?

P1: I sent empty tins, cans, tissue rolls, used paper they ask about a lot of resources and I am always providing them.

P2: like I said just some papers for cutting and drawing, card bot box for cereal that the school can use, rolls for toilets inner toilet rolls anything that you know the child can play with we just handover to the school.

P3: I sent old material to the school. From the start they indicated to the parents that they want old material that they can use for doing paintings at the school.

P4: We pay for the purchase of stationary.

P5: I sent paper that they said they will need it, used paper, plastics. We also have a list of things that are supposed to be bought like beach buckets and shovels, medication, towels, etc so I provide that

P6: Fundraising & arranging tours for the centre.

P7: Donations in form of cash or kind and materials that might be needed for a certain learning activity at school

P8: by doing donations

P9: sometimes we ask our child to share her toys and learning material that we buy.

P10: giving magazines, newspapers and old toilet rolls because they recycle things.

Researcher: What are your perspectives on provision of resources at the ECD centre?

P1: it is good to provide resources, but I have reservations it is too much, for example they will say pay R550 for registration and it covers toilet paper and soap for the kids, but they will still send you a list of thinks that we are supposed to buy and bring to the school and you will still see that that pack of tissue and soap is there. Before term ends, they will say please may you contribute more of these things. I think they should list these things once not asking again and again.

Researcher: (probe) so what do you do you provide?

P1: Yaah I give them because you do not want to quarrel with the people who are taking care of your child when you are not there. But deep down my heart it will be too much for me.

P2: the school and the parents should partner, if there is a committee they need to really mobilised, like to my child's school there is a parent class rep on the WhatsApp group, one parent leads, where parents can mobilise resources that the class need. So, I think it's all about having a good understanding of what is needed at the school.

P3: I feel that they have more than they require at that centre but more can be given since they only request for old material that we are not using at home so there is no harm in giving them.

P4: Though limited I think they are trying; kids utilise used papers for drawing and writing

P5: I think it is a good idea to provide the centre with resources but they should not ask for too many things that are not necessary. For example, they will say bring a bottle of Panadol that will stay at school in case the child gets sick. So, every child is going to bring a bottle and they will be too many, why not just buy their first aid kit which they can use for every child.

P6: it is a good idea to supply the centre with resources, so that our children will not short of things to use.

P7: it is a good idea as it shows me what my child is doing at school. However, if possible, the ECD can find ways to get the resources so as not to put pressure on the child and parent

P8: the resources are quite beneficial to all children and are safe to use.

P9: the resources must develop and provide appropriate learning for the children.

P10: it is actually a good standard, because the outdoor equipment is well.

Researcher: What kind of resources do you mainly assist with at the ECD centre?

P1: Stationary, toiletries, toys and many more

P2:   Papers, toilet roll, card box

P3: Time, old papers, money for outings and many more.

P4: Stationary

P5: I assist with stationary

P6: Whenever needed; technological resources e.g., projectors, laptops for use

P7: It depends with the activities at school e.g., Money, empty boxes of cereals

P8: donations food and clothes.

P9: Toys, flash cards, books, educational games

P10: recycling materials

Researcher: Do you think it is a good idea for practitioners to always bring up activities that requires financial support for your child? For example, going for outings.

P1: Yes, it is a good idea, I don't have problem with that because by doing a lot of the activities the child will be also learning. It only becomes a problem to me when they ask things double than required like what I said before**.**

P2: yaah look if it's part of learning so why not. I might be able to go with my child to the zoo, but there is much learning when they are going with other young kids my child would learn more so as for me, I wouldn't mind. It will be good to organise those things more often

Researcher: (probe) even if the money it's a lot?

P2: Remember like what I said it's all about what you perceive as benefit for me I think it is good for the child to be exposed to a number of things as for me if they say we are flying to some place I wouldn't mind to pay for it. It would be a pity if they take the child there and just sit under a tree, not showing them let's say the animals they flew to see, they should be learning that would be happening. It's a matter of seeing if they are doing what they are supposed to do with the money.

P3: yes, it is good because our kids can get exposed to a lot of things that will make them learn and grow well.

P4: I think it's a good idea, it gives kids good exposure

P5: it's a good idea but I think it must not be done like always. For example, every week they will say they are going somewhere, like really when are they going to have time to learn. They must go for outings but not too much.

P6: I think it is good specially to assist parents who cannot afford all the things needed for the child. (For example, all the money we raise goes back into the child coffers & not a cent goes to the centre.)

P7: it is good in that the child gets exposure to a different environment but they should not be much. If it would be possible the activity costs can be included in term fees

P8: yes, because it makes us parents to be more involved

P9: yes, because it teaches and develop a child's way of thinking in different environments.

P10: it is a good idea because both the parents and practitioners they are the ones who decide about the outing.

Researcher: What are your views regarding fund raising at the Centre, which involve the child having to pay a certain fee.

P1: Fund raising is very good because they will be getting some money for the centre and I am sure this will make the centre growing, rather than they will just sit and do nothing, I don't have a problem with it when they are doing fund raising.

P2: it's all about are they doing what is supposed to be done with the money.

P3: It is time consuming and kids might not be interested in it.

P4: I think it's a good initiative, it assists with funds needed for the running of the ECD

P5: I support this it's a good idea, the centre will develop very well if they are getting money from other activities not only to wait for school fees.

P6: I believe it is a great idea if there is proper accountability; but if there is none then there it is not a good idea.

P7: I support fundraising done for a good cause

P8: it helps us parents to do fund-raising

P9: always support the school, because it benefits my daughter and the centre to develop good relationships with children

P10: it is actually a good thing because the child experiences a different environment and benefits from it.

PARENTS AND PRACTITIONERS' COMMUNICATION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Researcher: How do you communicate with practitioners at the ECD centre?

P1: I Communicate with the teachers face to face, sometime I call them, sometimes when I am having a pressing need, I call the principal

Researcher: (**Probes) (P1)** what kind of a pressing need?

P1: Sometimes my child can come home with some bruises or scratches on the hands and I can just call the principal to ask what really happened. Sometimes they write in the message book but that's not enough I feel I should call them and get clarity.

P2: the official one is the message book; I write a message and they sign to indicate that they have read it. They write a Message and I sign they also have phone numbers that they gave to all parents. So, depends with time I can use a call, message, WhatsApp like what I said on dropping and picking the child teachers and the assistants are there to talk to parents so if there is something that u want to say you can communicate, they are available for that. So, communication is in different forms.

Researcher: (probe) (P2) so as for you, you have been using all these communication methods?

P2: What I haven't used so far is the call, because what I have used is WhatsApp and messages to communicate with the teacher if the child is not coming to school so I SMS or WhatsApp so that the teacher will come back to me at her convenient time. And they have been very supportive in all the communications that happens.

P3: through the message book.

P4: There is no formal channels of communication, usually we see progress about the child through interaction and the report which comes when the term comes to an end

P5: I communicate with teachers through WhatsApp, face to face conversation phone call and email

P6: We have access to all forms of communication; from email; letter; phone call; SMS; WhatsApp & office visit at any given time (Normal working hours)

P7: in person, SMS, calls and WhatsApp

P8: by telephone and message book

P9: by making an appointment and visit the centre, telephone, message book communication book.

P10: through message book, meetings and use the phones for emergencies

Researcher: Are there any opportunities for parents to come to the centre and talk with the practitioners?

P1: yes, parents can come and speak to practitioners for example when you pick-up and drop-off your child, but there are no specific times that the teachers they sit down and speak with parents but only in meetings

P2: at dropping and picking up the kids, there is always a teacher or assistant teacher to talk to. The gate is always open

Researcher: (probe) (P2) is it possible to speak to the teachers besides pick-up and drop-off times?

P2: There are no consultations times but I believe that it's all about that particular teacher's time from 7am to 12:30 they are busy so maybe you can just make an appointment after school. They have open lines for communication. The opportunity to talk to them is available.

P3: YES, parents are allowed to come to the centre and speak to the practitioners whenever they wish to.

P4: Yes, if there are concerns, a parent can engage the practitioners

P5: Yes, you can talk to them in the morning and in the afternoon when picking up the child. And also, you can set an appointment, but there are sometime that they indicated in the message book that these times they will be very busy with the teachings they will not be able to attend to parents unless it is urgent

P6: yes, anytime

P7: yes

P8: yes

P9: yes, there is

P10: only when the parent makes an appointment

Researcher: Do you think that parents have adequate opportunities to participate within the ECD centre?

P1: yes, they have all the opportunity to participate, like what I said the day-care is open for communication with parents.

P2: Very much there are teacher parents meeting and parents are there to make comments, there is room for parents to participate.

P3: yes, there is parents and teacher meetings that are open for us parents to participate.

P4: Well, not really, I believe there is still much which needs to be done. There should be time for parents and practitioners to meet and discuss, not necessarily when there is a problem

P5: There are no parents and teacher meetings, therefore it is difficult to fully participate

P6: yes, in parents and teacher meetings.

P7: yes

P8: yes

P9: yes, but not most of the times. Only on special events

P10: yes

Researcher: What are the challenges faced in trying to communicate with practitioners

P1: I face challenge with my small boy, I think is because of different cultures and race. There at the day-care they are white and I am black and they were expecting my 7months boy to be able to use the pot training. So, I had to tell them that no he is still

young for our culture. So, the principal was having a red face angry that why my child is like that. So that the challenge that I encounter.

P2: no… no… challenges, but parents sometimes they do not know how to communicate on WhatsApp. The teacher will be sending pictures on the WhatsApp group showing parents what the children were cutting some parents will attack the teacher there on WhatsApp asking why my child is not there what… what…. But maybe it would be a few photos and others will be still coming. So, the challenges are always from us parents that we do not know how to communicate sometimes.

Researcher: (probe) (P2) so you are fine when you child is not featuring on a photo from the centre?

P2: I would enquire about it, but I would question it as if I am suggesting something but I can communicate with the teacher privately to her inbox. You know when you ask on a general group it's not nice, it's better to ask the teacher like my child seemed not to be appearing on the picture. Or the child is always on the solitary corner, may be the child is always on the naughty corner which needs to be communicated to the teacher. It's all about the proper communication with the teacher it's all about the proper language.

P3: sometimes teachers are in a hurry and they do not take enough time to attend to our queries as parents.

P4: No challenges

P5: sometimes to call the class teacher you want to ask something about the child, her phone will be off. When you get there personally, let's say you want to pick the child, the teachers sometimes they will be very busy and you end up going back home without communicating to the practitioners

P6: none

P7: none experienced so far.

P8: some of them are under qualified and difficult to have adequate information sharing

P9: they are too busy and some of them don't comply easily.

P10: it can only happen after hours and practitioners also have a family

Researcher: How often do you contact practitioners, and why do you contact them?

P1: I contact teachers more often and when it is necessary, for example when I want to enquire something about my child.

P2: Once in a while, when I want to communicate about my child

P3: Maybe once a week, replying to their notifications and sometimes telling them about what they should be careful about when it comes to my kids.

P4: regularly, when I have issues of concern which I will have observed on the child

P5: I contact them more often if I want to ask them about my child and if I have any query

P6: As often as I can; checking on the welfare of the children & stuff. If there are issues pertaining to the centre; the child or any issues raised by the parents.

P7: I contact them anytime if need be

P8: every week

P9: when necessary, I would write a letter in my daughter's communication book for appointment to check my child's progress.

P10: only when there is an emergency or only when you seem not to understand the homework given to the child

Researcher: Do you feel you get regular and adequate feedback about your child behaviour and development?

P1: Yes, they always sending messages in the book telling me on how the child is doing at school.

P2: Yes, the behaviour is always shown on the chart if I have any question I can always ask, what had happened for the child to be on that behaviour colour.

Researcher: (probe) (P2) May you explain further how the behaviour on the chart works?

P2: The behaviour of the children is always displayed on a chart. There are colours from red, green, yellow, blue and purple. If the behaviour is very bad the child's name will be on red and the teacher needs to contact the parents because the behaviour of the child was bad. Then orange the behaviour is also bad but the teacher does not

contact parents, green is good then yellow the child can be given a present for good behaviour the child portrays good behaviour in class and in all the activities that they were doing in that particular day. A purple is very exception when the child is really doing exceptional things. So, this is a way of communicating to parents. So, it's a way of communicating to parents how your child is behaving that is it positive or negative behaviour.

Researcher: (probe) (P2) so are you happy with the behaviour of your child?

P2: Very much

Researcher: (probe) (P2) so do you trust their judgement?

P2: Yes, I trust that, if the children were on one colour all the time, I would question that so I have seen other names shifting. So, to me the chart is updated every time.

P3: Yes, every term we have consultations.

P4: Well this come at the end of the term, it's satisfactory as far as am concerned

P5: YES, they are always sending the outcome of their performance in the home work book and I am always asking the teachers how my child is doing

P6: yes, I am always asking how my child is performing and the teachers are willing to share everything that will be going on with my child in the class

P7: yes

P8: yes

P9: yes, when my child is struggling with work, the teacher phones me and I go to the centre.

P10: yes, because there is a log book

PARENTS AND PRACTITIONERS TOGETHER IN DECISION MAKING

Researcher: How do you work together with practitioners in coming up with important decisions? For example, to allocate funds.

P1: We do not work together; they do not ask parents on what they should allocate funds. They only explain what they call the registration fee is for.

P2: no, we do not discuss the funds the school is the one who manages

Researcher: (Probes P2) what did they say about the registration fee

They will explain that if a child is coming to that day-care for the first time, they will need money for administration purposes as well as for the stationery and toiletries. So, they said the registration fees covers a number of things.

P3: There is a school governing board and parent's teacher association.

P4: There are no consultations held at that level

P5: when they want to do something, they write in the book to ask the parents if they are interested, if not you don't sign if you are interested as a parent you sign in the book to show that you are agreeing on what they are asking. For example, they ask in the book if you want your child to be taken pictures at the centre if you want you sign to agree.

P6: We have a committee responsible for the daily running of the centre. This committee as mandated by the parents & practitioners convenes meetings regularly where decisions are made.

P7: they do not involve parents in decision making

P8: normally they call for meetings whereby decisions are made with both sides

P9: they have a parent meeting and every parent gives input and we all make a final decision at the end.

P10: the parents and practitioner meetings

Researcher: What prevents you from being more involved in decision making processes at the ECD centre?

P1: I think it's because they are not really open on how us as parents can be involved.

P2: look there are some decisions that they consult the parents for example in the meetings teachers tell us parents how they do their things, but they always tell us and ask for our opinion so the opportunity to influence is there. They tell us how they do things so as parents you are free to comment.

P3: I am not in the SGB but here and there we put suggestions across to the principal.

P4: The door for that is not open

P5: It seems they want to do things on their own and not involve parents too much

P6: nothing

P7: I have never been given the opportunity to be involved in decision making

P8: I am full-time employed single mother

P9: I am busy sometimes working at home.

P10: as a parent you are busy and working

Researcher: How do you want to be involved in decisions that affect your child?

P1: I expect the parents to contact me most of the time when they have any question concerning my child.

P2: I expect the teachers to share any information that concern my child.

P3: I would like to be told on time and I can think over it.

P4: There should be regular meetings in which parents contribute on what is taught and the operations of the ECD centre

P5: I want them to call me most of the times if something happens to my child, or write a letter, or WhatsApp me.

P6: I need them to communicate with me as a parent more often

P7: I want to be aware of the learning activities and extra mural options that can be available for kids

P8: all the time, because it concerns my child's future

P9: I need to be informed about my child's performance at the centre

P10: as parents to be allowed to join the outing that they do with the kids.

Researcher: Are parents included in the governance of the ECD centre? If, yes how?

P1: they are not. But as for now I am not sure, because last year they call for a meeting where they wanted to select the governing board but I could not attend because it was scheduled at night, so I don't know if this is now functioning

P2: yes, parents are involved there is a class rep among the parents. Who talk to the teacher representing all parents? For example, the teacher will request the parents to close the gate when they come and pick the kids, the teacher will speak to the parent class rep and the rep will communicate to all the parents on the group.

P3: yes, through SGB committee and dad committee

P4: No, they are not

P5: NO

P6: Yes; they comprise 90% of the committee & are free to volunteer to be part of the governing of the centre. Separate & apart from the committee, parents are requested to help & make sure we maintain the standards of the centre even without being a member of the committee

P7: no

P8: yes, they are there in a council for parents at the ECD centre

P9: yes, there are some parents in the school board. They attend all meetings in the ECD centre

P10: yes, because some of the parents are in the governing board that helps in making decisions.

STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE PARENTS AND PRACTITIONERS INFORMATION SHARING

Researcher: What are the strategies to enhance parents and practitioner's information sharing that you are practicing?

P1: I am using WhatsApp sometimes to communicate with the teacher, but I feel there should be a WhatsApp group so that people can be able to communicate once. Because I feel parents will be having a lot of questions to ask but they will be just thinking that maybe I am the only one experiencing this therefore they are not able to ask.

P2: the message book that the school is doing and make sure that you have the teachers' number and always talking to the teacher and always be available and always getting inside the school yard when dropping your child.

P3: WhatsApp group for parents and teachers, having class reps that liaise with the teacher.

P4: I do share ideas with the principal at times, however this is at an informal level

P5: I make sure I communicate with teachers every week

P6: Not only do we have meetings with parents; we have a WhatsApp group that updates information consistently. Parents without WhatsApp, receive SMS; calls to make sure that everyone receives information

P7: we interact when I go to the school

P8: WhatsApp groups and letters

P9: a communication book and social media e.g. WhatsApp and parents' meetings

P10: through idea box

Researcher: What information can you share with the practitioner that will help to get a clear picture of what are the child's interests and strengths?

P1: I tell the teachers that my children are very active, there they must not worry too much lest say if the child is just walking up and down in the class, my children are like that. And I also open to them that my children are used to me shouting at them so there for sometimes you have to speak on top of your voice for them to listen as long as you don't beat them

P2: uuum I think…., if I say my child loves out door therefore the teacher will know that juggle jims will work well with the child, so I make sure I communicate with the teacher about what my child wants. And also telling the teacher what the child is allergic to for example my child is allergic to sun burns therefore the teacher will be aware that if they are doing activities where there is sun, my child has to be on the shade.

P3: Information about what the child is doing at school or what i see them doing at home

P4: The activities which the child is interested in

P5: share information about the sport that my child likes, what she is doing at home etc.

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P6: Child's interests at home; at school; health issues; what he enjoys doing on his own without supervision etc.

P7: I can share about what my child likes and what she enjoys doing

P8: about my child's behaviour, personality and the way they contact at home.

P9: I explain the child's reaction to homework and behaviour that will help the teacher to better understand the child.

P10: as a parent to notice if the child is shy or talkative and share with the practitioners

Researcher: Is it easy to access information about your child, and how do you do that?

P1: yes, it is easy I just go to any teacher and speak to them if there is something I want to enquire.

P2: Through communicating with teachers, I get all the information that I want.

P3: Yes, it is easy. We can send messages to the teacher on her WhatsApp and we can also book appointments then we see her when she is free

P4: Assuming from the ECD, it's not easy, I only come to know more about my child from the report and if there are any problems. I do also engage my child every day on what could have transpired at school

P5: yes, it is easy, I communicate with the class teacher of my child

P6: the centre keeps a file with all his information as well as recordings of observations of behaviour & attitude changes so as a parent you are allowed to ask for the file anytime and see how your child is doing.

P7: Yes, I always ask the teacher and the principal. I sometimes ask my child

P8: yes, it is easy

P9: yes, it is easy and we do that through communication books and through phone

P10: Yes, it is, by communicating with the teachers

Researcher: Does practitioners share information about the curriculum that they are teaching the kids? What are you as a parent doing to support this?

P1: yes, they do send weekly themes of what they are teaching our kids.

Researcher: (Probe P1) so do you also teach the child at home about those weekly themes?

P1: yes, I do

P2: yes, they do. They give themes that they are teaching them and per week they give a breakdown of the things that they are doing in detail.

P3: yes, they share themes for every week, we ask the kids about the theme that they will have done at the school

P4: No, they do not, I think this is very important. It should be done

P5: yes, they sent homework every week and I help my child to complete it.

P6: Yes, they show the curriculum at the beginning of every year & will indicate if there are changes. As a parent I do follow ups at home; help with revision & make sure the child is adequately prepared for each day at school.

P7: yes, they provide the curriculum and I revise with my child at home what they would have done at school

P8: yes, they do so in helping we try to practice with the kids as much as we can at home

P9: yes, they do and we follow the task given to us by the teacher regarding homework

P10: they have theme charts so the parents are allowed to see that.

Researcher: What do you think should be done for better information sharing between parents and practitioners?

P1: to understand what the means of communication is comfortable with the teachers, because some time if you send a WhatsApp, they do not respond but if you call you get your answer quick, so may be others are not comfortable on writing something down.

P2: it's all about attitudes in communication but this platform that we are using are very helpful. I understand that there are other parents that do not have WhatsApp but it's always about the attitude to communicate.

P3: There should be regular replies to messages and always checking the kids' books.

P4: There should be days in which parents are invited to come to the ECD and see their kids involved in activities at the ECD or in class. Also, there should be discussions on the curricula and activities between parents and practitioners

P5: There should be teacher and parents' meetings, even if it to meet after work hours

P6: Parents must not just be involved; they must avail themselves. Practitioners do their best in communicating but parents are not always compliant; parents must give their all; this is not for the practitioners' future but for our children's future!

P7: The crèche should have meetings with parents at least once a term

P8: I think all the practitioners should have both contacts and address for all parents they should have a data base to have internet access

P9: informal parent and practitioners meeting will help to have a better understanding view of the child's development.

P10: just to be open about the things that takes place at the centre, communication is the key.

EDITING CERTIFICATE

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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I, Jeanne Enslin, acknowledge that I did the language editing of **Lilymore Mudzawapasi's** thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education at the University of Fort Hare.

The title of the thesis is:

PARENTS AND PRACTITIONERS' PARTNERSHIP IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROVISIONING IN THE EAST LONDON EDUCATION DISTRICT

I also did some basic formatting of chapter headings and subheadings, table and figure headings and lists. I did not check references, as agreed with the student. All language corrections or changes are evident in the version of the thesis in track changes and with clear comments for the student's attention.

The quality of the final document, in terms of language, formatting and references remains the student's responsibility.

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