# EXPLORING THE IMPORTANCE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD STIMULATION IN RURAL HOWICK WEST IN PIETERMARITZBURG, KWAZULU-NATAL, SOUTH AFRICA

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of requirements for the degree of Master of Social Science (Research Psychology) in the School of Applied Human Sciences, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg.

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# DECLARATION

Submitted in partial fulfilment of requirements for the degree of Master of Social Science (Research Psychology) in the School of Applied Human Sciences, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg.

I, *Palesa Tracy Xulu*, declare that:

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# ABSTRACT

This study used qualitative research to investigate crèche educators' beliefs of the role of early childhood stimulation in rural areas in Pietermaritzburg; taking into cognizance educators' views on the role of play using toys as a form of stimulation. Considered in this study are the challenges and benefits experienced by educators participating in the Singakwenza early childhood intervention programme. Singakwenza early childhood intervention facilitator training challenges were also explored. The sample comprised of six rural educators and two facilitators that were all part of the Singakwenza early childhood intervention programme. Purposive sampling was used to recruit research participants whose ages ranged from 23 to 60 years. This study was aligned with the holistic approach and a social constructionist view of early childhood development. The findings showed that the educators' beliefs about the role of stimulation is directly related to their personal childhood backgrounds having experienced stimulating activities growing up and later engaging in the Singakwenza intervention training programme. This highlighted educators' beliefs that stimulation is important as it encourages development and growth in early childhood. Educators expressed feeling fulfilled in their professional role, as activities children engage in were applied at home and in the community. Educators also acknowledged the Department of Social Developments' assistance with food grants, which they found to be very helpful as most children attending the crèches were from disadvantaged backgrounds. Some of the challenges educators faced ranged from parents' lack of consideration for their children's educational needs, to lack of educational space as classrooms were considered small due to the large volume of children in attendance. Singakwenza facilitators articulated facing challenges from educators who required ECD education for the Singakwenza intervention to be successful. It is recommended that ECD educators and facilitators collaborate with parents to establish a sharing of ideas on how to establish effective ECD outcomes. Facilitators need to acknowledge and embrace at the onset and throughout the intervention process that educators possess some level of ECD knowledge and work towards assisting educators to excel in their profession. This study recommends that DSD and other governmental departments provide training to officials from DSD, local government, DBE and other organisations interested in ECD to accurately and meaningfully assess and monitor ECD services.

**Keywords:** Early Childhood Development, Educators, Parents, Facilitators, Department of Social Development, Stimulation, Play, Toys

# ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| DoE: | Department of Education |
| DBE: | Department of Basic Education |
| DSD: | Department of Social Development |
| ECD: | Early Childhood Development |
| ECD Programmes/Interventions: | Programmes offered directly to young children by ECD facilitators |
| LAMIC: | Low-and middle-income countries |
| NAEYC: | National Association for the Education of Young Children |
| NDP: | National Development Plan 2030 |
| NGO: | Non-Government Organization |
| NICHD: | National Institute of Child Health and Human Development |
| KZN: | KwaZulu-Natal |
| SAIDE: | South African Institute for Distance Education |
| UNICEF: | United Nations Children's Emergency Fund |
| UNISA: | University of South Africa |

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

# CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1    Background to the research problem

Studies in anthropology regarding hunter-gatherer communities have shown play to stimulate different areas of children's development (Gray, 2009). The study by Pellis and Pellis (2013) stated that for the longest time in history, humans have engaged in activities of play in early childhood that contributed to specific skills being used in adulthood. Therefore, the kinds of skills that children learn would be related to the types of tasks that an adult introduces to the child (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [NICHD], 2006). This would further determine and influence how the child develops and experiences the resources given to them, thus further contributing to the child's mental, cognitive, physical, and emotional stimulation and development (Hewlett & Lamb, 2009; NICHD, 2006).

Studies by Bock (2002a) and Lieberman (2014) identified that both development and learning are endogenously and simultaneously shaped, and that the custom or practice of human childhood is the consequence of indiscriminate advantages of the interface between development and learning, and through playful interactions children master particular skills which enable them to engage in creative and divergent thinking. This helps children to realise a sense of self-efficacy – a belief in their own ability to approach objectives, tasks and challenges (Lieberman 2014; Onishi, Baillargeon & Leslie, 2007). Adult and child interactions during play can help support children's reciprocity, inter-subjectivity and social cognition, which provide a basis for advanced forms of social awareness (Clearfield & Nelson, 2006; Meltzoff, 2007; Rochat, 2006). Therefore, play can be distinguished as a form of stimulation that can be viewed as an exploratory type of learning which involves various forms of behaviour that take shape in a "low-risk, low-cost context" (Gopnick & Walker, 2013, p. 15).

This study takes into cognizance that there are different kinds of play that stimulate development, i.e., video, computer games and free play, just to name a few. Electronic video and computer game play have been shown to stimulate cognitive, emotional, social and behavioural development in early childhood (Biocca, 2002; Granic, Lobel, Rutger & Engels, 2014; Greenfield, 2014; Griffiths, 2002; Li & Atkins, 2008) but shows less significance for physical development (Stettler, Signer & Suter, 2004). Research has shown that the time spent

by children engaging in video play has harmful effects on children's development, such as increased behavioural and attention problems, poor cognitive development; poor educational outcomes and obesity relating to lack of physical activity during video play (Anderson & Gentile & Buckley, 2007; Chan & Rabinowitz, 2006; Gentile, 2014; Gentile, Lynch, Linder, & Walsh, 2004; Kirkorian, Wartella & Anderson, 2008; Stettler, Signer & Suter, 2004; Swing, Gentile, Anderson & Walsh, 2010). Free play is considered important for children's development as it requires children to choose how they wish to engage in playful experiences, they also stop and start activities at will, with less guidance from adults (Santer, Griffiths & Goodall, 2007). Although the above point may be valid, free play does give children less direction in terms of achieving external goals and may contain a less educational component, therefore achieving less of an overall optimal developmental experience for the child (Santer, Griffiths & Goodall, 2007).

Educational play has been considered for this study more than video, computer game and free play because it has been shown to stimulate all the above areas of development, including physical and educational growth (Lillemyr, 2009). This study demonstrates how educators, through stimulating playful interactions with children can positively facilitate children's educational outcomes and influence developmental trajectories. Furthermore, due to this study being located in rural Pietermaritzburg, one has to have an understanding of rural Black communities early childhood development experiences in South Africa, thus the South African educational perspective is considered in this study.

The study by Kitchen (as cited in Lethoko, Heystek & Maree, 2001) reported that the Bantu Education Act (1953) of apartheid enforced the segregation of South African schools due to race, which left Black African communities, particularly schools, with poor education instruction, debilitated school buildings, and negative perception of African communities' educational system. The Department of Education *Interim Policy for Early Childhood Development* stated that children living in poverty stricken Black African communities attend crèches and schools that are underprivileged (DOE, 2001). These schools lack necessary educational facilities, thus decreasing the likelihood of children being stimulated in all areas of development (DoE, 2001). The lack of adequate educational facilities poses problems as it presents a challenge for children's successful educational performance later on in life (Williams et al., 2001). It is important to be aware that it is not only facilities that enable children to be stimulated at an early age leading to educational success, but also adult roles

help shape children's successful futures. Thus, research has found that educators play a pivotal role in encouraging early childhood stimulation as educators spend most of their time teaching and nurturing the relationship between themselves and children (Cevher-Kalburan, 2014).

Furthermore, educators "bring their personal beliefs and values about the ethical purpose of teaching", and these beliefs do have an impact on how children are educated and therefore learn (Cevher-Kalburan, 2014, p. 1). Educators are responsible for acquiring an understanding of early childhood development (ECD) knowledge comprising of play, as this is important for children growing up in adverse circumstances (Miller & Almon, 2009). Pitt, Luger, Bullen, Phillips and Geiger (2013) stated that adults that have not experienced some form of stimulation contributing directly to their education and learning processes during early childhood, are less likely to encourage or believe in the use of play as a form of stimulation in early childhood. Thus, this study sought to explore the educators' beliefs of the importance of early childhood stimulation in rural areas in Pietermaritzburg, taking into cognizance their views of the importance of play as a form of stimulation.

The study by Gardiner (2008) upon reflecting on education in rural areas of South Africa, reported that since 1994 training teacher colleges were of poor quality and used rigid teaching methods where children had a less critical attitude towards learning, thus these training colleges have since diminished, amounting in educators finding alternative ways of receiving education and training. The study by Koen and Ebrahim (2013) using qualitative methods, assessed 147 students in their final year of Foundation Phase specialization with the aim of exploring real-world experience, inclusive of engagement with cultural differences and how this influences the quality of students learning in Foundation Phase. Their findings suggested that using the real world as a means of authentic learning enables the students to create meaning by gaining first-hand experience with their learning environment (Koen & Ebrahim (2013). Their study further found that the lack of quality of education in early childhood in rural areas has an effect on the quality of how children learn and develop, therefore educator knowledge is important for future educational success in children (Koen & Ebrahim, 2013).

Educators that the current study engaged with were associated with Singakwenza. Singakwenza is based in Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal and is a Non-Profit, Public Benefit Organisation that recognizes the importance of stimulation through play, using tools such as recyclable toys in early in childhood to facilitate learning. Singakwenza has developed a

unique intervention programme focusing on using recyclable materials as toys. The recyclable materials are used as a form of education as Singakwenza facilitators train rural educators on how to make educational toys for children to learn and play. Recyclable toys encourage stimulation in children's cognitive, emotional and physical development, but also add to the fun of learning for children ranging from 3 to 5 years, as children are able to build and play with toys they have made individually and with other children (Kultti & Pramling, 2015). The early childhood stage is a critical period for children's cognitive and socio-emotional stimulation, therefore the Singakwenza intervention seeks to positively intervene at this stage, thus helping to encourage children's later educational success (Cheung, Cueoto, Glewwe, Richter & Strupp, 2007; Grantham-McGregor; Becker, 2011, Singakwenza, 2014).

It is envisaged that the findings of this study will contribute to the improvement of educators and communities' knowledge of the importance of stimulation in early childhood, and become open to interventions such as those offered by Singakwenza. The findings of the study also seek to bring an awareness to the importance of collaboration between parents, educators, ECD facilitators and other government stakeholders which will allow for greater quality education for children, as different ideas, information and understandings of effective ECD will be shared.

## 1.2    Statement of the problem

The importance of the role of early childhood development in South Africa cannot be disputed (Camilli, Barnett, Ryan & Vargas, 2010; Rivera, 2008; Van der Gaag, 2002). The South African government policies state that ECD includes children from birth to 4 years and Grade R is considered as a separate entity, with primary school starting from Grade 1 to 3 (DoE, 2001; Saide, 2014). The concept of ECD in South Africa and how it is structured leads to inconsistencies in viewing ECD overall (Excell, 2011). For example, ECD centres are funded and staffed differently compared to Grade R, the qualifications and registration of ECD educators is different from Grade R educators and what is articulated in policy documents is different in actuality (Excell, 2011; Excell & Linington, 2014). The dynamics considered above have an impact on how ECD educators perceive their ECD profession, which further affects the quality of ECD practice (Excell, 2011; Excell & Linington, 2014).

Despite great strides being made by the South African government departments, for example, the Department of Social Development (DSD), Department of Education (DoE), and the Department of Basic Education (DBE), to improve ECD policies, what constitutes quality ECD remains problematic as ECD is still described vaguely or loosely (Excell & Linington, 2014). This is perhaps encouraged by the conforming and/or not reforming ways of teaching that are still apparent in the country (Excell & Linington, 2014). ECD educators that have not had educational or practical exposure to ECD concepts or methods of application in classroom settings, tend not to have a definite conception of what constitutes quality ECD and therefore the application of play as a form of stimulation and learning in classroom contexts could prove to be difficult (Pitt et al., 2013). Thus, educators' lack of knowledge may affect quality practice and teaching of young children (Chisholm, 2004; Excell, 2011; Murtin, 2013; Mwai, 2003; NAEYC, 2009; Phurutse & Arends, 2015). Therefore, it is important to consider educator beliefs, educational and personal background, as all these attributes are interrelated and influence practice and how educators approach ECD as a whole (Rogers, 2010).

While there have been research accounts produced by Excell (2011), van der Vyver (2012) and Atmore (2013) on disadvantaged rural areas in South Africa regarding the importance of educators' role in early childhood development, there has been limited research on educators' beliefs of play as a form of stimulation in rural Howick West in Pietermaritzburg. The current study sought to contribute to such knowledge.

## 1.3    Research aim
The current study aimed to explore educators' beliefs of the role of stimulation in early childhood, as educators spend most of their time teaching and facilitating how children grow and develop development.

## 1.4    Objectives
Using a qualitative approach, the current study had the following objectives:
 a)  To explore early childhood crèche educators' beliefs about the role of stimulation in childhood development.
 b)  To explore early childhood educators' involved in the Singakwenza early childhood intervention programme, experiences of the challenges and benefits of participating in the programme.

c) To establish the training concerns raised by Singakwenza facilitators involved in early childhood development intervention programme.

## 1.5 Research questions

The following research questions guided the current study:

 a) What are the early childhood educators' involved in the Singakwenza early childhood intervention programme beliefs about the role of stimulation in child development?

 b) What are the challenges and benefits experienced by educators' participating in the Singakwenza early childhood intervention programme?

 c) What concerns regarding training challenges do Singakwenza facilitators involved in the early childhood intervention programme have?

## 1.6 Methodology

The interpretivist research paradigm was used in this study, along with qualitative research methods. The interpretivist paradigm and qualitative research methods were deemed suitable for this study as eight one-on-one interviews were conducted. Interviews were used as they lead to a more significant understanding of individual's thoughts about their social world (King & Horrocks, 2010). Non-probability sampling methods were used, specifically purposive sampling, as the researcher had the deliberate intention of using the recruited sample (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Thematic analysis was applied to examine the patterns in participants' responses (Lyons & Coyle, 2016).

## 1.7 Definition of terms

**Crèche:** A crèche is a day-care centre for young children (Excell and Linington, 2011). For this study, a crèche primarily caters to children from poorer families and children's ages range from 0 to 5 years.

**Early Childhood:** Is defined as the period where rapid growth and development occurs in the human life. This rapid development occurs from birth to eight years and is critical for healthy cognitive, emotional and physical growth of young children thus forming the foundation for later educational development and well-being (UNICEF, 2001).

**Early Childhood Development (ECD):** "An umbrella term which applies to the processes by which children from birth to at least 9 years grow and thrive, physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, morally and socially" (DOE, 2001).

**ECD Programmes/Services:** Refers to those programmes offered directly to young children by ECD facilitators.  These can be offered at ECD centres, homes and crèches etcetera.  "ECD programmes include a variety of strategies and a wide range of services directed at helping families and communities to meet the needs of children in the above mentioned age group" (DOE, 2001).

**Educator:** The Department of Basic Education (2010) conceptualises the term educator as "any person, who teaches, educates or trains other persons or who provides professional educational services".

**Facilitator:**  A facilitator can be defined as an individual qualified by their experience who provides services in homes, centres and schools. For the purposes of this study, the term facilitator includes both formally and non-formally trained individuals providing an educational service in ECD and who may be associated with an ECD programme (Ebrahim & Irvine, 2012).

**Play:** Young children's play can be defined as creativity, adaptation, exploration, experimentation, learning, communication, socialization, acculturation, and mastery (Ashiabi, 2007; Piaget, 1962; Schwartzman, 1978; Vygotsky, 1978).  Play also involves gross and fine motor movements and thus promotes coordination and visio-spatial ability (Sheridan, Howard, Alderson, 2010).

**Quality:** Hyde and Kabiru (2003, p. 53) define quality as a measure of excellence, free "from defects, deficiencies, and significant variations that are brought about by consistent adherence to measurable and verifiable standards to achieve uniformity of output that satisfies specific customer or user requirements".  In this study, quality refers to the ability of ECD programmes and DOE, DBE and other government organisations to satisfy stated or implied needs of the learners, the community and the government as stated in the South African legislations and policies.

**Stimulation:** Includes cognitive, psychosocial and physical stimulus, that when coupled with nutrition, healthcare and education can help with children's optimal development (UNICEF, 2001). For the purposes of this study, stimulation is introduced through educational play in order to help facilitate children's overall development.

**Toys:** Can be defined as contributory objects that come in different forms which are an imitation of something which enables the many possibilities of play in children's games, thus toys include objects such as dolls, teddy bears, play cars etcetera (Lillemyr, 2009). In this study, educational toys are defined as toys that are given to children to arouse their interest in a manner that is effective enough to achieve educational gains.

## 1.8    Conclusion

This chapter introduced the background to the research problem and problem statement. The research objectives and questions were also outlined, as well as the methodological process conducted in the study. The following chapter is a discussion of the literature review which contains ECD information on educators, facilitators, parents and intervention programmes needed to ensure effective quality and effectiveness in early childhood.

# CHAPTER 2
# LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1    Introduction

The current chapter discusses the concept of early childhood development and the importance of using play as a form of stimulation.  The literature reviewed gives an understanding of the different types of play encouraged in early childhood, the impact of culture on ECD, as well as the role of government, ECD interventions, educators and family in effectively facilitating and implementing ECD interventions.

## 2.2    Early childhood development in present day South Africa

The DoE (2001a) argued that ECD is the all-encompassing term that takes into cognizance the "process by which children from birth to at least 9 years grow and thrive, physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, morally and socially" (p. 33).  In addition, the White Paper No. 5 on Early Childhood Education (2001) focuses on the development of children in early childhood and also the rights that pertain to them (DoE, 2001a).  Thus, the South African government seeks to bring about a transformation in the education system (DOE, 2014).  This transformation includes an improvement in the quality of how educators teach and children learn in early childhood (DoE, 2014).  To support the improvement of ECD, the DoE (2014) maintains that improvement of infrastructure, intervention strategies and human resources to support effective education in the early childhood years are warranted.  The review by the DoE (2014) as cited in Motshekga & Surty, 2014), indicated that basic education should be viewed as important for the country of South Africa in "Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) 2014-2019 and is central to the government's National Development Plan 2030 (NDP)" (p. 9).

The South African NDP 2030 is central to the nation's developmental goals and is focused on the provision of integrated early childhood development, more so for children who come from less fortunate backgrounds (National Planning Commission [NPC], 2012).  It was identified by The Housing Development Agency by Project Preparation Trust of KZN (2014) which asserted that the effectiveness of the provision and planning of ECD services requires that government departments, such as DoH, DSD, DoE, with communities, parents, educators and NPOs to ensure collaboration with each other so as to have and maintain meaningful outputs.

When considering ECD, the Department of Health covers the birth to 9 years age cohort and the system primarily prioritises access of public health services to children coming from disadvantaged areas (Leatt, Shung-King & Monson, 2006). Atmore, van Niekerk and Ashley-Cooper (2012) stated that the Department of Social Development (DSD) acknowledges its role as focusing on the birth to 4 years cohort. The study by Pasensie (2012) stated that the DSD primarily helps fund children's nutritional and basic needs in the form of subsides and supports registered ECD centres with educational equipment. Thus, the study further revealed that the Department of Education of South Africa assumes responsibility for the 5 to 9 years age cohort and therefore has the responsibility of funding ECD centres that are registered as independent schools and assumes responsibility of paying Grade R educator's salaries and training, which helps to strengthen and support ECD structures (Pasensie, 2012). Although the DSD has shown great promise in alleviating the plight of ECD, the study by Martin (2012) showed that more needs to be done to improve the quality of early childhood education in South African disadvantaged crèches.

The much needed improvement is evidenced in the study by the national Department of Basic Education (DBE), DSD and UNICEF, where researchers found that registered and unregistered community ECD crèches and centres were of "poorer standard than that of public schools" (DBE, DSD & UNICEF, 2010, p. 61). The indications evidenced by researchers show that problems could arise if children do not have access to a quality ECD environment, as research from DBE, DSD and UNICEF (2010) further revealed that poorer learning environments can be associated with poorer ECD and restricted developmental opportunities. Hence, children who do not receive quality ECD services and programmes, nutrition, proper stimulation and education, are at risk of poor health and other vulnerabilities which include but are not limited to low pass rates and negative adult outcomes (Johnson, 2006).

The nature of ECD requires that all children have access to quality services that are stimulating and nurturing educationally, thus the DSD's National Draft of Early Childhood Development Policy of the Republic of South Africa of 2015, recognized that ECD services do not reach every child and therefore are not universal (DSD, 2015; Unicef, 2015). Furthermore, some of the ECD services that are available to disadvantaged children are of poor quality as they lack nutritional, parental, early care and educational support (DSD, 2015; Unicef, 2015). The DSD and Mbere (2015) maintained that some ways to rectify these problems is by making vulnerable children a priority for ECD services by empowering educators and parents in providing a

"coordinated planning, funding, implementation, monitoring of progress and ongoing quality improvements to ensure realisation of the national ECD vision, goals and objectives" (p. 18).

The country of South Africa can be thought of as going through a transition phase where education policy authors are making strides in the implementation of ECD policies, such as the 2013-2018 Integrated ECD Plan (Biersteker & Dawes, 2014). These strides undertake to ensure that all children aged five years will have attended an educational institution by year 2014, which has seen the South African government putting more of an effort into ECD interventions in the country. Therefore, the significance of this has led to more favourable outcomes for ECD services and children, as an increase has been shown in children of 5 years attending ECD institutions in the past few years, which is useful if children are to receive an equal opportunity for educational success later on in life (DBE, 2014).

## 2.3    Understanding early childhood development

Essentially, the first five years of a child's life shapes the child's development and also shapes who and what the child will become so basically shaping the child's future, growth, family and community dynamics (Grantham-McGregor, Cheung, Cueto, Glewwe, Richter, Strupp, & The International Child Development Steering Group, 2007). From the time a child is born, to the first few years of its life, it goes through rapid growth in different domains which helps to lay a strong foundation for learning specific skills (Edie, 2007; Field, 2010; McDevitt & Ormrod, 2002), as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 6 & 27) emphasised that all children have the right to develop to their maximum potential, which includes the right to be physically, mentally, spiritually, morally and socially developed (UNICEF, 2013). Thus, studies by UNICEF (2013) consider early childhood development as beginning from 0 to 8 years. During this age timeframe, children go through developmental milestones that have a great impact on their level of achievement in school and in the social world (Karoly, Kilburn & Cannon, 2005; Kilburn & Karoly, 2008; National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2009; Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2004).

Laying a strong foundation in early childhood is important as research studies have found that the developmental challenges that children face in the younger years, i.e. lack of healthcare and nutrition, poverty, lack of cognitive stimulation, play a role in children's poor achievement at school, leading to negative behavioural outcomes later on in life (Beatty & Rapporteur, 2009; Chilton, Chyatte, & Breaux, 2007). Furthermore, research has shown that exposure to early

childhood interventions leads to tremendous turn around for children's educational trajectory, more so for those children who are disadvantaged and at risk of delayed school readiness (Howes, Richie & Bowman, 2002). The study by Baker-Henningham and Boo (2010) found that children aged birth to age 5 years, who have been exposed to prerequisite skills are likely to have more benefits and take advantage of later learning opportunities than their disadvantaged counterparts. This emphases the importance of disadvantaged children receiving intervention opportunities with the help of different role players, i.e., educators, parents, facilitators, etc., in facilitating the maximization of children's developmental potential, which will ensure long-term educational success (Campbell, et al., 2014; Heckman, 2006; Lara-Cinisomo, Fuligni, Daugherty, Howes and Karoly, 2009).

## 2.4    The role of culture in early childhood development

Bekoff and Byers (as cited in Gopnick & Walker, 2013) stated that across species, children engaged in playful activities that they would later use in adulthood. Play can therefore be described as a type of exploratory learning in which the young animal engages in a variety of behaviours in a low-risk, low-cost context" (p. 15).   For generations children have learnt to educate themselves about their surroundings though play and active engagement. Children of hunter-gatherers learnt different skills by simply applying their knowledge learnt from observing and modelling adults, peers and others, on how to go about worldly tasks by engaging in play and exploration (Gopnick and Walker, 2013; Hewlett & Lamb, 2009).

Gray (2009) indicated that childhood play and exploration in hunter-gatherer beginnings had a fundamental role in establishing later educational growth and adult success for children, as these children did not only consider play as free time, but also as work.  For example, children could learn how to sharpen wood to make toys or make spears to hunt for game, allowing them to become productive members of that particular community (Bock & Johnson, 2004).  In addition, the study by Hewlett, Founts, Boyette and Hewlett (2011) stated that social learning played a profound role in how hunter-gatherer children learned and developed, thus in their study they found that children learned faster and caught on to tasks easier below the age of 5 years.  Therefore, children develop through social learning and their cultural context has an influence on how and which kinds of learning takes place in early childhood (Boyd, Richerson & Henrich. 2011; Kolb, 2014; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014).

Culture can be defined as the traditions that people practise; it can be expressed in how people dress, the food they eat, the types of music and dance they engage in, as well as the ideas, interests, values, beliefs and relationships people become involved in (Kalman, 2010). The cultures that individuals belong to will permit them to behave in a certain way or adopt a certain perspective on a certain issue specific to that culture (Storey, 2015). For example, if educators grew up in a culture of learning, where education and play were emphasised, they will have a belief in the value of education through play, therefore using playful activities to educate children at home and at crèche (Rogers, 2010). Thus, when considering how children develop in the early years, it is imperative that people involved in ECD practices, such as educators, researchers, policy makers and facilitators take into account the child's cultural background when creating policies or designing ECD programmes on how and what children should be taught in classroom contexts (Maschinot, 2008). This will give a more accurate and holistic view of the child's cultural context and how the child ought to learn and develop in that particular environment (Maschinot, 2008). Furthermore, studies have found that play and culture go hand in hand as play is viewed across many cultures as the main element that young children engage in, thus the importance of play and toys as a form of stimulation has to be taken seriously in early childhood and applied accordingly in classroom contexts by ECD educators (Dell Clark, 2009; James & Prout, 2015; Rettig, 1995).

## 2.5    The role of toys in facilitating stimulation in early childhood development

Early childhood stimulation is largely encouraged through the use of play and toys (Wood, 2013). Toys can be used by educators in supporting children's development at a young age, as there are various ways children can create toys, which facilitates simulation (Sinno, Charafeddine & Mikati, 2013). For instance, the action of making toys using recyclable materials allows the use of physical and mental stimulation as the child uses their imagination and hands to malleable construct toys. The various types of toys enable children to engage in different social behaviours such as sharing, which permit reciprocal interaction and encourages relationships between children and others (Sharma & Cockerill, 2014; Sheridan, Howard, Alderson, 2010). Furthermore, toys that resemble symbolic games and encourage creativity also encourage stimulation of the different developmental domains, namely, "active engagement, internal control, social connection, and joyfulness" (Änggård, 2011; Sinno et al., 2013; Wohlwend, 2015). Thus, the domains characterise the various ways that play is observable in behaviour, cognition, affect and social-cultural connection which allows for

children's fundamental development (Cornelli Sanderson, 2010, p. 2; Smith, Cowie & Blades, 2015).

When children are given the opportunity to play with different toys, they acquire a set of different skills and abilities; they also gain play experiences that allow them to perform different functions (Bergen, 2015; Cornelli Sanderson, 2010). Benson and Haith (2009) study found that different toys encourage different play experiences for children. For example, toddler boys may build cars or bridges using clay. This building of toy cars may stimulate creative thinking and competitiveness, whilst for girl toddlers who engage in playing with dolls this would stimulate more nurturing, loving and caring feelings and abilities (Lindsey, 2015). Thus, play using stimulation toys has beneficial outcomes in early childhood development.

The belief in play and the encouragement and motivation by adults, especially educators is needed, as educators spend the most time with children therefore having an influence on children's development (Boyd, Barnett, Bodrova, Leong, & Gomby, 2005; Gordon and Browne, 2014; Miller & Almon, 2009). Educators who do not introduce or encourage the use of play using educational toys as a form of learning risk placing young children at a disadvantage (Research Foundation, 2010) by hindering children's' possession of a full number of sensations which could contribute to optimal development (Elkind, 2007). Further still, the DoE (2014) asserted that educational toys allow children to actively engage with their immediate environment therefore encouraging social interactions with other children and adults which allow association and development of ideas about gender roles, as children practice social skills and communication (DOE, 2014).

## 2.6    The importance of play in early childhood development

Play is "intrinsically motivated, and personally directed by the child...it is a lens through which children experience their own world, and the world of others", furthermore, it involves the child engaging in free and spontaneous behaviour with or without adult instruction (Goldstein, 2003, p. 5; Sheridan, Howard & Alderson, 2010). Goldstein's (2003) study found that play consists of stimulating sensations that can enhance early childhood development at least by 33%, and, ECD intervention of children's access to toys at the age of 18 months is equal to a child's intelligence at the age of 3 years, which is significant as this leads to the belief that play does support and prompt development in the early years. Moreover, Essa (2011) stated that play has cognitive, emotional, physical and social benefits, and when adults encourage and

partake in playful activities with children, children are able to trust their abilities and gain independence in all areas of development. Thus, the study by Lester and Russell (as cited in Gleave & Cole-Hamilton, 2012, p. 9) revealed that there is an overall amount of evidence that suggests that play assists children in developing cognitive functions. These cognitive functions include mental processes such as perception, memory, attention and language development (Nouchi & Kawashima, 2014). Saracho and Spodek (2005) stated that language can be understood to be a tool of thought as it supports children's' cognitive development as language skills development allow children to be more independent and organized in such a way that they can reconstruct their perceptions to fit their own goals and intentions.

An example of this is the study by Lockhart (2010) who gave the illustration of a child who is building a doghouse using educational blocks. Whilst pretending to build the block house the child is pretending to be the owner of the dogs and the doghouse. The child pretends to sooth the dogs, calming them down as not to get aggressive towards the builder who is battling to complete the doghouse. While the child pretends to be the builder, he/she takes on a concurrent role and lends voice to the owner of the doghouse (Lockhart, 2010). In this scenario, the child is showing signs of important cognitive functions, such as self-regulation and control, whilst also developing language skills that enable the child to plan, organize and execute other skills (Lockhart, 2010). It is therefore evident that play serves a critical role in children developing cognitive skills and language, which can be further strengthened by adult intervention and facilitation through helpful hints of how to better role play and make use of language (Lockhart, 2010).

Play is viewed as producing social and emotional skills in young children, and these skills are critical as they encourage children's cognitive development (Boyd et al., 2005). Tassoni (2007) stated that, some of the social benefits of play can be seen when children engage in cooperative play and showcase skills such as turn-taking, listening, and sharing with other children and adults during play activities, thus children are able to regulate and control their emotional states when engaged in play with others. Educators' and parent's role in the development of socio-emotional skills is important (Tassoni, 2007). Thus children learn to master certain skills with adult supervision and reinforcement, which encourage the creation of the personality, regulation of emotions and facilitation of relationships with peers and adults (Schore, 2015; Tassoni, 2007).

Other skills can also be developed using play as found by Trawick-Smith (n.d.); Bart, Hajami, and Bar-Haim (2007); Kail & Cavanaugh (2015), who noted that before and after birth, young children engage in motor activities that are fundamental for their growth and development. When young infants move playfully, for example, a child of six month holding onto the table and grasping at a toy, this can help the child develop knowledge about the characteristics of the objects they want to play with and the types of surfaces that these object tends to be found; thus the playful movements that children engage in at this level tend to contribute to primary motor abilities (Bourgeois, Akhawar, Neal, & Lockman, 2005; de Campos, Rocha, Cicuto, & Savelsbergh, 2010). Accordingly, Adolph, Vereijken and Shrout (2003) stated that as infants get older, they are able to master loco-motor skills, such as walking and braking, and these skills are directly related to the quality of playful experiences and where the experience happens, which is generally at home, on the playground or in the class environment.

In addition, Bourgeois et al. (2005) found that children at the age of 10 months are able to manipulate objects in more complex ways and manipulation of these playful objects allows for more complicated motor skills, such as throwing or catching a ball, in preschool. While the study by Clearfield (2011) observed that the onset of walking marks the onset of cognitive and social behaviours. Three experiments were done. In the first experiment, children were observed to see if they showed signs of exploration and social behaviours while crawling in a baby-walker. The second experiment entailed observing "the social behaviours of independently walking infants who were compared to age-matched crawling infants in a baby-walker" and the third experiment used longitudinal measures to track infants' social behaviours as they "transitioned from crawling to walking" (p. 1). Results showed that, "even when controlled for age, the transition to independent walking marked increased interaction time with mothers, as well as more sophisticated interactions, including directing mothers' attention to particular objects" (Clearfield, 2011, p. 1). Clearfield's (2011) research showed that for children to develop essential skills such as learning to walk or throw and catch a ball, children need the attention, nurturance and guidance from an adult, more especially parents, caregivers or educators, as these individuals spend most of the time with children and can provide developmental support. Furthermore, Russell (as cited in Winter, 2010) found that playful engagement between children and caregivers can help mediate children's developmental trajectories, causing the consistency of affective relationships from caregivers to be essential for ECD to be successful.

It is crucial for adults engaging with young children to understand that early childhood development is holistic in nature (McMonagle, 2012). Meaning that the different learning and development that take place in a child's life are all "interconnected and mutually dependent" thus the playful activities children interact, are essential for children's cognitive, emotional, physical and social development therefore not being mutually exclusive in children's overall development (McMonagle, 2012, p. 1). Thus, the awareness is important as it will permit for better facilitation of children's holistic development and educators can become aware of which activities to implement in crèche in order to promote effective ECD practices using play based learning activities (McMonagle, 2012).

## 2.7 Different types of play in early years

Play requires that children be able to be free enough to move around in an open space and enjoy an interactive social environment with peers and educators. There are different types of play that are visible in early childhood, especially during crèche years. In a developmental study, O'Neill, Swartz, de la Rey, Duncan and Townsend (as cited in Bukatko and Daehler, 2004) found that there are three forms of play that are apparent in young children, namely, "solidarity play, parallel play and cooperative play". Ruthus (2014) observed that these types of play take place in 2 to 5 year old children. Thus, during solidarity play, children tend to play by themselves without acknowledging the other children (Arthur, Beecher, Death, Farmer, & Dockett, 2014; Bierman, Torres, Domitrovich, Welsh, & Gest, 2008; New & Cochran, 2007). While Sigelman and Rider (2014) observed that parallel play takes place when the child is aware of the other children around him/her, and he/she engages in play with peers in the same space, but does not interact with them.

Furthermore, cooperative play promotes cognitive and social development in children and involves children engaging actively with each other (Gestwicki, 2013; O'Neill, Swartz, de la Rey, Duncan & Townsend, 2011; Rubin, Bukowski, & Laursen, 2011). "Spectator play" and "associative/partnership play", are also other types of play that children similarly engage in. Spectator play involves a child watching another child or children playing and that child refrains from taking part and becomes a spectator of how other children play, while associative/partnership play entails children playing together and sharing the same materials or by imitating thus enabling active engagements between children (Ruthus, 2014; White, 2012).

The different types of play that children engage in are important for children's cognitive, emotional and physical stimulation and also contribute to children's social development, as they interact with others, fostering healthy development in the above mentioned areas of development (Ginsburg, 2007; NAEYC, n.d).  Although play is primarily led by children and development happens within children, adults still have the responsibility of creating physically and psychologically suitable spaces and environments that are conducive to playful interactions, while facilitating playful experiences children engage in during activities (Santer, Griffiths & Goodall, 2007).

## 2.8     Understanding South Africa's early childhood development struggles

In the past, apartheid was used by the White Afrikaans minorities as a tool to oppress and violate the natives living in South Africa (Gerard, 2011; Southall, 2010).  Education, health, transport and recreation were divided and confined along racial lines (Beinart & Dubow, 1995; Fiske & Ladd, 2004; Lamanski, 2004).  Schools, especially in rural and township areas suffered the most as they lacked proper educational facilities and no funds were allocated to the improvement of education thus leading to debilitated school buildings and poor quality of education in these areas (Chisholm, 2004; Clark & Worger, 2011).  The lack of commitment to the improvement of schools left African communities disadvantaged, as Black learners showed high drop-out and poor passing rates and low assessment scores (Attewell & Newman, 2010; van Heerden, 1995).

The study by Atmore (2013) stated that learners who were affected the most were those in early childhood.  Atmore's review investigated South Africa's children's situation during apartheid. Thus, the situation analysis investigated the "South African government ECD policy and programme implementation reports, and the main challenges affecting children and the ECD sector in South Africa" (p. 1).  Atmore's study concluded that there had been improvement in terms of children's and community's access to ECD centres and programmes nationally. Progress in ECD can be seen both qualitatively and quantitatively, as children from disadvantaged backgrounds are now better equipped to access Grade R having learnt fundamental skills in crèche.  Atmore's study revealed that children have access to education that is of better quality than before, as crèches and ECD centres have the support of government and the Department of Social Development, but they also identified "infrastructure, nutrition, ECD programmes, teacher training, institutional capacity and funding as the major gaps in ECD provision" (Atmore, 2013, p. 1).

It is important to take note that although apartheid had played a part in hindering positive ECD outcomes in rural and township areas, South Africa as a country has come a long way since apartheid rule (Gerard, 2011). The study by Lethoko, Heystek, and Maree (2001) stated that one of the most important challenges that the post-apartheid South African democracy faces is that of creating a society that nurtures and accepts the concept of education and what education means for educators, learners and parents. Thus, these stakeholders need to interactively collaborate to ensure quality education for all children in early childhood (Daniel, Southall, & Lutchman, 2005).

Expanding on this, Lethoko, Heystek and Maree (2001); Irogbe (2003) revealed that education should be valued as an important contribution to the nation's socio-economic development and therefore a culture of education needs to be established in crèches, schools and in communities, as this culture of learning will help create positive and reflective attitudes about learning as a whole. To further shed light on this point, Govender and Fataar (2014) revealed that since 1994, the new government has made great strides in ensuring that educators in disadvantaged areas have access to professional education and training. The Department of Basic Education (2011) upon reflecting on professional teacher training, stated that South Africa's ECD NGO's play a great role in creating innovative and creative experiences for both educators and learners through ensuring effective programme planning, curriculum design and educator training and accreditation. Additionally, with the help of NGO services educators from rural communities acquire professional skills and knowledge that is able to accommodate children's needs in their cultural context. Such programme implementation skills can be received at accredited university institutions, such as UNISA (2015) who outlined that there are ECD courses available for educators, parents and other caregivers that ensure they are well equipped with knowledge that they can practice at home and in the classroom settings.

## 2.9    Parents' role in early childhood development

In the context of rural South Africa, the lack of parent involvement in children's education in disadvantaged areas could be due to a variety of problems (New & Cochran, 2007). These problems range from lack of proper knowledge of how to effectively enquire from educators about children's progress and how to better help children with homework, as parents themselves are uneducated (Nyama, 2010). Venter and Rambau (2011) placed emphasis on

issues such as economic problems and poverty and that these problems do influence lack of parental assistance in children's education.

Parents from disadvantaged backgrounds may not fully understand play and the use of toys as a form of stimulation in early childhood. Thus, lack of knowledge may be due to parents lacking insight as to what stimulation is and why it's needed for children to attain prerequisite skills that will benefit them later in their education (Baker, Camero, Rimm-Kaufman & Grissmer, 2012; Lifter, Foster-Sanda, Arzamarski, Briesch & McClure, 2011; Moses, 2006). Milteer and Ginsburg (2012) stated that many disadvantaged parents struggle to incorporate or encourage the uses of play and toys as a form of stimulation, mainly because parents coming from these backgrounds have no time to make play a priority due to lack of interest or lack of funds to buy toys, as they are faced with poverty issues. The study by Kotzé (n.d.) stated that the insufficient parental involvement in children's stimulation in early childhood poses a problem as research shows that children from poorer backgrounds, who are not exposed to stimulation in early childhood, tend to show a vast difference in cognitive and non-cognitive abilities, when compared to children from more advantaged backgrounds.

Essentially, some parents lack "knowledge about and ownership of their right to be involved in the decisions shaping their children's education" (Lundgren, Scheckle & Zinn, 2015, p. 4). Thus the study by Pitt, Luger, Bullen, Phillips and Geiger (2013), revealed that parents who have little to no education, and have not been exposed to ECD programmes are less likely to encourage or believe in stimulation in their children's early years. It is of importance to acknowledge the problem experienced by parents, as Mereoiu, Bland, Dobbins and Niemeyer (2015) study specified that it would be beneficial if parents and family collaborated with educators and other professionals involved in early childhood development programmes, so that parents can better understand ECD and help their children reach developmental milestones. Cardona (2008) revealed that "the foundation of children's development and learning depends upon the inter-contextual nature of relationships between families and schools", and that family involvement breeds positive outcomes for communities and society (p. 1). Thus, parents that are fully involved in their children's education at home, facilitate better child performance at school, and further collaboration with educators helps parents prepare children for formal schooling (Campbell, 2008; Pomerantz & Moorman, 2007).

The research reported by Hannon and Nutbrown (as cited in Desforges & Abouchaar, 2009, p. 67-68) exemplified the above description of how parents' involvement is crucial in early childhood. The research was conducted in the United Kingdom, with the objective of exploring ways in which educators and parents could use collaborative efforts as a form of promoting literacy development at crèche. There was a control and one intervention group. The intervention included educator visits to pupil's homes, group activities and parents were able to take part in the intervention programme. Results revealed that parents were positive about the programme, as this was evident in the 100% no dropout rate of participants in the study (Hannnon & Nutbrown, 2001). Educators that took part in the programme rated parental engagement highly. The children's literacy achievement was found to be higher than that of the comparable group thus the intervention was viewed to have had an all-round positive result.

The discussion in this section shows that when parents work together with educators they are able to share responsibilities, accountability of outcomes and goals and resources, thus this collaboration permits for mutual trust, support, respect and a common objective of wanting to improve children's development in early childhood (Cook & Friend, 2010; Mitchell, 2014; Pianta, Kraft-Sayre, Rimm-Kaufman, Gercke, & Higgins, 2001).

## 2.10    Educators role in early childhood development

The study by Azuma (as cited in Taylor, Samuelsson & Rogers, 1999) maintained that culture plays a significant role in how educators view play, as it is established that different cultures may attach different meanings to the same phenomena and educator background influence beliefs about play as a form of learning. Educator's cultural context and beliefs about play, has a role in whether or not they encourage stimulation through play, as educators spend most of their time teaching children, as stated by Cevher-Kalburan, (2014, p. 1) who observed that educators "bring their personal beliefs and values about the ethical purpose of teaching" when interacting with children, thus these beliefs do have an impact on how children are educated and therefore learn.

Although educators are aware of the value of early childhood stimulation such as traditional concepts of play, they seem unaware or do not have enough knowledge of the different uses of early childhood stimulation, such as brain development, memory, physical and social development processes that are developed using effective stimulation (Woods & Jeffrey, 2002). Thus educator's background, histories, culture, education level and the way in which educators

perceive children to learn in the younger years, has an effect on how they educate and the level of quality they give to children's education (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004; Woods & Jeffrey, 2002). This is exemplified in the study by Excell (2011) whose research was set in Johannesburg South Africa, with the aim of investigating how teacher's perceptions influence their practice. Results showed that even though educators maintained that they were using a constructionist approach to teaching, a few could not articulate their understanding of their practice. Moreover, educators' "espoused theories" were not the same as their "theories in use". Educators used more traditional teaching methods as opposed to more alternative methods, and children were viewed as unable to determine their learning paths, therefore seen as helpless and dependent on the educator (Excell, 2011, p. 320). Therefore, giving light to the fact that educators need to be cognizance of their beliefs and how these can hinder or challenge how they choose to stimulate children during tasks.

To give context to the above, The Department of Basic Education (2014) stated that educators are the heart and soul of a "functioning school system", thus it is imperative that educators' development is taken seriously as educators are the ones that can ensure a quality education for children, therefore improving the quality of South Africa's education system (p. 1). Research studies by Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop (2004); Grant, Gardner, Kajee, Moodley and Somaroo (2010) revealed that educators in possession of educational training need to be continuously improving their capabilities and maintain their confidence in their profession, so educators can better understand their role as leaders in young children's lives, therefore facilitating effective educational outcomes for children.

The impact that educators can make on young children's development, is evidenced by research conducted by Cortina, Fazel, Tintswalo, Hlungwani, Kahn, Tollman, Cortina-Borja and Stein (2013) where the research aimed to investigate the "prevalence of children's psychological problems as well as possible risk and protective factors, in a rural, socio-economically disadvantaged area of South Africa" (Cortina et al., 2013, p. 1). The study made use of 1,025 children who were assessed and rated, and psychological problems in children were examined using teacher- and child-report questionnaires. Results showed "teachers identified high levels of behavioural and emotional problems (41%). Children reported lower, but substantial rates of anxiety/depression (14%), and significant post-traumatic stress symptoms (24%)" (Cortina et al., 2013, p. 1). These results reiterate that educators are fundamentally key to recognizing the psychological, emotional and stressful problems that children in their classrooms may be

facing and therefore intervention strategies to support educators and children are needed, so children can be successful in their education and overall wellbeing (Cortina et al., 2013).

To elaborate, several studies found that educators play a crucial role in children's development and need to exhibit empathic and pro-social behaviour when educating, as these abilities develop in the second year of a child's 'life, thus enabling children to be instilled with sound affective and academic skills to better assimilate positively into society (Baumeister and Bushman, 2008; Brownell, 2012; Hopkins, 2014). Therefore, pro-social behaviour and empathy emerge when children engage in shared activities with educators, parents or peers (Dowling, 2014). McDonald and Messinger (2011) cited that pro-social behaviour included the child doing something that is good for another and the study by Findlay, Girardi and Coplan (2006) revealed empathy as the child being able to put themselves in another's shoes, by caring and understanding how another is feeling. With the encouragement of the uses of play and toys in an educational setting, educators can act out pro-social skills and empathic behaviours that children can model in their own playful experiences with peers (Dowling, 2014; Wentzel, 2015).

The encouragement of empathy and pro-social behaviour can lead to the creation of positive social relationships and healthy outcomes for children (Caselman, 2006). Thus, when young children model pro-social behaviours and empathy from educators, this can create a lasting self-concept and understanding of the self as a school-self (Mindes, 2006). Over and above that, educators feel pride in their professional role knowing that they have helped shape children's lives by instilling them with values and behaviours that they can practice at home, in their communities and in society, as they see children's accomplishments as an extension of themselves (Ladson-Billings, 2009). In addition, Lundgren, Scheckle and Zinn (2015) stated that educators need to stimulate a different kind of engagement around learning and teaching practices within crèches and schools, as this will encourage educators to reflect on their own and their learner's practices when applying new teaching strategies, thus promoting optimal childhood development and effective teaching habits.

## 2.11   Early childhood development programmes

There has been much attention given to early childhood development programmes in generally poorer countries over the past few years (Engle et al., 2007; Engle et al., 2011; Gertler, et al.,

2014; Nair & Radhakrishnan, 2004). These ECD programmes cater to children, families and educators and include planned activities that are holistic and "designed to promote the emotional, mental, spiritual, moral, physical and social development of children from birth to nine years" (Ebrahim & Irvine, 2012, p. 6). Research findings show that to be effective, early childhood development programme facilitators need to be aware of the communities' culture, social background and for programmes to be geared more towards children from disadvantaged backgrounds, with the primary purpose of training parents and educators on how to best help with children's development in early childhood (Jones, 2010). To show the importance of this, research on the positive impact of ECD programmes was conducted by the Philippine government. The rigorous study was on the effectiveness of ECD-related programmes for improving children's development in the developing world. The study lasted 3 years and 6,693 children were part of the study, their ages ranging from 0-4 years. There were two treatment regions and a control region that did not receive the intervention. The intervention included health, ECE, nutrition and social service programmes (King & Lee, 2006). Research results revealed significant improvement in children's social, motor, cognitive and language development along with important nutritional status of children who resided close to ECD programme areas. Those children who did not live close to these areas did not show much of a significant change in their development (King & Lee, 2006).

Further still, there was research conducted by Baker-Henningham (2013) which found that early childhood education interventions can "reduce the loss of developmental potential in children from disadvantaged backgrounds in low-and middle-income countries (LAMIC). Peer-reviewed journal articles describing controlled evaluations of ECE interventions in LAMIC were reviewed to identify studies with child mental health outcomes. Studies with proximal outcomes for child mental health including caregiver practices" were reviewed (p. 1). Results showed that early childhood education is beneficial and works best if activities encouraged stimulate the uses of language, cognition, language, self-regulation and socio-emotional competence. Research results further showed the importance of interventions that include training for educators. This training involves skills that help to improve children's cognitive and social competence (Baker-Henningham, 2013, p. 1). Pillay (2014) echoes Baker-Henningham's (2013) point stating that ECD programmes are more effective when they include educators' views on how to develop programmes. Allowing educators to become a part of the planning and maintenance stages of ECD programmes permits greater sustainability of programmes (Pillay, 2014). All ECD professionals involved in ECD interventions should

be able to work together even if they come from diverse cultural, social and socio-economic backgrounds (Davids, 2015). Individuals have to share knowledge, skills and expertise that they have gained from their own personal ECD journeys or official ECD training with other professionals, enabling effective ECD outcomes for children and improvement of policy and quality of programmes (Bruder, 2010; Flottman, Mckernan & Tayler, 2011; Lumsden, 2005).

## 2.12 Theoretical Framework

This study is aligned with the holistic approach and the social constructionist view of early childhood development. The holistic approach takes into consideration all the elements that could possibly affect or hinder a child's early development process, such as ensuring that a child is cognitively stimulated, healthy, has adequate nutrition and all psychosocial development needs and protection are met (UNICEF, 2006). The holistic approach to early childhood education views educators and children's families as collaborators in promoting children's development (New & Cochran, 2007), while the constructionist theory considers knowledge and learning as an important process for individuals, thus Lev Vygotsky founded the social constructionist theory (Frantz, 2015). This theory details that children's approach to learning is active and flexible, with the emphasis on acquiring knowledge and understanding arising from socially constructed experiences. Thus, the experiences occur in collaboration between the child and someone more experienced or competent in co-creating reality (Pound, 2011). Duffy and Cunningham (as cited in Frantz, 2015) stated that knowledge is not a truth that is external and waiting to be found or transmitted, but it is viewed as "emergent, developmental, non-objective, viable constructed explanations from people engaged in meaning-making in cultural and social communities of discourse" (p. 2).

There have been many theorists that have contributed to knowledge pertaining to early childhood development, such as Piaget and Bandura, but this study focuses on Vygotsky's theories of learning, as he extends the theories to include the fundamental role of social interaction in development of cognition (Tryphon & Vonèche, 2013). Lev Vygotsky was a psychologist born in Russia during the early twentieth century where he developed the Vygotskian perspective to psychology. Vygotsky's theories of learning have a focus on education and how children learn and process information from the social world. Vygotsky's approach to learning includes the sociocultural theory of learning, the importance of cultural and psychological tools of language and thought, the zone of proximal development (ZPD),

scaffolding in children's cognitive processing and the value of play for children's learning (Bronson, 2000; Wass & Golding, 2014 Vygotsky, 1978).

## 2.13    Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory

Vygotsky thought of the main goal of education as generating and leading development, which is the consequence of social learning, which is when individuals internalize culture and develop social relationships (Vygotsky 1978).  In his work, Vygotsky expressed the value of past practices in helping to make sense of present experiences (Feden & Vogel, 2003).  Therefore, new information and skills learnt by children can be viewed as being influenced by each specific child's cultural and social background, more specifically the influence of parents, educators and other significant others directly involved in children's development and creation of new experiences (Dahms et al., 1997).  Vygotsky (as cited in Lantolf, 2000) detailed that the sociocultural environment presents the child with tasks and engages them through tools, which children learn to use appropriately from parents and educators as these individuals are representatives of the culture in which the children belong.  Vygotsky's perspective on culture refers to the fact that individuals are essentially not autonomous beings living without environmental or social interference, thus human cognitive functioning is viewed as an inseparable element from the social world and incorporates sociocultural tools (Lloyd & Fernyhough, 1999).  Vygotsky (as cited in Daniels, 1996 and Lantolf, 2000) further revealed that cultural tools are defined as signs, symbols, artefacts, activities or language created by people specific to that particular culture and historical context, as these specific cultural tools are passed on from one generation to the next as people adopt or change tools to suite community's needs.

Culture is pivotal for children's cognitive development and psychological tools of a particular culture enable children to graduate from elementary processes, which are natural and involuntary (Gredler & Shields, 2008; Greenfield & Cocking, 2014) to higher level mental processes, such as voluntary attention, abstract thinking and voluntary self-regulation (Bronson, 2000; Diaz & Berk, 2014).  The development of higher mental processes aid children in using language to negotiate and create meaning, while symbolic tools facilitate the control of thinking and actions thus ensuring that children act less on impulse and can self-regulate (Bronson, 2000).

For children to appropriate these cultural and social tools, Vygotsky (as cited in Wertsch, 1985) maintained that children acquire knowledge through interactions with others first (inter-psychological plane) and thereafter through assimilation and internalization of knowledge received initially, thus adding their own values to this knowledge (intra-psychological plane). Thus, the transition that takes place from acquiring knowledge socially to later personally internalizing that knowledge as personal values, does not take place merely through copying. For example, what the educator displays, the child does not merely copy, but transforms what he/she has learnt from the educator into personal values that the child will adopt. Thus interaction is critical for the transformation from the social plane to the personal plane to occur in children as this acts as a bridge to understanding (Turuk, 2008). Another example would be if the educator relays the message verbally that there are specific toys that when used educationally, bring about specific outcomes, then children are more likely to use those particular toys in future to solve specific problems thus internalizing that knowledge as their personal value (Turuk, 2008).

### 2.13.1 Mediation

According to Williams and Burden (1997) study, in order for meaningful learning experiences to occur, educators must steer clear of instructional learning and take into consideration a more process of learning approach to educating children. This type of learning should be an interactive process between educator and child through active co-creation of meaning and knowledge, which will facilitate mediation (Jones & Brader-Araje, 2002). Vygotsky (as cited in Williams & Burden, 1997) revealed that mediation occurs when educators or significant others play a role in helping to shape children's learning experiences, as adults are significantly more knowledgeable and skilled and can relay these attributes to young children using language. Furthermore, Vygotsky (as cited in Zhou & Brown, 2014) identified that language plays a particularly important role in how children think, as they connect past experiences with present situations and create meaning through interactions with others. Mediation, therefore is of great significance as it allows for a collaborative interaction between the educator and child and since learning occurs psychologically, physically and socially, it would be accurate to postulate that the Zone of Proximal Development is the mechanism by which growth and development occurs (Freeman, 2010; Vygotsky, 1978).

### 2.13.2  The Zone of Proximal Development

Vygotsky (1978) coined the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development which he defined as "the distance between the actual developmental level determined by the individual problem solving and the level of development as determined through problem solving under guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 352).  The ZPD as defined by Vygotsky is the actual or current developmental level of the child with the application of mediation of semiotic and environmental tools and the help of an experienced adult, for instance, an educator or parent (Shabani, Khatib & Ebadi, 2010; Vygotsky 1978).  Vygotsky (as cited in Rogoff, 1990) found that the ZPD takes into account functions that are still in their early stages of maturation and have not fully matured yet.  Since the ZPD is a dynamic region, collaboration with a more capable other can boost the children's cultural skills, enabling the ZPD, cognitive development, process of learning and culture to be in constant interaction with each other (Daniels, 2008; Vygotsky, 1978).  Therefore, for the ZPD to work best, the process of scaffolding needs to be considered.

### 2.13.3  Contributions of scaffolding in early childhood learning

A way to ensure that children get the best out of their learning experiences in early childhood, the concept of scaffolding needs to be applied, as scaffolding ensures that teaching and learning occur in the ZPD (Christmas, Kudzai & Josiah, 2013; Vygotsky, 1978).  Scaffolding is important for children to learn new skills and concepts whilst having the advantage of having a knowledgeable adult or peer to help them solve the task (Daniels, 2001; Vygotsky, 1987).  Scaffolding is part of the concept of ZPD and ensures that with the gradual withdrawal of adult help and support, the child is able to solve a given problem or master the task without adult help, and in future be able to master the same task alone (Moll, 1990).  Further still, scaffolding grants the child to reach new levels of development when educators give children manageable amounts of information, and simplified tasks enabling children access to grasp different concepts and apply them to new tasks learnt (Burch, 2007).  Additionally, Williams and Williams (2010) stated that the educators' feedback, such as motivational talk and encouragement need to be present alongside corrections of errors children may make while learning, even if it is through playful experiences.

### 2.13.4  Contributions of play to development of the ZPD

For the ZPD to be effective, consideration of educator's role in children's development needs to be accounted for (Hogan & Tudge, 1999).  Children's interaction with educators and peers

is important, as educators have the ability to create a climate of interaction between themselves and between children through collaborative play activities introduced in a classroom setting. Children who have developmental challenges or who struggle with certain tasks can benefit from play activities introduced by educators or more capable peers, but taking into consideration that the collaboration and acquisition of new skills is to be effective if it is within the child's ZPD (Christie, 1991).

Today, Vygotsky's theory of learning permits understanding and association between the role of play and learning (Bodrova, Germeroth & Leong, 2013). Vygotsky (as cited in Hurwitz, 2002) placed great emphasis on imaginative play and the child's creation of imaginary situations, which gives creativity to real life roles performed by children. The idea of imaginative play can be thought of as children being motivated by wishful thinking of needs that they cannot attain in reality, thus playful behaviours acted out display an effective medium or outlet for reducing socially undesirable behaviours in children (Lindon, 2001; Pellegrini, 2009 & Vygotsky, 1967). With the encouragement of educators, play and imaginative roles can have a significant function as they enable children to monitor their own behaviour and self-regulation (Taylor, 2013).

It is evident from Vygotsky's theories (1986; 1978) that for children to gain effective learning strategies, the child's sociocultural context, tools and people that the child interacts, enables development of new experiences and opportunities for children to learn. Educators play a pivotal role in how children experience the world around them, as educators introduce and structure learning activities according to what they believe is best suited to children's learning (McMonagle, 2012). A greater impact can be made by educators if they were to have the fundamental understanding of the ZPD, scaffolding and the different kinds of play and how all of these components interact to shape young children's optimal development in early childhood (Bodrova, Germeroth & Leong, 2013).

## 2.14   Conclusion

The current chapter dealt with a review of literature pertaining to the importance of play and toys as a way to enhance stimulation in early childhood. The role of the South African government department's encouragement of ECD interventions and policies were also

discussed. The role of educators and parents were revealed as to how they can ensure that ECD interventions and programmes introduced in early childhood are applied effectively. The chapter concludes with Vygotsky's theory of learning perspective, where reference was made to the sociocultural theory, mediation, ZPD, scaffolding and the importance of play in early childhood. The next chapter introduces the methodology and ethical considerations pertaining to the study.

# CHAPTER 3

# METHODOLOGY

## 3.1    Introduction

Chapter 3 presents the study's methodology section. This section begins with a look at the research paradigm, the research design and sampling are presented, followed by data collection and methods of data analysis. Credibility, trustworthiness, dependability, transferability and ethical considerations are also discussed as they have a bearing on the study undertaken.

The educators involved in the Singakwenza intervention will be denoted from the results and discussion sections with the letter 'SE'. Facilitators from the intervention will be referred to as Singakwenza facilitators (SF) to distinguish them from facilitators in the general public.

## 3.2    Research paradigm

This study used the interpretivist paradigm, instead of the positivist paradigm, as Bassey (as cited in Tubey, Rotich & Bengat, 2015) stated that the positivist perspective views reality as observable, constant and objective, thus individuals can make predictions and generalise about how people will behave in certain situations. The positivist perspective would not have been applicable to this study as it does not consider that the research participants are individuals who are constantly evolving in terms of how they view and interpret their own reality and context. Therefore, making predictions and generalisations on how study participants would react or behave in a certain situation cannot be determined, as individuals' emotional states, cognitive processes and ways of being are fluid and not constant.

The interpretive paradigm was considered suitable for the current study because of its main emphasis, which is that of observation, interpretation and the relationship between researcher and participant, which allows for deeper meanings to surface (Ponterotto, 2005). Several studies (Hansen, 2004; Schwandt, 2000, & Sciarra, 1999) have stated that interpretivist paradigms' premise is that reality is only known to the individual participants that possess it and therefore reality is in the individual's mind. It is only when the study participants share their antidotes of their experiences on ECD, that the researcher gained an understanding of their reality. The study by Thomas (2010) revealed that reality is internal to the participants and the meaning of experiences remain hidden until revealed to the researcher, thus the

reflection and dialogue between study participants and researcher enabled for mutual understandings of the research problem.

The interpretive paradigm helped to shape the research as it aimed to clarify the individual motives and meanings that were associated with social action (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2009). The researcher was able to interpret and make sense of participants experiences in their contexts and the meanings attached to these experiences (Snape & Spencer, 2003). The researcher's history, background and prior understanding of the research problem played a role and therefore was not separate from what the researcher had heard or understood from participants (Terre Blanche et al., 2009).

## 3.3    Research design

The study was conducted using a qualitative research design. Qualitative research is a form of social inquiry that has a focus on how people interact and make interpretations of their social context and thus provides detailed descriptions and analyses of the human experience (Marvasti, 2004). The participants shared their views on ECD during interviews. The interaction between researcher and participants allowed for different meanings and interpretations of what was discussed. The study participants were able to provide detailed descriptions of how they experienced play and toys during tasks and also reflected on what kinds of toys facilitate development in early childhood.

Qualitative research can be described as naturalistic in its approach, as the qualitative researcher often engages with research participants in their natural environment, where it is more familiar for them to share their experiences, observations, perspectives, behaviour and feelings (Woods, 2011). The interviews with participants took place at places that were convenient for them and therefore this participants to feel more relaxed about the interview process and became open to sharing their views on ECD. Ritchie and Spencer (1994) revealed that qualitative research is commonly used to bring awareness to social and public issues. Hence, this study sought to bring awareness of rural ECD educators' beliefs about the role of stimulation in early childhood, plus the benefits and challenges associated with their profession. The study also had the intention to bring to light the training challenges that the Singakwenza ECD facilitators encounter when working on the intervention programme with rural crèches.

**3.4     Sampling**

Tuckett (2004) asserted that in qualitative research there are no rigid rules as to how many participants should be included in a study. For the purposes of this study, the sample consisted of 8 individual interviews.  The interviews included 6 ECD educators associated with the Singakwenza ECD intervention programme and 2 Singakwenza facilitators who were part of the Singakwenza intervention. All study participants were Black African women who spoke isiZulu as a first language and English as a second language.  They were all born and raised in rural Pietermaritzburg.  The participants' ages ranged from 23 to 53 years old.  There was no predetermined age group for participants and although their ages seemed to vary, the findings of this study showed that young and old participants shared more or less the same kind of beliefs with regards to the value of stimulation and thoughts on play experiences in early childhood.  These beliefs were further influenced by their personal background and early childhood experiences.

*3.4.1 Sampling method*

The study by Flick (2007) stated that when considering people to participate in the study, sampling for people with experience and knowledge and who personally relate to the topic is useful, as these individuals are considered to be in an informed position to answer questions addressed in the interview.  Therefore, non-probability sampling methods were used as they reflect the sample population.  For the purposes of this study, the individuals were recruited with the help of Singakwenza's founders.  Enlisting the founders help was important as they knew which individuals were part of the intervention.  The study made use of participants that were knowledgeable and experienced in ECD, for example, some of the educators associated with Singakwenza and Singakwenza facilitators recruited for the study had some previous ECD training and knowledge of play as a form of stimulation.

Non-probability sampling methods work best when the study has a short time frame (Collins et al., 2000).  For instance, for the purposes of this study, the time-frame to complete the study was a year, as it is a Masters dissertation which required a 1-year duration for the course, therefore non-probability sampling methods were seen as more convenient.  Collins et al. (2000) asserted that non-probability sampling methods do not generally include or make use of every element in the study population, so the study's representativeness of the population becomes limited.  The participants involved in the intervention were just a few of the people who are actively involved in early childhood intervention programmes in the Pietermaritzburg

area and consequently this sample is limited in terms of representativeness, as inclusion of every element was unlikely.

The study used purposive sampling, but more specifically critical case and homogenous sampling strategies, instead of heterogeneous maximum variation strategies. Critical case sampling allowed the researcher to select a small number of cases to include in the study, as this strategy tends to produce large amounts of information and thus making great contributions to the uncovering of the phenomenon being explored (Patton, 2015). The homogenous sampling strategy is generally used with participants who share the same kinds of traits or characteristics and the research question addresses those traits which will further reveal the phenomenon under study (Palinkas, et al., 2015; Patton, 2005). The information obtained in the study was rich in data as study participants were open about their background and lived experience. For example, the participants discussed how they too went through the same play experiences as the children in their crèches and that they too used recyclable materials to make toys to create meaningful play activities. Educators who were part of the intervention also identified the different types of play activities that contributed to their own and crèche children's development. Hence, heterogeneous maximum variation strategies would not suffice for this study as the researcher would have had to obtain larger samples (Guest, Bruce & Johnson, 2006; Morse & Niehaus, 2009; Padgett, 2008) comprising of a variation of perspectives, ranging from individuals, organizations, pieces of data, events etcetera, which possibly would not have remained specific to exploring chosen participants' beliefs on early childhood stimulation.

The criteria for choosing the participants is listed below:
- Live in and around rural and semi-rural Pietermaritzburg
- The participants and Singakwenza facilitators must have some knowledge, interest, experience and contact with younger children considered to be in their early childhood years
- The participants and Singakwenza facilitators had to have experience in educating young children
- They had to be a part of the Singakwenza early childhood programme (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

## 3.5    Data collection

The study focused on using qualitative research methods and interviews to collect data. Interviews were chosen because they were viewed to be more applicable in addressing the research questions.

### 3.5.1   Interviews

Interviews as a means of data collection were useful as they functioned to elicit specific information from the participant (Collins & du Plooy, 2000). Thus, in-depth interviews are used in qualitative research methods and enable the researcher to use a small group of people to collect in-depth information about people's perspective on issues, furthermore, the participant is able to reveal their beliefs, values and attitudes about a specific topic (Boyce & Neale, 2006). This study used face-to-face in-depth semi-structured interviews to collect information from 6 educators associated with Singakwenza and 2 Singakwenza facilitators. The participants shared their beliefs on the importance of play in encouraging stimulation in early childhood.

The interviews with crèche participants were conducted at venues that were convenient for them. The interviews lasted between 25 minutes to 1 hour. They were conducted in a space away from other people where there were no interruptions and privacy was maintained. Some participants chose to meet and conduct the interviews at the crèches as this was convenient for them and also because they wanted to show the researcher their work environment. Hence the researcher was able to gain a better sense of study participant's day to day experiences of ECD. The use of semi-structured interview methods had the benefits of having both open and closed questions that allowed for detailed information to be revealed (Hewitt-Taylor, 2011). By using semi-structured interviews, the researcher was able to uncover whether or not participants incorporate play as a form of stimulation into their lesson plans. Through engaging with the interview transcripts, themes emerged that confirmed participants beliefs and knowledge of the importance of stimulation in early childhood.

Two qualitative semi-structured interview schedules were compiled and validated. One interview schedule was for educators associated with Singakwenza and the other for Singakwenza facilitators. The interview schedules were first written up in English and then translated into isiZulu. This was done so that the participants had an option to choose which language they preferred to speak during the interview and also the language they preferred to

be questioned in. The isiZulu and English interview schedules were drafted by the researcher with the help of another Psychology Masters student whose home language is isiZulu. The interview schedules were checked for congruence in meaning and comprehension by this thesis supervisor and found to be suitable for the research study. The English interview schedule questions for study participants can be viewed in Appendix 7 and 9. The isiZulu schedules can be located in Appendix 8 and 10. The qualitative interview schedules were suitable for the study as they made use of focus questions and sub-questions, therefore allowing the researcher the confidence to direct the interview. Directing the interview enabled focusing on eliciting specific responses that answered the research questions (Seidman, 2013). The use of a questionnaire would have been applicable to this study as it would have shown similar ideas around educator views on ECD. However, the use of a questionnaire would have limited the study data in that, questionnaires generally elicits superficial answers that lack the depth and richness that is needed for this study, thus this study needed to unearth participants' personal accounts, beliefs and views on the research topic (Dörnyei, 2003).

The following research questions guided the study:

- What are the early childhood educators' involved in the Singakwenza early childhood intervention programmes' beliefs about the role of stimulation in child development?
- What are the challenges and benefits experienced by Singakwenza's educators' participating in the early childhood intervention programme?
- What concerns regarding training challenges do Singakwenza facilitators involved in the early childhood intervention programme have?

The study by Prescott (2011) stated that it is useful to use McCracken's (1988) four-step model that helps with the designing and implementation of a qualitative interview. Although McCracken's (1988) four-step model could be viewed as out-dated, it is still applicable today. The model has been recently applied and cited in several various studies such as Green and Weaver (2005); Sherman and Wrushen (2010); Prescott (2011); Csoport (2011); Hunter (2012) and Lee, McCloskey, Beverland (2015) to name a few.

McCracken's (1988) four-step model can be viewed below:

(1) review of analytic categories and interview design

(2) review of cultural categories and interview design

(3) interview procedure and the discovery of cultural categories

(4) interview analysis and the discovery of analytical categories (McCracken, 1988, p.29).

The researcher focused on the 4 steps of the model, as these steps relate to the validation of the interview schedule. The first and second step of the model states that the researcher should review literature so as to familiarise themselves with the different "categories and relationships that the interview must investigate", and to be aware of the cultural element of the study context (McCracken, 1988, p. 32). The researcher reviewed various literature on ECD, policies in South Africa, other African and International countries and similar research studies investigating educator beliefs or play as encouraging stimulation in childhood. The reviewing of literature enabled the researcher to start to formulate categories that would bring substance to the study, such as incorporating the idea of play and toys into the stimulation concept. Further familiarisation with the cultural context of the study was important and this occurred through reviewing studies conducted in similar contexts, for example, studies in disadvantaged South African rural areas and how ECD and educator beliefs are prioritized in these contexts. The familiarisation of literature enabled the researcher to become aware of the preconceptions that exist in the literature and for the researcher to be able to take a step back and look at the information in an unfamiliar way, thus helping to shape the questions to ask in the interview.

Steps 3 entailed constructing the survey by including biographical questions and including questions that will put the participant being interviewed at ease (McCracken, 1988). To gather information relevant to the study, the researcher decided to approach 2 ECD educators who were not part of the study and who were from a disadvantaged area of Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. The criteria for choosing the 2 educators was that they had to have knowledge, experience or some form of training on ECD, this would lead to possible beliefs about stimulation and possible questions. Educators did or did not have to be a part of any ECD intervention, because ultimately the researcher was looking to find out questions to use and how to structure the interview schedule for the interview with study participants. To gather more information, the researcher asked the founder of Singakwenza for assistance. Both ECD educators and the Singakwenza founder proved to be of great value in aiding the researcher to formulate key questions to add to the interview schedule, i.e., the educators shared their histories, beliefs, knowledge and experience on the role of stimulation in aiding early childhood. The founder of Singakwenza programme helped to shed some light on the need for play and toys in rural crèches. She further discussed the value of having ECD facilitators provide training to crèche

educators in rural Pietermaritzburg, as this allowed for improved quality ECD practices. With sufficient knowledge obtained from the 2 educators and founder, the researcher identified the key areas to focus on during interviews. For example, topics that were included in the interview schedule were on demographics; a typical day in the classroom context; questions focusing on educators understanding of stimulation in early childhood and lastly their thoughts on the Singakwenza intervention. The English interview schedule questions for study participants can be viewed in Appendix 7 and 9. The isiZulu schedules can be located in Appendix 8 and 10.

To assist with further validation of the interview schedule, the researcher asked the ECD educators and founder to look over the interview questions already complied and add to it if need be. One of the educators brought to light how question 3.5 in section C of the educator's interview schedule was significant as it connected educators past childhood experiences of play with adult beliefs of play and this possibly leads to effective ECD outcomes. This question was further evaluated and used in the interview schedule.

To time how long the interviews would last and if the questions asked were relevant to answering study questions, the researcher interviewed the ECD educators and timed them using a stop watch. Both interviews lasted 45 minutes to an hour, thus the timing was deemed sufficient as it confirmed that the interview schedule was useful in eliciting in-depth information. Thus, with open reciprocal communication with research participants during interviews, the same kinds of profound data could be achieved. Step 4 of McCracken's 4 step model assisted with the discovery of analytic categories. This was done by identifying themes and seeing how they were interconnected to the phenomena under study (McCracken, 1988). The pilot interviews and themes that had emerged increased the researchers' awareness on how to reformulate certain questions with the help of themes that had emerged, thus wording them in a way that was understandable to the study participants. The researcher was happy with the balance between the specific and general questions and overall formulation of the interview schedule and piloting thereof.

### 3.5.2   *Data collection Procedure*

Audio recording and note taking was used during the interview process and this helped the researcher remember and reflect on what had been spoken about (Creswell, 2012). The study by Turner (2010) stated that for interviews to be effective they should come across as warm, friendly, professional and should act as a guideline for scientific searching. Lincoln and Denzin

(2003) further stated that the researcher and participant should create an atmosphere that promotes rapport building, with enough detachment so as not to lose sight of the scientific search. Thus, before the beginning of each individual interview, the researcher made sure to take a few moments to make introductions and build rapport. The researcher and study participants spoke in a friendly and conversational manner about the research process. The researcher further detailed the need for the study, why the researcher had chosen them to be a part of the study and the consent requirements before commencement of the interviews. The informed consent form was written in isiZulu and English and all participants had the option of reading and signing either one of the two. After having explained the informed consent and its relevance in the language requested by the participant, a signed and verbal agreement was made between the researcher and participants concerning how the research was to commence thereafter.

Each interview lasted between 45 minutes to 1 hour, depending on how much each individual was willing to share. All participants had the ability to write and speak English and isiZulu, as isiZulu is their mother tongue and they teach in English at crèche. Interviews were conducted in isiZulu and English, depending on what language the participant felt comfortable using. Sometimes the discussions and explanations took place using both languages. The study by Hanrahan et al. (2015) study noted that there may be challenges in translation of the process of research due to linguistic and cultural differences that can impend comprehension. Thus these challenges may include research participants' lack of understanding of the terms and concepts used during the research process as the word-for-word literal translation may not be effective in channelling the correct meaning (Hanrahan et al., 2015). Taking this into consideration for the purposes of this study, the linguistic and cultural differences between the researcher and research participants were similar as the researcher grew up in a fairly similar context, using the same home language as the participants, i.e. isiZulu, and understanding the second language, i.e. English. During the commencement of the interview, when both languages were used, the researcher continued using the initial survey which was presented in the language that the participant had requested. For example, if the participant chose to do the interview in isiZulu, a isiZulu survey was used at the onset and throughout the interview. This was done so that the flow of line of questioning was consistent. The issue of translation was minimal as both researcher and participants' were familiar and understood the languages used. Participants had a good understanding of the research topic and concepts discussed because participants worked as ECD professionals. They were familiar with the Singkwenza organization, therefore

there was familiarity with the concepts used in the interview, and hence meaning in translation was never lost. If there were misinterpretations of the meaning of a question, the researcher was able to clarify these as she knew what she meant to question.

The study by Ponterotto (2005) stated that, during the interview process, the researcher should refrain from expressions of judgement, bias or personal beliefs and attitudes as this may negatively affect the interview process and information given by participants. The researcher found it difficult not to show any signs of bias or expressions of interest in the topic of discussion, as transparency, trust and interpersonal engagement are thought of as imperative for qualitative interviews. However, bias was reduced by the researcher by keeping an open mind about the subject matter and responses given by participants and Singakwenza facilitators.

## 3.6    Data analysis

Qualitative researchers, having collected the data, transcribe the interviews verbatim (Johnson, Dunlap & Berloit, 2010). Transcription offers a descriptive account of the study and since transcriptions do not provide an explanation of what participants had meant during the interview, the researcher therefore has to immerse themselves in the data so as to provide possible meaning and interpretations to the data collected (Burnard, Gill, Stewart, Treasure, Chadwick, 2008). Before analysis, the researcher transcribed the data and translated it into both English and isiZulu. Qualitative data analysis is inductive and when working on the data, the researcher was able to establish themes or patterns that emerged (Creswell, 2007). Dey (1993) stated that during data analysis, the researcher explores and describes the object, situation or event under study and hence engages the object, situation or event in such a way as to understand and make meaning of what the study sought to explore. For the purposes of this study, codes were developed using open and axial coding from interview responses and thematic analysis techniques were used to analyse responses (Babbie & Mouton, 2006; Frantz, 2015).

Open coding helped to identify themes generated by the data (Babbie & Mouton, 2006). For the purposes of this study, the coding helped to guide the study's objectives. Different sections of texts, for instance, sentences and paragraphs, in the interview transcripts were coded using different colour highlights which helped to further induce themes (Terre Blanche et al., 2009). Once different sections of text were highlighted, a comment was made alongside each

highlighted bit of text. These comments helped to remind the researcher of what the participants had stated about a study related topic and also to reflect on the objectives flowing through the data. Further, same kinds of responses to topics were highlighted using same colour highlighters. Comments were made on the side of each relevant highlighted text and evaluated on the basis of whether it was relevant to the study's objectives. Axial coding worked best when "grouping themes according to colour codes applied in the process of open coding" (Thabane, 2015, p. 169).

Some of the themes that had emerged from the interviews related to the research questions and other themes were developed through the researchers understanding of participants responses. Labels were given to the themes that had emerged and sub-headings were therefore provided. Direct quotes and examples of extracts coded for specific themes were provided and presented in chapter 4. Three core themes, and 11 sub-themes were presented which helped with the analysis of the responses. Thematic analysis worked best for this study because it enabled the researcher to gain insight into study participant's beliefs, experiences and views on stimulation and the role of the intervention and their role in children's development (Terre Blanche et al., 2009).

## 3.7 Credibility, trustworthiness, dependability, transferability, confirmability and rigor

Validity and reliability are commonly used in quantitative methods which are in line with positivist research. The above terms do have some relevance in qualitative research methods as they help define the strength and truth of the data (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). The appropriate terms to use for qualitative research methods which are evident in naturalistic environment are: credibility, trustworthiness, transferability and rigor which are viewed to closely correspond to validity in positivist research (Golafshani, 2003), while dependability is closely related to the quantitative research concept of reliability (Gray, 2009).

### 3.7.1 Credibility

A study's credibility is shown if it is able to reflect the study's truth value or believability of the research findings (Polit, & Beck, 2006; Sandelowski, 1986; Streubert-Speziale & Carpenter, 2007). Credibility was established in this study using multiple sources of data, which included study participants and also various types of literature. The researcher refrained from interrupting or using closed questions during interviews, thus allowing for less structure so participants could relate their stories and data obstruction to be restricted. Credibility was

further established by having repeated contact with participants, especially when the researcher needed further clarification regarding what participants had mentioned in the interview. The researcher shared the research questions and findings with the thesis supervisor and other Masters graduates, which allowed for a different perspective and interpretation of the data. This permitted the evaluation and interpretation of isiZulu transcripts which needed to be back-translated into English. The translations and interpretations of transcripts were scrutinized by thesis supervisor and the researcher, which further helped to strengthen the study's credibility.

### 3.7.2 Trustworthiness

The study by Krefting (1991) stated that, "truth value asks whether the researcher has established confidence in the truth of the findings for the subjects or informants and the context in which the study was under-taken" (p. 215), thus the research itself has an element of truthfulness as the researcher was able to access first hand subjective information on participants experiences. This information can be considered truthful and valid to the participants and context in which the research was conducted. Guba (1981) stated that trustworthiness is applicable when having considered and applied the four concepts in the study, which are: credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability. Trustworthiness was established in the study as the four concepts mentioned above have been considered, discussed and explored in this thesis. Marrow (2005) further mentioned that researcher subjectivity, reflexivity and interpretation are considered important in establishing trustworthiness in a study. Transcripts, notes and the audio recordings were helpful in terms of enabling the researcher to immerse in the data and further be able to give adequate interpretations. The researcher was reflexive and aware of the bias that became apparent due to her own subjective experiences concerning the topic and how the research was conducted. For example, by reading literature on the topic and the researchers own interest in the subject matter led the researcher to consider the participants and context chosen. The data was sufficient and adequate as interviews were rich in information and very informative when looking at participants beliefs of stimulation.

### 3.7.3 Dependability

The study by Shenton (2004) states that, although the concept of dependability may be difficult to live up to in qualitative work, researchers should try and produce research that another investigator can replicate, as it is important when conducting research in any field of study. The researcher had ensured dependability of the study by stating and discussing step-by-step

on how the study was planned and executed. For example, documentation of data has been accounted for, the methodology and accounts of events and decisions made from the outset of the thesis till the concluding stages of the research have been documented. Therefore another researcher would be able to replicate this study in a similar setting.

### 3.7.4 Transferability

Transferability refers "to the ability of the account to provide answers in other contexts, and transferability of findings to other contexts" (Terre Blanche et al., 2009, p. 381). The researcher has ensured transferability of the study by providing details at length of the phenomenon's context through the uses of this study's literature, study's methodology and information obtained from interpretations from transcripts. The information gathered and findings obtained are transferable to similar rural setting in South Africa, as chapter one discusses the research problem and significance of the study to social sciences and educators understanding of stimulation in early childhood, particularly in rural KwaZulu-Natal crèches.

### 3.7.5 Confirmability

The concept of confirmability includes the researcher's documentation, the methods and decision making processes included in the study (Jeanfreau & Jack, 2010; Polit, Beck, & Hungler, 2006; Streubert-Speziale, 2007). The researcher relayed a thick description throughout the thesis and provided paper trails which included written consent forms, audio recordings, transcripts and notes, which underpin confirmability of findings. The transcripts were coded and notes taken into account during interpretation of the interviews, thus this was done to show that findings emerged from the data and not from the researcher's predispositions. The description and justification of each strategy employed in the study sought to enhance its credibility.

### 3.7.6 Rigor

"Rigorous research is research that applies the appropriate tools to meet the stated objectives of the investigation" (Ryan & Bernard, 2000, p.3 4). This study is a form of investigation and therefore the researcher asked a series of methodological questions to ensure that the research is rigorous, for example, the researcher asked, to what degree the research techniques are considered appropriate to answering research questions? Also, questions such as, to what degree did the analytic techniques reveal a full range of themes? Therefore, the researcher being able to explain the research process, and the use of codes, describing themes and how

models were induced, ensured the rigor of the study.  In this study, a step by step account was given of the method and data so that other investigators would be able to analyse and replicate the current study.  Mays and Pope (1995) stated that other researchers may need to take into consideration that some research elements may be different when investigating the same kind of research, for example, when other investigators embark on this type of research they would have to take into cognizance that other educators and facilitators' responses, educational level etcetera may be different.

This qualitative study can be viewed as valid and reliable, as the different kinds of validity have been accounted for in this study.  For example, communicative and argumentative validity equate to the credibility of the study (de Vos, 2002), see section 3.7.1.  Ecological validity suggests studying participants in their natural environment (Sarantakos, 2005), thus participants were interviewed at the crèches, where they expressed that they felt most comfortable and the phenomenon under study was revealed with ease.  Also, validity was ensured by using McCracken's (1988) four-step model that helped to validate the interview schedule so as to examine the tools capability "to yield the required magnitude and categories of data" (Thabane, 2015, p. 172).  Dependability is closely related to the research concept of reliability (Gray, 2009).  Thus, reliability indicates the capacity for the study design to produce consistent results, regardless of the research conditions, participants or researcher (Sarantakos, 2005).  Yet in spite of this, the fluidity and changing aspects of human lives does not ensure exact reliability of qualitative studies thus transferability of the study is sought.  Hence having made that statement, the validity demonstrated above is appropriate to prove reliability (Babbie & Mouton, 2006; Leedy & Ormrod, 2001).

## 3.8    Ethical considerations

Research ethics are important for researchers to take into consideration when conducting research as its main objective is to act as a guide and code for researchers, thus ensuring that the research participants' welfare is protected (de Laine, 2000).  There are widely recognized ethical principles that are applied to most research studies, which include, autonomy and respect for the dignity of persons; informed consent; beneficence; anonymity and confidentiality; non-maleficence; justice and risk/benefit determinations (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001; Wassenaar & Mamotte, 2012).

### 3.8.1 *Autonomy and respect for the dignity of persons*

The principal of autonomy pertains to viewing participants as autonomous beings who have the right to voluntarily take part or refuse to take part in the study (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012). Autonomy and respect for dignity of participants was taken into consideration, as participants were advised about their rights and informed consent. This can be seen in the informed consent forms in Appendix 5 and 6. The study by Emanuel, Wendler and Grady (as cited in Wassenaar and Mamotte, 2012, p. 278) stated that, the principal of respect in ethics asserts that the researcher should have and maintain respect for the participants throughout the research process and this was achieved by the researcher ensuring participant anonymity, confidentiality and sharing research results with research participants at the end of the study.

### 3.8.2 *Informed consent*

After having been granted ethical approval for the study, view Appendix 1, the researcher was able to focus on giving participants the necessary informed consent forms. Several studies state that informed consent pertains to the negotiation and renegotiation of trust between the researcher and participants (Field & Morse, 1992; Kvale, 1996; Munhall, 1988). Trust was established between the researcher, participants and facilitators, as gatekeepers' approval was obtained, i.e. Appendix 1 & 2 and information sheets, i.e. Appendix 3 & 4, and informed consent forms, which can be seen in appendix 5 and 6. Making all participants in the study aware of the different documentation enabled them to gain a sense of trust that this study was indeed valid and would be treated with professionalism at the onset and throughout.

Since study participants were located in rural Pietermaritzburg, there was a possibility that the educators and facilitators would feel comfortable receiving the consent form in isiZulu, thus the English consent form was translated into isiZulu ensuring participants understanding of their ethical rights and nature of the research. Further still, this enabled them to understand that the interview will be audio recorded and a declaration needed to be signed to give approval to all aspects of the interview and research process. Thus the researcher gave consent forms and interviewed in either English or isiZulu as instructed by participants.

By providing the above information, the researcher was able to negotiate trust with study participants by informing them about the intentions of the study. The information provided

relayed the duration of the research; how confidentiality would be maintained with use of pseudo names; how the information gathered was going to be utilised; how participants engagement would help contribute to the overall research; the ethical rights of the participants to stop the interview process at any time they felt uncomfortable; contact details of the researcher, thesis supervisor and ethics committee were provided if they had any queries or questions or had something to add.

### 3.8.3   Beneficence

The study by Stevens (2013) stated that a study should aim to have as much benefit to society as possible, whilst reducing or minimising harm done. With regards to beneficence, Singakwenza facilitators benefitted from the research findings as they had a vested interest in ECD and overall educators' beliefs concerning the intervention.  The educators associated with Singakwenza were able to become aware of the issues surrounding their views of early childhood stimulation and how their beliefs have the potential to impact children's educational outcomes and scholarly success.  The broader community will acquire knowledge from the study, as new information about ECD is relayed and can be used to make improvements on current ECD interventions and inform community members on the importance of stimulation at an early age.

### 3.8.4   Anonymity and confidentiality

The principal of anonymity states that no identifying information, whether documented or verbal should be revealed to other persons (Aurelius, n.d.; Strydom, 2005a; Wassenaar, 2006). Anonymity and confidentiality were considered, as pseudonyms were used to disguise individuals' real names, for example, study educators names in this study are disguised in the results section by denoting their names as SE's and faciltators as SF's.  Thus ensuring that participants' identity will not be disclosed to any other persons (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001; Marvasti, 2004).  To further maintain confidentiality, the data sets of audio recordings for this research are stored electronically with an encrypted password.  The data is stored for a period of five years. The transcriptions are locked in a file cabinet in the supervisor's office at University of KwaZulu-Natal the Psychology department.  The study will be made available at the University of KwaZulu-Natal library for reading or research purposes.

### 3.8.5 Non-maleficence

Non-maleficence in ethics maintains that the researcher should do no harm or evil during the research process, hence, this means having the best interest and well-being of participants in mind (Omonzejele, 2005). Non-maleficence was ensured as no harm came to participants and the researcher did not use deception at any point during the research. The researcher was sure to maintain the transparency of the research process from beginning till end.

### 3.8.6 Justice

Justice needed to be adhered to in research processes. Thus this involved the researcher being aware and preventing the overburden of one population in order to have the research applied to another population who potentially stands to gain from the research findings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). This means that the overburdened population assumes the risks but does not benefit from participating in the study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Risks and benefits should be equally distributed among all involved in the study and who stand to gain from the research (Orb, Eisenhauer, Wynaden, 2000). The ethical issue of justice was taken into consideration in this study. All participating individuals were treated with fairness and equity as the study sought to bring awareness to all educators, facilitators, communities and society about the importance of the phenomena under study.

### 3.8.7 Risk/benefit determinations

The risk/benefit determination means that the risk and benefits of the current study balance each other (Wassenaar & Mamotte, 2012). At the onset of the interview process, participants were informed of the risks and benefits of participating in the study. There were no particular risks, as the study essentially needed to gauge early childhood educators' beliefs about early childhood stimulation, and Singakwenza early childhood intervention facilitators' training concerns. There were no risks in the study, only benefits. These benefits included contributing to community's knowledge about the phenomena under study and also highlighting the importance of ECD programmes in ensuring optimal educational development for children and support for educators.

### 3.9 Conclusion

The current chapter provided descriptions and discussions of the study area which included the background of the study, the research design, sampling methods and samples. The data collection method were semi-structured interviews that allowed for some degree of flexibility

in research questions. The data collection procedure, data analysis were also discussed, along with credibility, trustworthiness, dependability, transferability, confirmability and rigor of the study. Lastly, ethical considerations were described at the end of this chapter. To follow is chapter 4, which will provide an outline of the study's results.

# CHAPTER 4

# RESULTS

## 4.1    Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the current study. Data extracts from the transcripts are presented. The findings are presented according to the themes that emerged from the data collected from interviews with participants and Singakwenza facilitators. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data, as indicated in Chapter 3. Three core themes and eleven sub-themes emerged from the data. The themes below include: educator background influences educator beliefs; the benefits and challenges experienced by participants and the challenges experienced by Singakwenza facilitators.

## 4.2    Educator background influences educator beliefs about play

During the interviews, the participants were offered an opportunity to reflect on their experiences growing up. They spoke of making their own toys using natural materials, which further contributed to their beliefs about play and toys as a means of stimulating children in early childhood.

Extract 1:

> SE3: *Sometimes we play with our thing see ah in the rural areas we play with our clay because um we playing with boys we playing clay making cows or sometimes we play making a dolly house we play with dolls we take the cloth make the dolls with the cloths*

> SE4: *No we did not have toys growing up we would make toys with paper we did not have toys growing up.*

> SE4: *I didn't have toys growing up we used to just take corn cobs and act like they were dolls and we used to dress them in paper we didn't get toys or dolls from the shops*

> SE5: *Yes I stayed at home and played with stones corn cobs and made dolls out of them even though we never knew what a doll looked like*

> SE6: *There were no toys at school when you went out you went and played with the skipping rope and hopscotch you know hopscotch? There were 10 squares and you play with a stone.*

> SE6: *No we did not have any but we know how to make them like we would make dolls out of material.*

The extracts above highlight the context in which some children in rural areas make use of familiar and/or available objects to facilitate play. In their description, one can identify their cognitive capacity and abilities that were applied in turning these objects into toys and forming new play activities, which is essential for early childhood development.

### 4.2.1 Theories of development are applied in classroom contexts

Extracts 2; 3; 4; and 5 indicate the participants understanding of the theories of learning they applied in the classroom setting. Study participant's responses showed an awareness, a belief of the value of stimulation in early childhood, the different kinds of play and educational toys that children and educators could engage in to facilitate learning and encourage stimulation and development.

Extract 2

> SE3: *because the others do want to write when the writing time they say they can't write I say when you coming here to school you coming to learn try yes, so I stay on them*

> SE4: *I will say is that I noticed that children are not all the same they may be in large numbers but they are not the same other children come to me already knowing how to perform certain tasks and others don't know much but three weeks won't go by without those children developing those skills and you seeing a difference and you also seeing them be like other children*

> SE5: *I teach them, I am there when they are doing it, I leave them when they know how to do the activity but I do not disappear completely and watch them to see if they are doing the activity like I taught them to*

> SE6: *yes so I think their brains are little and are age appropriate for these ones are older and so those little ones will get left behind they will get left behind in terms of catching on like right now in class let's say there are five altogether or six altogether they can't all catch on at the same time there are those who are fast at catching on to something new so those ones catch on quickly and then there are those that are slow*

From analysing the extracts, participants seemed to use Vygotsky's (1978)
theories of development which is often applied in learning contexts. This theory assumes that children learn to master tasks and solve problems with the help of a more knowledgeable

50

other. The responses during interviews showed that they were aware that each individual child in their classroom is different and children process information differently at different age levels, thus child's progress and development will differ from child to child.

Extract 3

> *SE3: yah helping a lot because you playing there you dunno nothing you going to school oh this one is wrong that one is not right you know what is a car there we are playing we playing with stones we make the stones like a car there in the crèche we playing with toys and playing with the real dolls it don't take them long to make them dolls yes*
>
> *SE5: for example you have the ball and they are playing and kicking it outside then you end up playing with the them outside and you kick the ball too and when the child gives you the doll and says it's crying you pretend to help make stop crying*
>
> *SE5: you just figured it out how to make a doll because the boys would make cars out of wires and we would take our jerseys as girls and put the corn cobs and put them on our backs and pretend they were babies and we would play house where you would have a family where mom and father and so on*
>
> *SE6: there should be a teacher that takes care of the child properly and teach it all these things and for the child to play and also learn and also be able to to draw, draw so it can get there*

Growing up in rural areas, participants made their own toys using natural materials and had experience in pretend play as they too would act out imaginative scenarios. Thus, these extracts represent participants' beliefs in stimulation in early childhood, and this is further exemplified by their willingness to engage in playful activities with children to help stimulate development. These activities included imaginative play which can also be found in developmental theories such as Vygotsky's (1978) theory of learning, where the adult and child play together and co-create real life situations and events which enhance children's cognitive and creative skills.

Extract 4

> *SE3: They learning a lot. The other child learning to think or to share the toys. The the child when they staying at home they can't even talk to other children. When they going to crèche they learn to talk, they playing with other children's in the crèche when the child never go to school they like to fight because they never sit with*

*other children you see.*

*SE3: they use ah the doll you see the other child who came you see next year when they going to school they can't dress themselves they use that doll they must dress that doll they they put the things the buttons on that doll they must learn*

*SE3: Yah it open the brains yah cause the child can know now when they see the window they will know what shape is that you see the door what shape*

*SE4: I give them the task of colouring in and others will have the task, identifying and separating different colour using coloured bottle lids. When children are using these coloured bottle lids they are able to discriminate different colours to use sorting and grouping methods they are also able to count these lids*

*SE4: because a child will play with the toy and at other times um (tongue clicking sound) (0.3) what can I say um (0.2) for example let's say the child is building blocks the child is constructing this themselves they are using their minds no one told them how to do this like it will put this blocks like this and like that and for example a car will*

*SE5: yes and then you show them to take the 2L for the bread packets and cut them then then they make a ball and throw it to one another and there is a lot that they gain from that because their muscle are working and their eyes are working also be built through that and no one taught the child how to build that car the child is doing that themselves*

Coming from disadvantaged backgrounds, participants did not receive the privileges of owning store bought teaching tools that they could help to educate children during lessons. The above extracts highlight the importance and value of natural materials used to create such tools thus facilitating child stimulation. The types of stimulation are highlighted in the extracts are cognitive and emotional stimulation, fine and gross motor development, sorting and grouping methods, eye and hand coordination as well as the ability for children to learn how to share and interact with others.

Extract 5

*SE3: when I get to the crèche in the morning when the time the children arrive at school they came in the morning and they play toys at nine half past nine they eat porridge twelve o'clock:: after porridge I start teaching (0.1) first I'm doing the rhymes after the rhymes I'm teaching the children's after that is the break time*

*outdoor playing after outdoor playing is a lunch time*

*SE5: yes I do like the skipping rope I hold for them while they skip and I live with*
*another lady and she also helps me hold the skipping rope and we also make*
*small balls out of plastic and throw it and they catch*

*SE6: It means that there should be a teacher that takes care of the child properly and*
*teach it all these things and for the child to play and also learn and also be able to*
*to draw, draw so it can get there*

*SE6: outside they can run outside they are free outside they are::: they can run and it*
*makes them think like they play games and they think about so and so they are*
*playing with and in class::it's helpful with toys because it helps them develop and*
*know what is this for example with the puzzle they know where to put the puzzle*
*piece at the same time they are counting how many pieces there are at the same*
*time*

*SE7: we go and paint we go outside and paint or if we are not painting then we play*
*with sand and if we are not playing with sand then we playing with cars outside or*
*we make a big circle and say poems outside then we go back inside the clock*
*strikes 12:00am or we do activity (inaudible) on another day we play with the ball*

The above extracts reflect responses during interviews, as participants revealed
how they structure their lesson plans around play activities. Lesson plans
involved different play activities introduced to children in the classroom and outdoors.

### 4.2.2  *Intervention benefits and keeping abreast of new ECD information*
This theme spoke of participants recognition of the benefits of the intervention and
staying abreast of new information pertaining to ECD practices that they too could use in
their crèches.

Extract 5

*SE3: we use the boxes to learn the shapes through the boxes sometimes we make dolls*
*with the cloths they learn faces and the body of the person*

*SE3: Um my relationship with Singkwenza they teach me how to teach the children*
*with ah activities the indoors and outdoors activities*

*SE4: I had no knowledge like now where I am able to give children different activities*
*rather than having them sing all the time so Singakwenza helped me a lot and you*

53

> *can just tell that it works because children are stimulated*
>
> *SE4: Singakwenza really helped in showing me a different way of teaching*
>
> *SE6: uhm yes it works yes because we sometimes come across problems with the teachers in Grade 1 they sometimes ask us and so you as a teacher must not left behind because it is your name at stake here*
>
> *SE7: And to educate us, yes to not throw away things like cardboard and that cornflakes cardboard should not be thrown in the bin, because it can help make shapes things like shapes and lids. You pick up lids and make lids because you know that some lids have colours so basically you are recycling and they help in other areas as well*

Responses from the extracts signal the value of information provided by the intervention and how this is of benefit to them and their professional role. The information on how only to recycle waste, but also create different teaching aids to facilitate and stimulate children's learning in the classroom is emphasised. These teaching aids or tools were viewed to assist children with colour discrimination, defining different shapes and sizes, developing and enhancing creativity in children, during indoor and outdoor activity engagement.

## 4.3    Educator benefits and challenges experienced

The following themes and sub-themes pertain to the benefits and challenges experienced by educators' associated with the Singakwenza intervention. During interviews, study participants described children's success as a source of great achievement for them and also found government organizations involved with the crèches as a great benefit. They expressed that parents were unsupportive and they had problems with lack of classroom space.

### *4.3.1    Successful children mean successful educators and community*

Participants that come from disadvantaged backgrounds have witnessed the plight of their communities and have long sought to improve their own and communities circumstances. Participants reflected on the significance and benefits of the work that they do with children at the crèches.

Extract 6

> *SE6:maybe if they are going into grade R they are going into grade R right now isn't it*

54

*so? They are developing for what? Grade 1. It means that there should be a teacher that takes care of the child properly and teach it all these things and for the child to play and also learn and also be able to to draw, draw so it can get there*

*SE7: I think that they think our children are able to be able to enter into school and they are intelligent and they are able to do things and we as teachers should not end here*

*SE7: what I think I am helping with is helping parents by taking care of the children and educating it, and the way we educate it shows that they are able to learn and they understand and even at home, people comment on how the child is able to say this and that. I am able to educate a child well. I am able to educate a child well in such a way that the child can understand and be able to do something.*

*SE8: it is for me to see the child be successful be successful some day and become someone or something, like a person who does well and is successful and educated, not someone who just stops growing here at crèche*

*SE8: I think it was her that bought that scissors yes and brought it I had never in my mind thought that if a person is left handed they um there are scissors of those people, in my whole entire life I had never see that it was amazing to me that there is scissors for left handed people, it was only when they made me aware of it that I understood the reason why the child was battling but even when I have the scissors I can use it myself even though I am right handed*

Having come from disadvantaged backgrounds, participants revealed how they had not had the most pleasant educational experiences. Participants past ECD experiences, along with the training received from the intervention, enabled them to become equipped with valuable knowledge that they can share with children they teach. Thus, judging from participants responses above, when children become successful in what they have learnt at crèche, it creates feelings of pride and accomplishment in participants.

### 4.3.2 The value of nutrition and DSD

In the following extracts, participants expressed the importance and the observed benefits of nutrition in growing children. They further acknowledged the role of government departments that play a supportive role in ECD in rural crèches.

Extract 7

> *SE4: there are benefits to a child eating breakfast because some children don't get breakfast at home and another thing is that the child cannot listen to you when you speak and even though you start the day with a lesson don't take too long teaching because some some children need that breakfast because they left home without it to begin with and the child might be hungry and thus won't be able to listen to you*
>
> *SE5: it's helpful because some children come in the mornings without having eaten any porridge because sometimes the parents are too lazy to make it and some children come in the morning and the first thing they ask for is the porridge so you give them the porridge and during snack time*
>
> *SE5: yes we get help from DSD to buy them food*
>
> *SE8: luckily government looks out for us when children are young and below the age of 18 years, that the child has eaten the child is clothed*

The above extracts above showed the importance of giving the child food during the day, as this not only helps with children's nutritional needs, but also with children's concentration in the during lessons. Participants' responses in the extracts spoke of the tremendous help received from government organizations, especially DSD, which was of benefit to educators as they helped with crèche children's food grants.

### 4.3.3 Parents lack of responsibility for children's well-being and education

In the current theme, participants were asked to reflect on their experiences with parents. They expressed that they found parents to be a challenge as parents were lacking in their role of taking care of children and their educational needs.

Extract 8

> *SE4: And a child's whose parent does not play a role, the child often forgets which means that even at home the child is not reminded of what was taking place at*

*crèche*

*SE4: those who don't play a role in their child's education really put their children at*
*disadvantage because you find that sometimes I cannot teach or reach*
*certain places in terms of educating the child and if the parent has a role things*
*would be easier we could help each other*

*SE5: when a child messes its nappy at home and they bring a soiled nappy to crèche*
*and think that we have to deal with it that is not right for the child and when the*
*child get to crèche and they mess themselves there is only one nappy and if they*
*soil that nappy you do not know what to give the child. The problem I see is that*
*it's the young children that have babies so they are also rushing to school and*
*therefore they do not know a thing about children and you notice that sometimes*
*a child has not been bathed in a long time. It would be nice for them to receive*
*some encouragement from home because you find that the parents know what to*
*do but they just don't pay attention to the child*

*SE6: sometimes the problem starts at home and you find that the child is ill-treated at*
*home maybe the child is not getting fed at home but for the most part the the*
*biggest problem of all comes from home.*

*SE7: sometimes you see that the parent wrote this homework or the child's brother who*
*is in grade 5 did the homework for the child and the child also says that mom or*
*brother wrote this.*

The above extracts signify the type of environment and circumstances that young children develop in, where there is an element of neglect and abuse that can be viewed to be spiked by poverty in rural areas. It is evident from participants' reflections that children's healthy growth and education is of little to no importance, which is challenging in on its own as the amount responsibilities for children fall on educators.

### 4.3.4   Methods to accommodate shortage of classroom space

Discussed in the current sub-theme, participants recounted how many children they had occupying their classrooms. They also revealed the strategic ways of how they faced the challenge of insufficient space in the classroom.

Extract 9

> *SE3: Forty-four. I got two two teachers. We stay in the same class there's only one*
> *classroom*
>
> *SE6: There are 38 at the moment. Yes its one class.*
>
> *SE8: I have thirty*
>
> *SE5: hhh there is nothing the only thing is their toys there are a lot and the problem is*
> *we do not have the cupboard space to put them like if there is a small hole the rat*
> *comes in and eats at that and the sponges*
>
> *SE5: we have daily planning where others are crayoning and others are doing puzzles*
> *and they also go outside to play they play with the toys.*
>
> *SE7: no they do not do the same thing all together, so in my class I have groups and*
> *there are four in a group. Red group come and they sit on the chairs around the*
> *table, and at the time red group is sitting there the other groups are sitting in the*
> *fantasy area. We have quiet area and we have block area. The others are sitting*
> *in the fantasy area doing fantasy and the others are in the clay area playing with*
> *mould moulding clay.*
>
> *SE8: I do this so that my job is easier like when I divide them I know that I did this*
> *activity with this group and I have it written down, since it is Monday today, red*
> *and blue will cut or we will paint and the others will do something else it just*
> *helps with me recognizing how my job is going.*

The extracts above reveal how participants make use of the little bit of space they use to accommodate to teach children. It is clear from the extracts that they have many children who are part of their crèche, so to accommodate all these children in one small space, educators plan their lessons and activities around where children are grouped and situated in the classroom. This makes it easier for them to move around the classroom and teach each group of children.

## 4.4    Challenges experienced by Singakwenza facilitators

The sub-themes discussed below, show the different challenges experienced by Singakwenza facilitators (SF). The challenges included managing educator expectations, dealing with negative attitudes and feelings of being unwelcome and facilitators struggle to build relationships with ECD educators. They also had frustrations as they were perceived by

educators as knowledge bearers. These themes are discussed in the study as they are viewed as posing a challenge to effective ECD intervention programmes.

### 4.4.1  Managing educator expectations

Singakwenza facilitators in this theme got an opportunity to reflect on the perceived expectations from educators that led to some challenges, and how they managed these expectations. They spoke of how they were expected to maintain the old or usual way of teaching children.

Extract 10

> SF1: you have to move and do the activity for the day and also do another thing and also play whereas um if they don't do all of that then they don't get like the stimulation
>
> SF1: so working with them like that working with Singakwenza it involves them the teachers they see why it is important for the child to learn then even if you take the the toys that we use that are made out of waste its easier cause its things that they can make for themselves
>
> SF2: cause what we say for them as they still young it's for its easy for them to learn through play so it's not like we normally say to them you can't just give them the pen and the paper and take the chalk board and chalk and go to the board and writing name cause they don't understand what is that they must first also they must first understand what it is like they must learn though play first before for them to write all those things that for the primary school I think I grade three and grade four and not for them in the crèche
>
> SF2: um what I can say you see in some of the crèches when you first go there I I'm gonna say they not doing well I think they were not used to what we saying to them you see if someone just came here I can say yes you can come and work me but maybe sometimes she got her expectations or she expecting something when you come in

Singakwenza facilitators revealed how they were expected to use the old methods of teaching children that rural educators were familiar. It was evident from extracts provided that crèche children were given tasks that were not age appropriate and educators resist the change brought

about by the intervention. Many challenges would arise as the intervention was based on age appropriate stimulation activities and less on traditional methods of teaching.

### *4.4.2 Negative attitudes from educators and facilitators feelings of being unwelcome*

During the interview, Singakwenza facilitators had the opportunity to express their views on how they were treated when facilitating rural crèches. They reflected on the challenge of educators' negative attitudes and unwelcoming feelings they received at the crèches.

Extract 11

> *SF1: it's very difficult to work at their crèches because they own the crèches its theirs we just come in with the education that needs to happen with the stimulation*
>
> *SF1: she didn't really intervene on the programme she wasn't happy to do anything as you came into the crèche she would just look at you like you had to greet her like you had to beg her to come and do the activities with you*
>
> *SF1: I had to work with one of teachers then when I worked with one of her teacher then she she wasn't happy cause like every time I came in the children would come run to me and hug me like they would normally like welcome me in a very nice way that children do but then I think that she thought that um I dunno what she thought but I think she had that jealousy or she wasn't very much happy about how things were going*
>
> *SF1: there have been time where it was hard to work with them really its if they are motivated and have the right attitude then it's easy but if they don't have the right attitude they not being self-motivate they not real really willing to do anything then it's hard*
>
> *SF2: some of them we've got good relationships some of them you see that I'm not gonna say that they don't want us see as we people we got every problem at home the other day we get there and you can see that no I don't think it was a good day for me to come here*

The extracts above show the significance of relationships that need to be created and maintained if ECD interventions are to be effective in rural communities. It is clear from the extracts that ECD interventions need to be applied with caution, especially when introducing new activities and concepts to individuals who previously had no knowledge of such concepts.

### 4.4.3   Educators' lack education thus intervention is challenged due to lack of meaning

The extracts in this theme revealed how educator's lack of education and prior training was viewed as posing a challenge for facilitators as they tried to introduce and implement the intervention.  Educators were perceived as lacking in motivation to take part in the intervention, therefore educator and facilitator relationships were tested.

Extract 13

> *SF1: um:::: I think with the teachers ah it's a lack of knowledge not knowing why you are doing what you are doing its gives them no meaning they don't understand why they should be teaching they don't understand why children should be doing activities why children should go and be in different areas each day they don't understanding importance of why children should be doing that*
>
> *SF1: because woo::: one they have not been trained two they don't see the importance of why*
>
> *SF1: to do activities when you have to attend to each and every child... you have like different groups you have three or five group or seven groups in one classroom and you have to attend to each and every group and attend to each and every child so moving all around sometimes you have to sit on the floor and do activities on the floor sometimes you have to bend and do activities on the table with the children sometimes you have to jump outside you have to run outside and I think that she didn't really like to do all that stuff that involves her physical whereas as a teacher you have to move all around and do physical stuff most of the time and she wasn't happy to be doing physical stuff*
>
> *SF1: Now she had to do something each and every day cause um when I did when I work with her she had to do activities with me on the day and then after she did activities with me on the day she had to carry on and do the rest with the children and so:: she didn't like to do much to work to stand up and talk and play with children and do activities she didn't*
>
> *SF2: I think the background because she didn't go to the crèche so she don't understand what the use of that*
>
> *SF2: um  what I can say you see in some of the crèches when you first go there I I'm not gonne say they not doing well I think they were not used to what we saying to them you see if someone just came here I can say yes you can come and work me but maybe sometimes she got her expectations or she expecting something when*

*you come in you come there then you tell them  this is what what we gonne do and you just give them eight boxes to play and then what what for then you take out the eight boxes and the children they play and do whatever they want to do and then the next day she's not gonne give them*

*SF1: some of them um they like they get scared and think that they not doing the best that they should be doing they think we gonne come and take over*

*SF1: the first main thing with them that we have to do is build the relationship with teacher so for me the key to work with the teachers is has been to build the relationship with the teacher first*

*SF1: she got to understand how we work and so like how what the change it has done to the children and not only that I came to them to take over her crèche she had to understand why I came to her crèche to do the programme with her teacher*

*SF1: yes it's very important and also you as a mentor you have::: to really build a relationship with the teachers*

*SF1: firstly to build a relationship with children is easy cause children always accepts you but if you don't have a relationship with the teacher then. It won't work you have to have a good relationship with the teacher*

*SF2: I ask teacher oh ok I showed you did you understand everything? Ok yes I did understand ok I'm not here to judge you*

Many rural ECD educators coming from disadvantaged backgrounds do not have contemporary methods of educating young children, and their lack of schooling or formal ECD training could be perceived as posing a challenge to current ECD interventions being implemented in their crèches.  Thus facilitators establishing and maintaining relationships with educators is important to intervention success.  Educators lack of understanding of new methods of educating young children can be problematic,  as many of these activities require educators to be motivated and partake in physical and psychological stimulation activities with children.

### 4.4.4  Perceptions of facilitators as information bearers
During interviews, Singakwenza facilitators discussed how they shared or gave information to educators.  They viewed themselves as information bearers who had knowledge that they needed to impart onto the educators, who seemed less knowledgeable.

Extract 14

> *SF1: it's very difficult to work at their crèches because they own the crèches its theirs*
> *we just come in with the education that needs to happen with the stimulation.*
> *SF1: they have to show that they passionate they have to show that each and every*
> *week that when you come there they do the activities with them they do it*
> *SF2: uh the feeling yoh heh I think it's a happy feeling for them cause we help them*
> *SF2: cause I did take her and show her how to do it now I'm giving her the chance, it*
> *not like when I go to the crèche I be doing everything for them we go to her and*
> *show her how to do it and after that she has to go to the other group and then*
> *show me that she has learnt something that I teach her*

The extracts above highlight the experiences that many disadvantaged communities go through with the introduction of a new programme or intervention. From the extracts above, one can describe Singakwenza facilitators as helping educators by introducing them to new ECD practices, although it may appear as though they are imposing their ECD knowledge on educators.

### 4.4.5   Too many children in one classroom

In extracts below, Singakwenza facilitators shared their views of the problems of educators taking on too many children in their classrooms as it generates more of an income for them. Lack of space was also viewed as quite a challenge by facilitators.

Extract 15

> *SF1: yes:: yeh it a a very big challenge to to really like make them understand that a*
> *teacher should have a certain number of children in a class there shouldn't be*
> *more than what's the number is is to be like for one teacher most of the time*
> *teachers should have not more than twenty-five children per class, but because*
> *when teachers have more children in the crèche it generates more income from*
> *for them but ah because they want to generate more income they end up having*
> *like forty fifty children in one class which is hard whereas they don't find it easy*
> *to work with such a large number of children its quite a big challenge and I think*
> *if they could have like have more space and less children it could be easy to*

> *teach whereas if they have a small space and a lot of children in one class then they can't really do much with such a large number of children*
>
> *SF1: this is why I say if the chi the teachers have a large number of children the can't really do that it's not possible for them to do that because if you have a large number of children you have to do a lot of things for different groups a lot things for each and every group and you have to be there with the children so if they don't teach them*

The above extracts from Singakwenza facilitators drew attention to the situation that many individuals living in disadvantaged areas who have minimal to no education go through when trying to make a source of income in a rural community. The lack of income for many educators seems to affect how they conduct their crèches. Educators take on a large number of children for the sake of more funds they receive from parents, thus this poses a challenge for children and educators and facilitators.

### 4.4.6   Conclusion

In this chapter, participants revealed their beliefs of the uses of play and toys to encourage early childhood stimulation and development. Educators further spoke of the benefits and challenges they experience as ECD educators. The benefits included receiving training from Singakwenza and also the usefulness of having the DSD help with food grants. The challenges admitted by educators were that parents did not play a positive role in children's education and the lack of classroom space was an issue. Singakwenza facilitators revealed experiencing challenges with educator's lack of understanding of the intervention and the problems with small classroom space. To follow is Chapter 5, which will discuss the possible explanations of the results from this chapter.

# CHAPTER 5

# DISCUSSION

## 5.1    Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the results that are presented in Chapter 4. This study sought to explore crèche educators' beliefs about the importance of stimulation in early childhood as well as the challenges and benefits experienced by the participants associated with Singakwenza intervention.  Singakwenza facilitators training challenges were also discussed in the current chapter.

## 5.2    Educator background influences beliefs about play

Many of the study participants did not have the opportunity to attend crèche mainly due to the apartheid governance which sought to undermine black children's rights to adequate education and optimal development.  Rural communities were not fortunate enough to have the government's support in creating ECD institutions for black children, or if there were ECD institutions in particular communities, they were not close enough for children to attend (Msila, 2014; UNICEF, 2008).  The lack of ECD financial and governmental support that SE experienced in early childhood did not deter them from needing and engaging in playful experiences as children.  This corroborates findings from Lancy (2002); Moyles (2014) who stated that children who have been socialised into a culture that does not encourage playful interests, will find ways to participate in playful experiences and engage in leading playful activities.  Thus, growing up in unfortunate circumstances, has presently allowed SE to embrace the interests of young children's opportunities for free time to create toys and play.

Further, rural children's socio-cultural background needs to be understood for one to fully conceptualize the importance of play in disadvantaged communities.  The assumptions underlying culture and how it relates to how educators view play and toys as part of stimulation is important.  Thus, when SE's involved in the Singakwenza early childhood intervention programme share their insights about the possible benefits of recyclable materials as educational tools, this allows us to fully recognize SE's beliefs about the role of stimulation in child development. Reflecting on this gives an idea as to where SE beliefs about play as a form of stimulation, stem from.  The kinds of play experiences and toy activities that they engaged in gives insight into rural African children's cultural heritage and traditional ways of playing

and learning, as this type of learning is incorporated into the Singakwenza ECD programme in crèches. In addition, understanding their play experiences contributes to our own comprehension of rural children's customs, practices, and objects used during learning, thus it can be said that rural children's cultural heritage encompasses human activity and allows for the production of tangible representations of individuals value systems, way of living and beliefs to become evident (ICOMOS, 2002; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004).

SE's socio-cultural and financial background influenced the tangible representations they would use thus these representations reflected their social and financial background (Darian-Smith & Pascoe, 2013). The current study showed that many of the SE's parents were out of work and children had to make use of recyclable toys for learning experiences. This is also evidenced by UNICEF (2007) who found that many of the homes that poor children originate from have parents who are unemployed and cannot afford store bought toys to facilitate children's learning. Armed with the knowledge of growing up using recyclable materials as toys, it is evident that SE's personal experiences of play, the contribution of Singakwenza ECD intervention programme educational techniques, have all added to educators valuing and believing in the benefits of stimulation in early childhood. This is clearly seen in them introducing playful activities during class tasks and affirming the idea that play is universal, thus displaying that their beliefs in play can help facilitate optimal growth in early childhood (Brown & Vaughn, 2009; Lancy, 2007).

### 5.2.1 *The application of theories of development in classroom contexts*

SE's beliefs about the role of stimulation was further witnessed as they incorporated strategies that reflected Vygotsky's social constructionist theory to teaching and learning in the classroom. Using Vygotsky's (1978) constructionist approach, they appeared aware of how to support the children's ZPD. This was illustrated in how they used it to guide classroom lesson plans as children's learning is enhanced when collaborating with peers and adults (Poehner, 2009). In addition, to facilitate learning in the ZPD, SE's shared how they used facilitation rather than instruction when introducing new concepts, for instance they taught children specific tasks, allowed children to replicate the task, monitored the progress and provided guidance in tackling difficult tasks (Mitchell, Myles, & Marsden, 2013; VanPatten & Williams, 2014).

The SE's in the current study tactfully engaged in helping the children in their ZPD by prompting and providing hints at different levels. Thus, this type of tactful teaching and learning could be described as scaffolding (Kail & Cavanaugh, 2015). Scaffolding does not necessarily simplify the task given to the child, but the role "of the learner is simplified through the graduated intervention" of the educator (Bliss, Askew & Macrae, 1996, p.39; Lerner, Liben, Mueller, 2015). Vygotsky (as cited in Culatta, 2015) stated that, children's cognitive development depends on scaffolding in the ZPD, thus the ZPD depends on social interaction. Social interaction and collaboration with the educator or peers during activities and problem solving will enable a child's full range of skills to be developed and the support from others would exceed what the child could have mastered if they had done the task alone (Fawcett & Garton, 2011). By introducing simplified tasks, SE's showed that they understood the role and need for stimulation and that children of a certain developmental age are mostly able to complete tasks that are age appropriate (Beck, 2011; Spiegler & Guevremont, 1998; Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976).

SE's further discussed the significance of the relationship between themselves and the children they taught. They revealed that although it is important that they facilitate children's learning by collaborating with them during tasks, it was just as important to assist them with regulating their emotions. Helping children regulate their emotions meant coaching children into imitating how to cope with their feelings. For instance, talking to children about how they are feeling, therefore facilitating self-regulation (Bjorklund & Blasi, 2011). When children discuss what they are experiencing, they are able to socially interact with others, which allows them to evaluate the world around them, which further instils new values and the ability to help differentiate things from what they already know (Florez, 2011).

Vygotsky (as cited in Maddux, Johnson, & Willis, 1997) stated that what children learn in a classroom context should be meaningful and should relate to what children learn outside of the classroom, therefore knowledge developed in the classroom should not be separated from knowledge and experiences in the 'real world'. For instance, the SE's demonstrated to children how to make the doll using recyclable materials, this enabled children to learn about the human body and all its functions. Though this, children were therefore able to experience real life situations through play.

When children are being taught different real life situations through play and toy making techniques, they are learning how to develop and create tools that facilitate learning (NAEYC, 1997; 2009). SE's described the role of stimulation in early childhood and how certain educational toys when used contributed to specific developmental areas. For example, most of them agreed that using different colour bottle lids allowed children to learn colour discrimination, counting and grouping methods. Another SE described how she taught children about the structure of the crèche building and how this taught children about different shapes. Pertaining to children's learning, SE's revealed that imaginative thought in early childhood played a significant role in children's development. Elaborate imaginative games were seen as inspiring children's imagination in and outside the classroom. The re-creation of real-life experiences during imaginative games helps young children make sense of who they are and what role they have to play at home and in their community (Gordon, n.d.). Additionally, the different playful experiences in childhood help facilitate physical development, as the study by Liu, Wu and Ming (2015) found that the benefits of physical play for children is that of stimulating the development and enhancement of gross and fine motor skills. Gross motor skills enable children to control their head, arms, and legs, while fine motor skills enable children to control the movement and development of hands, feet and toes. Crain (2015) study found that children's engagement in physical activities helps to stimulate children's bodies by strengthening the muscles and encouraging hand-eye coordination. To validate this, during interviews, SE's shared that they incorporated outdoor play activities into lesson plans and these activities included playing with the ball and skipping ropes. On hearing their responses, it was evident that they have an understanding that of the different types of stimulation needed in early childhood.

In the current theme, it is evident that SE's were aware of the role of stimulation in childhood development. Their awareness was further shown in how they incorporated theories of development that affected their teaching practices and tasks, and how this impacted on children's learning. Furthermore, SE's taking part in different play activities showed that they had a good understanding of how their past experiences with different types of play could advantageously influence how children learn and develop overall.

### 5.2.2 *Intervention benefits and keeping abreast of new ECD information*
SE's disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds enabled them to become familiar with the circumstances of the unaffordability of store bought toys. SE's parents could not afford to buy

them toys therefore they made their own toys out of recyclable materials. Using recyclable materials to create toys and learning experiences is beneficial, as the Environmental Protection Agency (2015) study recognised that re-using waste materials is beneficial as it is easy to teach children to create educational toys, furthermore, it maintains a clean environment and decreases the financial burden of disadvantaged families having to buy toys.

SE's beliefs of the role of stimulation in early childhood was further seen in their encouragement of using toys in an educational setting to stimulate crèche children. The Singakwenza ECD intervention equipped educators and children with toy construction skills that could further help them to design toys made specifically for educational purposes (Bar, 2015). They discussed how they had previously attended ECD courses and how this strengthened their professional growth and also enabled them to incorporate lesson plans that could cater to individual children's needs, thus making a difference in how children engaged with the information given during tasks.

SE's need to keep abreast of new ECD information was due to pressures received from Grade 1 educators who would comment positively or negatively on SE's educational skills. The Grade 1 educators would often judge SE's professional skills based on whether or not a certain child knew basic concepts coming into Grade 1. The study by Bruwer, , Hartell, Steyn (2014) affirmed that Grade 1 educators do find it difficult to teach children coming from crèche and Grade R, as a significant number of these children are not at the required level of school readiness to enter into formal schooling. SE's noted that Grade 1 educators were aware of the ECD interventions in the area and therefore were more attracted to taking on children who had been exposed to interventions, as these children were considered more intelligent and ready for formal schooling, than children who had not experienced interventions. The South African Council for Educators Act (2000) and Bruwer et al (2014) asserted that educators' enthusiasm for knowledge reflects how all ECD educators should feel a sense of responsibility to learners, communities and other professionals in guiding and encouraging children to realise their full potential in terms of educational success, thus this empowerment of themselves and others can be attained if they too are educated.

SE's seemed aware of the importance of their level of education, their willingness to engage in ECD courses and interventions, and how this could potentially facilitate the role of stimulation in early childhood, thus impacting children's learning and future education. Their optimism to

seek out information pertaining to ECD showed a desire for knowledge and positive future aspirations as ECD professionals.

## 5.3    Educator benefits and challenges experienced

The themes to follow describe the benefits and challenges experienced by SE's. They revealed that the most challenging part of their job was parent's lack of commitment to children's overall well-being and education. They also revealed challenges experienced due to the small classroom space, and found that the support from government organizations such as DSD were helpful in sustaining rural crèches.

### *5.3.1   Successful children mean successful educators and community*

SE's in the current theme revealed the benefits of their profession and how valuable their work as ECD professionals is. They also explained how children's success was directly linked to their own and communities success, and that the success of children depends on the educator (UNESCO-GMR Team, 2004). This notion was shared by SE's who perceived themselves to be contributing to children's good achievement in school, which helps shape children's success later on in life. They reflected on how their jobs do not end at crèche as they created lesson plans and directed activities and tasks that would determine children's success. The types of lesson plans and activities were perceived as directly contributing to community success because children were learning tasks that they could apply at home and in a community setting.

SE's shared that another benefit of their profession, is that successful children reflect positively on them as parents and other professionals deem educators as competent in their field and that further inspires them to work hard at their profession. For example, they maintained that they were able to educate children in a manner that children could understand and become competent enough to complete tasks given at crèche in such a way that children are able to enter into Grade R and Grade 1, ready to take on more advanced tasks and complete these tasks successfully. During interviews, SE's showed pride in their effort to facilitate children's education, thus this pride was further perpetuated by them receiving good reviews from parents and other professionals on how well they incorporated the intervention teaching strategies into their methods of teaching.

SE's seemed aware of the impact of culture on children's later educational and community achievement. ECD activities that they used included a variety of play and toy experiences that

contributed to children's stimulation in early childhood. Thus reflecting children's traditions and cultural context (Kekae-Moletsane, 2008). For instance, they mentioned teaching using cultural homemade dolls to describe to children who they were as individuals, in relation to the broader community. Miller (2008) stated that, when children are educated about their cultural and social experiences, they have the ability to develop intellectually, physically, emotionally and socially, therefore encouraging the formation of the self in early childhood that would potentially last throughout a children's life time. This means that, if children know themselves, they have potential to be aware of their responsibility and social standing in society.

It is important for children to learn of the importance of education and their social responsibilities, as revealed by Karoly, Kilburn and Cannon (2005) who found that children who have had the opportunity to attend crèche and have been exposed to ECD activities involving stimulation, showed greater academic, social, emotional and physical competencies, with less delinquency behaviours. These children also tend to do well in the labour market than children who were not exposed to ECD stimulation activities and crèche experiences. If children become successful, SE's visualised great community benefits. For instance, one study SE explained that she previously was unaware that there were scissors especially manufactured for left-handed individuals. She was made aware of this by the Singakwenza facilitators, thus she was able to encourage children that were left-handed to use these scissors so as to complete tasks effectively. What the SE's revealed showed an understanding of how community members who were previously uneducated or uninformed on a particular 'topic', i.e. left-handed scissors, could benefit from learning from crèche children and educators. This not only increases community knowledge, but also increases their awareness of the different circumstances that may affect children in early childhood. It was apparent from the SE's responses that they incurred great benefits as ECD educators. This theme further indicated how children are taught and by whom they learn from, can have an impact on them as individuals which can possibly contribute to educator and community achievement.

### 5.3.2 *The value of nutrition and DSD*

During interviews SE's shared concerns that many of the children they teach were not being properly fed at home and this was problematic. Almost all of the SE's interviewed noted that the children came from disadvantaged backgrounds, had deceased or unemployed parents, and this variation of problems was associated with low nutritional care for children. For example, SE's reflected on how parents were school going adolescents and inexperienced in taking care

of children's nutritional and physical needs. Thus, children's whose caregivers do not take care of their health and nutritional needs, put them at risk of stunting and disease, which could be linked to long terms recurrent infections, poor feeding practices and micronutrient deficiencies (Cogill, 2003). This is further elaborated by Madhavan and Townsend's (2007, p. 1) study which investigated the impact of social relationships on children's health and nutritional status of rural South African children. Children's weight and height were compared to international standards and relating variation in nutritional status to measures of social relationships. Findings from the study highlighted the importance of parents being present to provide financial and long-term nutritional support to a growing child. Thus, if it were it not for SE's ubuntu-like cultural compliance in sharing basic provisions such as food, parents would have struggled to negotiate children's basic needs (Lesejane, 2006; Mokwena, 2007).

The SE's comprehension of parents' plight during discussions enabled the researcher to gain an understanding that participants were considerate of parents' financial position, and the problems created therein minimized the effective relationships with parents. SE's were more inclined to overcompensate for parents' shortcomings by sharing what little food they had with crèche children, thus demonstrating to children, parents and community at large, caring and positive behaviours needed for children's optimal development.

The study by Save the Children (2015) found that children who live in poverty are at a disadvantage because they are susceptible to an unhealthy way of living and this affects children's emotional and physical development and therefore children born from poorer families are less likely to have a bright successful future. Faber and Wenhold (2007) study which looked at nutrition in contemporary South Africa found that childhood malnutrition is more prominent in the first two years of a child's life with prevalence being higher in rural areas than urban areas. On relating to the issue of malnutrition in children's development, Skweyiya (2006) stated that young children need to have access to good nutrition and health which will enable them to develop optimally.

Some of the crèches involved in the study were not funded by DSD, thus this was viewed by SE's as problematic, as children were assumed to suffer developmentally when they did not have access to nutritional food. Adolphus, Lawton and Dye (2013) study found that children who do not consume enough food in the day are less likely to be mentally active. This study showed that when children received food throughout the course of the day this had a positive

72

impact on children's cognitive performance, especially in the areas of memory and attention. This is evidenced in SE's shortening their teaching sessions, thus allowing children enough time to reflect on what has been learnt during tasks. They also discussed how they would have 'snack breaks' in between lessons so as to keep children's attention and not overwhelm them with lots of information whilst hungry.

On understanding of the plight of disadvantaged crèche children, some of the SE's assumed the responsibility of registering with the DSD to receive social grants. The Department of Social Developments' assistance was understood by SE's to be of great benefit to them and the children, as it elevated much of the food shortage experienced. To add, literature reported on by Giese and Budlender (2012) stated that government departments such as DSD have shown their support in funding disadvantaged children, whose ages range from 0 to 4 years and research has shown that the funding during the years 2003 and 2004 were estimated to be greater than 335 million, therefore revealing a substantial increase in children's subsidy in 2011 to 2012. Through collaborations and funding, the DSD and other governmental organizations like the DoE and DBE could put young children at a developmental advantage, as "there is growing evidence that social assistance has a positive impact on the lives of children in poor households in South Africa" (Delany, Ismail, Graham & Ramkissoon, 2008, p.1). SE's find great benefits when government organizations such as DSD show support. Through this support, children grow up healthy.

### 5.3.3   *Parents lack of responsibility for children's well-being and education*

In the current section, SE's voiced that parents posed a challenge as they seemed to lack responsibility and interest in their children's well-being and education. SE's complained of parents who were not willing to take care of children's physical needs. This was typified by more than one SE who revealed that most parents were ignorant of the fact that children needed to be fed different kinds of nourishing foods, to be taken care of physically and emotionally in order to grow optimally. The study by Jenny (2010) stated that children's whose parents neglect to take care of them have cumulative problems. These problems included physical, emotional neglect, which results in children being stunted in growth. Children also develop medical problems, low muscle and bone density and tend to have neurological problems. Additionally, Wild (2015) asserted that parents who do not care for children's nutritional needs, may further contribute to children's malnutrition. Furthermore, when children have malnutrition, this causes cognitive stunting which may be irreversible, thus becoming

detrimental to children's development. Although SE's seemed to feel burdened by parents' diminished responsibility for children, they still managed to remain positive and supportive in children's developmental and learning process. This support they showed by giving children food and encouraging them to complete tasks given.

The assumed lack of responsibility demonstrated by parents created a negative impression on SE's as they now had to assume the role of caregiver and not educator and professional. SE's in the study identified the challenge of always striving to disassociate themselves from the role of caregiver and stay true to their profession of early childhood educator. To differentiate and elaborate on the educator and caregiver roles, the study by Essa (as cited in Tarrant, Greenberg, Kagan & Kauerz, 2008) identified that there are distinctions between the caregiver and early childhood educator roles. The caregiver generally works at a day care centre and their role is to take care of children, babies and toddlers physical and emotional needs, while an early childhood educator mainly focuses on caring for children's educational needs. Although SE's distinctly related more with educating and not caregiving, they were challenged by this aspect of their jobs, as they were reluctantly engaging in both roles. SE's further expressed frustration at taking on many responsibilities, some which were meant to be taken on by parents. Mukeredzi, Mthiyane & Bertram (2015) study asserted that it is not uncommon in the South African education system for educators to bare the tremendous burden of playing the role of nurturer, care giver, educator and counsellor in the teaching profession.

The many responsibilities that SE's tackled were deemed as challenging, even more so since they felt that parents undermined the value of ECD and the work they put in to making crèches a success. To give clarity to this point, the study by Shumba, Rembe and Pumla (2014) which sought to explore parental perceptions of ECD provisioning at early childhood centres included in their study, four female participants who were purposively sampled, interviewed and document analysis conducted. Results obtained from the study indicated that parents regarded ECD centres as a place where children's physical, psychological and spiritual needs are elevated, and activities given to children are considered beneficial for their future educational success. Although parents seemed to view ECD provision as beneficial for their children's development, results showed that parents played a minimalistic role as they perceived getting involved in ECD centre processes as unwarranted (Shumba, Rembe and Pumla, 2014). Thus concluding that parents were incognizant of their role and the role of ECD centres, possibly because there was no open communication from ECD educators to parents about

74

responsibilities that each role player should account for (Nokali, Bachman & Votruba-Drzal, 2010). It is valid to conclude that early childhood educators who have not been formally trained as professionals in their particular field may not know how to deal with parents lack of involvement in children's education, as parental lack of involvement may be due to early childhood educators not knowing how to include parents in the children's educational process, or educators seemingly not having the necessary training and strategies to promote family collaboration (Waddell & McBride, 2008). Thus, educators who do not receive parents support in children's education, often feel overwhelmed and frustrated, hence for educators to do their jobs as professionals, they need to be able to rely on parents' support (Siririka, 2007).

SE's mentioned that parents were required to facilitate children's homework, which was designed to stimulate children's physical and cognitive development through participating in toy making and creative tasks. Having provided parents with instructions on how to facilitate homework sessions with children, it was found that parents and siblings were completing children's homework. Parent's lack of consideration for the value of homework can pose a challenge for educators and further have negative consequences for children. To further expound on this, the study by Liu (2009) found that when parents and siblings do children's homework, they take away from children's self-reliance, hence they also teach children that it is ok to cheat, moreover taking away from children's learning experiences. Mukuna and Indoshi (2012) study stated that strong communication links between educators and parents would give way to parent's participation, which entails being involved in classroom activities at crèche, attending crèche meetings, social events, homework and providing suitable nutrition and care to children at home, therefore providing sufficient support for educators. Hoover-Dempsey et al., (2001) study findings uncovered that if parents believe that they should be involved and educators want them to be involved in children's education, and that their involvement will contribute positively to their children's educational outcomes, parental involvement will include helping children with homework. Thus, supporting children in homework tasks were found to encourage attributes linked to achievement, i.e. self-regulatory skills.

SE's were aware that children's family environment, especially the support and involvement of parents played a major role in childhood literacy development, as the home environment was viewed as a place of nurturance (Crain, 2015; Strickland and Riley-Ayers, 2006). Parents support for children and ECD educators is imperative, as the study by Canter and Canter (2001)

observed that in order for educators and parents to establish a relationship, trust needs to be built, with educators understanding that there is a possibility that parents who did not have a an educational experience growing up may have negative or indifferent feelings about the schooling environment. Thus, having an understanding of parent's educational background and what they could or could not contribute to children's learning, would be useful for SE's when trying to collaborate effectively with parents. As a consequence, this collaboration would ensure a more defined working and social relationship which could lead to substantial outcomes for children.

### 5.3.4   Methods to accommodate shortage of classroom space

The current theme dealt with SE's challenge with classroom space. The classroom space was viewed as being considerably small and not conducive to effective teaching and learning. The lack of appropriate space resulted in SE's creating activities mostly geared towards outside play. The need for effective play spaces is paramount to children's growth, as Brussoni, Olsen, Pike and Sleet (2012) study asserted that children need enough space to play freely as this encourages the development of children's mental and physical growth. Additionally, indoor space allows children to be able to feel comfortable, welcome and relaxed, encouraging the motivation to learn and concentrate, further enhancing children's individual potential (Brittin, Sorensen, Trowbridge, Lee, Breithecker, Frerichs, & Huang, 2015).

In addition, responses communicated by SE's showed challenges with infrastructure issues experienced by rural crèches. Considering this, the study by UNICEF (2006) revealed regulatory guidelines that are applicable to early childhood development services, i.e. crèches. The guidelines stated that every child has the right to a healthy, playful and conducive to learning environment. This environment should have the minimum standards for premises, which are 1,5m² for indoor areas and 2.5m² for outdoor play areas. Hence the study by Wulsin (2013) found that when children have enough indoor and outdoor space to move freely, it encourages children to become adventurous, creative and willingness to interact and create relationships with peers.

Although SE's found the lack of classroom space challenging, they still housed a large group of children, ranging from 38 to 44 children per class. The Singakwenza facilitators were able to help them tackle the problem by showing them how to place children into manageable groups. The groups consisted of 4 to 5 individuals enabling SE's to effectively plan and

manage tasks to give to specific children, thus further enabling them to identify each child's strength and weakness.  This helped facilitate the process of giving children manageable tasks and encouraging collaboration between children who were more knowledgeable to pair up with peers who would benefit from their assistance (Anning, Cullen & Fleer, 2008).

Studies by Goncu (1999) and Gibbons (2014) revealed that children should engage in different daily activities as this would help children to learn how to solve problems and become literate through doing activities.  It was acknowledged by SE's that when children are placed into different groups, they were able to complete specific tasks daily as children did not have to wait for their turn to be taught something new.  SE's shared that in their groups, children would have a certain time period in which to complete a task and be moved to a different part of the classroom in order to complete a different task.  For example, in the classroom there space was created for fantasy area which endorsed imaginative play contributing to children's creativity. The space for block area was reserved for toy construction and quiet area for reading of age appropriate books. Through grouping methods, participants were able to do their daily planning for the following day (Koza & Smith, 2004).

It was evident that the grouping of children into specific areas of the classroom permitted for a more functional space and daily planning of each day's activities.  Even though SE's seemed to be managing with large groups of children in one class, they did seem challenged at times and some considered taking on less children for the sake of increasing classroom space.

## 5.4    Challenges experienced by Singakwenza Facilitators

The Singakwenza facilitators (SF's) experienced various challenges when entering and becoming a part of new crèche.  From the responses given by facilitators, the researcher is able to gain an understanding of the obstacles faced which may hinder effective ECD outcomes.

### 5.4.1   Managing educator expectations

In this theme, Singakwenza facilitators shared how they were challenged with managing educator expectations.  This was due to rural educator's unfamiliarity with the intervention process.  Initially, they observed that crèche educators were confused by the intervention and what it entailed and also what was expected of them.  For example, educators were taught by to use recyclable materials to create toys and how to incorporate play into the classroom teaching strategies.   The SF's observed that educators had little understanding of the

importance of homemade-type toys and how experiencing these toys had a transcending effect of knowledge, which would cross from adult, i.e. educator to child and from child to adult, i.e. educator and parents, thus enabling a sharing of educational ideas and knowledge with the broader community (Ahluwalia, Bethleham & Ginio, 2007).

The study by Mitchell, Dillon, Strong-Wilson, Pithouse, Islam and O'Connor et al. (2010) identified that educators are consistently under pressure to play a significant and appropriate role in dealing with the transforming teacher practices and children's educational needs. Considering this, crèche educator's initial resistant behaviour towards the change could be viewed as being due to educator's expectations that SF's would improve on old methods of teaching and neglect to initiate new methods of teaching that are unfamiliar and possibly harder to grasp. Educators remaining in the traditional methods of teaching could be quite detrimental to their own professional growth and children's educational progress, as several studies have asserted that traditional methods of teaching are not entirely capable of generating teachers that are for changing times (Darling-Hammond, 1999; Kincheloe, 2003; Lieberman & Miller, 1990; Tsui, Edward & Lopez-Real, 2009). Rural educators teaching methods were limited to teaching crèche children using books and pencils and demonstrations of certain concepts were completed on a blackboard.

The method of teaching used by educators could be viewed as less efficient in facilitating children's learning as Harms, Clifford and Cryer (2014) study found that children's intellectual and physical capabilities thrive when children have a combination of different playful activities and interaction that facilitate positive learning experiences. Rural educators who had not received the opportunity to attend ECD training or education, lack the fundamental understanding of how to best educate children, and those educators who do get an opportunity to attend these training institutions, are not fully equipped with how to educate children at a young age. Thus to validate this, the study by Schulz (2005) stated that traditional teacher education programmes do not prepare educators adequately for the teaching context and thus contemporary teacher preparation practices should focus on applying more context specific techniques of teaching. It could be said that the facilitators entering rural crèches train and prepare educated and uneducated educators on contemporary methods of teaching, which emphasise educators using more play-based learning techniques, which incorporate using recyclable materials found in the environment, therefore applying more context specific teaching techniques (Schulz, 2005).

The type of teaching methods used by educators were not uncommon to SF's as the NAEYC (2009) study revealed that educators who were uneducated on ECD and come from disadvantaged backgrounds were more likely to possess limited knowledge about ECD learning and developmentally appropriate practices for children at crèche level. The knowledge imparted by SF's on the importance of play as a pathway to better learning experiences for children, could be seen to be echoed by DOE (2014) who confirmed that when children use educational toys, they actively engage with their immediate environment. This entails manipulating parts and objects during play to create the desired effect thus leading to children's active learning. The DOE (2014) further stated that, with the facilitation of the adult during play, children are able to engage in social interactions with other children and this enables the association and development of ideas about gender roles, as children practice social skills and communication, therefore traditional methods of teaching come into question, as they seem not to fully incorporate the current educational needs, i.e., play, during tasks.

### 5.4.2 *Negative attitudes from educators and facilitators feelings of being unwelcome*
Singakwenza facilitators in this theme revealed challenges of feeling unwelcome as educators tended to exhibit negative attitudes towards them. ECD educators negative attitudes were viewed by SF's as a sign of jealousy, as crèche children responded well to the intervention, but also because they were sharing new information not 'previously known' by educators. Furthermore, facilitators understanding of educators' jealous behaviour was perceived as stemming from crèche participants' feelings of inferiority. This inferiority was due to educators assessing themselves as not possessing the same kinds of ECD knowledge and education that SF's enjoyed and because of the mentioned issues, SF's were treated as 'outsiders'.

ECD educators' initial negative and ill feelings towards SF's were thought to be brought about by a mutual lack of understanding and respect for each other's professional, socio-economic and cultural background. It was interesting to note that although both educators and SF's were from the same similar socio-economic and cultural background, both parties were unaware of the commonalities that they possessed in terms of their similar upbringing experiences and thoughts on play as facilitating stimulation in early childhood. The lack of awareness seemed to be the cause of tension in their establishing a professional relationship. Thus, the study by Scheuermeir (1991) and Sergiovanni (2015) stated that, for there to be a common

understanding of each other's professional position, outsiders, i.e. facilitators need to encourage a means of interaction with the insiders, i.e. educators on both beliefs and values, thus the interaction must have a foundation of mutual respect. Although SF's responses during interviews showed that they were frustrated with educators treating them as outsiders, the outside perspective that SF's possessed sought to bring value to crèches as new skills and experiences were the main focus of the intervention. An outsider perspective in rural intervention programmes could enable SF's to enquire about the current status of educators teaching challenges that need be addressed if educators were to gain new knowledge on how to handle different teaching dilemmas.

SF's shared that they found it challenging to work at the crèches because they were individually owned and were not government funded. They expressed that there were barriers to teaching educators on how they could use context specific strategies, i.e., recyclable materials, to create interesting lesson plans and activities. They further revealed that the relationship appeared to be non-existent, as educators would not intervene in the programme, and SF's would continue training educators who could not find meaning in what they were learning, which led to both parties not fully engaging with each other. Thus, the study by Whitebread, Basilio, Kuvalja and Verma (2012) revealed that adult roles are sometimes disjointed, complex and counter-productive, when engaging with children's activities, thus when collaboration between educators and facilitators involved in intervention programmes cease to exist, children's educational outcomes do suffer. Thus, negative adult roles and lack of collaboration has the potential to hinder children's chance of a healthy educational environment.

### 5.4.3   *Educators' lack education thus intervention is challenged due to lack of meaning*
Singakwenza facilitators revealed that most of the educators who had received the intervention, had limited to no previous education, with most educators having not attended crèche or completed Grade 12. The SF's perceived educators' role as one that was not supported by any education or training and therefore needed refinement in terms of how educators ought to facilitate learning in the classroom. Educator's lack of education in ECD was perceived by SF's as a challenge and a problem that meant that educators were behind on important knowledge that they should possess if they were to educate children in early childhood. ECD education was considered by SF's as important and UNISA (2015) ECD course programme specified that the type of education and knowledge that ECD educators should possess were to "teach in the childhood development sector, facilitate active learning in early childhood

development, manage the learning programmes in early childhood development courses and facilitate healthy development in early childhood development" (p. 1). This, therefore detailing that for educators to be proficient in their careers, they have to be cognisant of the need to well-educated and trained in ECD.

Without educators' prior education and training, SF's perceived educators' circumstances as a challenge, and burden of having to first educate and train educators. Hence, if educators were already in possession of ECD current information, SF's challenges would be limited, as SF's would train educators on existing knowledge that educators' possess and supplement educators' existing ECD knowledge, with the practicalities of play and toy making information. Furthermore, with educators existing ECD knowledge and education, this would enable educators to take on a more leading position in decision making with regards to lesson plans, thus ensuring that SF's perform their duties as guides, assistance or supporters rather than educators depending on them for instruction. Therefore, this would further permit the building of dependable relationships that will ensure the success of the intervention.

SF's spoke about how educators did not understand the intervention, therefore losing its meaning for educators. They attributed educators' difficulty establishing meaning to the intervention, to educators' lack of education and having not attended ECD institutions that promoted a play environment. SF's reasoning of why the intervention lacked meaning for educators could be contested as many of SF's did engage in play during their childhood and some had received some form of ECD education. To validate this, the study by James, Jenks & Prout (1998) asserted that most children no matter their background, culture, socio-economic status, are familiar with play and the creation of toys that are inspired by creative thinking. Thus as children grow into adulthood, they are aware of the idea of play even if they do not engage in playful activities as in early childhood. Consequently, educators' childhood experiences of play should be viewed as a foundation of their understanding of early childhood stimulation. Furthermore, participant's responses showed that individuals that teach children in early childhood are aware of what stimulation is, but lack the necessary teaching strategies of how to incorporate what knowledge they had into practicable lesson plans. It would have been more beneficial for SF's to approach educators with this thought in mind, as it would have allowed them to plan beforehand how to collaborate with educators. Hence the study by Fullan (2007) stated that meaning is achieved if it is shared, as meaning is viewed as motivation that creates engagement, and this engagement is between people and involves understanding the

change that needs to happen. Therefore, the interactional relationships and shared understandings between educators and facilitators about the intervention and how it could best be effective was important in developing and shaping meaning for educators.

SF's linked the intervention lack of meaning to educators' resistance to change, change being the intervention. Educators were seen as individuals who wanted to maintain the status quo and were not readily accepting of new information. Furthermore, educators refused to participate in playful educational activities introduced by the SF's, even though SF's would direct educators and children as to how to perform these activities. Educators who are not accustomed, unaccepting or unmotivated by ECD interventions can pose obstacles to individuals facilitating the intervention process as the intervention will be challenged. Thus educators who are willing to adapt to current ECD activities, can help children learn respectful ways of engaging with their social world where adults help them understand themselves and others, and this nurtures the transference of different skills, ideas and knowledge (NAEYC, n.d.).

Understanding rural educators' social background and upbringing, ECD experience and educational level is supreme to interpreting if educators would accept ECD interventions, as meaning of the intervention would be informed by their current and past experiences with ECD. Therefore, success of the intervention could be viewed to depend on developing and maintaining good relationships to guarantee effective ECD outcomes.

### 5.4.4 *Perception of facilitators as information bearers*

In this theme, Singakwenza facilitators expressed that their role was not only to introduce new concepts of the intervention but to also share knowledge presumably needed by crèche educators. This information included and was not limited to educating educators on key ECD concepts, educational information and training material. During interviews, most of the SF's defined themselves as a source of help to rural educators, even though SF's seemed to feel that educators were treating them as outsiders.

Upon further analysis of SF's perceptions as helpers, the researcher was cognizant that one of the main reasons for the challenges experienced by SF's was that they imparted information to educators and did not invite them into dialogue about how they could be involved in sharing their ideas about how to proceed with the intervention. The impartation of knowledge from one

source that is considered informed, to another source that is considered less informed, seemed to have proved problematic.  Thus, the study by Naples (1996) found that the insider outsider positions of individuals in communities are not fixed, but are forever shifting and changing according to the cultural values of community members, thus relationships and levels of interaction taking place between insiders and outsiders is constantly negotiated and renegotiated.  Naples (1996) study proved significant because when introducing any new intervention to educators, knowledge should be shared between educators and facilitators, and not be one sided, where SF's 'give' educators information and change their circumstances, while educators become mere recipients of information, therefore putting themselves at a disadvantage as they become less aware of their own capabilities and thus rely more on outside influences to reform their circumstances.

SF's and educators were from a similar rural background and upbringing in PMB, but due to SF's affiliation with the ECD intervention programme, they were considered experts because they could access ECD resources and education.   Thus, this seemed to give facilitators a perceived sense of status that educators could not quite relate to, therefore causing difficulty for educators to accept SF's as being equal to themselves.  Due to educator insecurities and disrelation of the relationship with facilitators', boundaries to the intervention seemed predefined before the intervention even commenced, thus the study by Kerstetter (2012) revealed that in order to break down boundaries and eliminate status arrangements between community members and individuals implementing interventions, individuals implementing the intervention need to establish a sense of trust and respect for community members' cultural identities and knowledge already pre-existing before the intervention.  Kerstetter (2012) further stated that, educators and facilitators need to work collaboratively with parents and community members as this would facilitate the rise of new intervention ideas tailored to communities and crèche needs.

How SF's gained entry into communities and engaged participants was noteworthy, as facilitators had the capacity to initiate and establish trusting relationships with educators (Weinbaum, Allen, Blythe, Simon, Seidel, Rubin, 2004) by not succumbing to behaviours of knowledge bearer, and therefore actually inviting educators into discourse that would facilitate positive knowledge sharing behaviours between each other.

### 5.4.5  *Large class sizes*

Singakwenza facilitators spoke of the challenges of classroom space.  They observed that educators were teaching more than the required number of children per class, i.e., each educator should not have more than 1 educator per 25 children. The subject of classroom space proved to be a concern, as the DoE (2011) verifiably stated that with large numbers of children in one class, the quality of teaching and learning diminishes incredibly and it is possible that with the large volume of children receiving education at the crèche, that some children are forgotten or fall behind because educators cannot extend themselves to these children.  Hence, Harrison & Sumsion (2014) discerned that children need open classroom space to ensure productivity and creation of social relationships.  Thus, if children do not have enough space it is a possibility that they their focus and creativity may be hindered, therefore affecting children's learning outcomes.  Consequently, facilitators were aware that with a large number of children per class, children could be deprived of significant adventurous opportunities when attending to activities, as lack of space induces boredom and fatigue (Casey, 2007).

Upon addressing this observed challenge with educators, SF's were met with indifference, which was perceived to be the direct result of educators receiving income from parents, as the more children educators accommodated the more income they would receive.  Thus, several studies have shown that there is a relationship between childcare quality and educator wages (Baker, Farrie and Sciarra, 2016; Britton & Propper, 2016; Mizala & N˜opo, 2016; Phillips, Mekos, Scarr, McCartney & Abbott–Shim, 2000; St.Clair-Christman, Buell & Gamel-McCormick, 2011).  The association is important to consider because the higher the wages, regardless of how many children there are in one classroom, the more attractive to educators the idea of staying and developing skills in the teaching profession and the more quality is upheld in ECD classrooms, with the help of intervention programmes (Early, Maxwell, Burchinal, et al., 2007).   Similarly, this could be viewed in educators who form part of the Singakwenza intervention, where although they accommodate large numbers of learners due to financial benefits, educators also find the idea of professional development fulfilling as they engage in educational opportunities presented by the intervention.  Additionally, to maximize small classroom spaces, SF's and educators helped each other to organize children by grouping them, so as to encourage different stimulation activities for learning.

The conundrum of small classroom space is a difficult one, as educators taking in more than the required number of children could be viewed as an economically beneficial for educators

and their own families, but puts crèche children they teach at some educational disadvantage. Non-the-less, the assistance of facilitators, crèche spaces were used effectively as educators were able to move around and monitor each child's development thus ensuring that children coped with ECD tasks.

### 5.4.6    Conclusion

Chapter 5 discussed the findings of the study according to the themes that emanated from the data.  Participant's views were considered during the discussion.  SE's beliefs about play and toys as a means to stimulate children was seen to be associated with educators' background, childhood past and present experiences of play and toy making.  The introduction of the Singakwenza intervention was viewed as helpful, as it enabled educators to be trained by SF's, therefore equipping them with the necessary education and experience to better facilitate children's learning in their classrooms.

The current chapter also captured educators voicing their appreciation for The Department of Social Development, as this government department was viewed to play a tremendous role in funding children coming from disadvantaged households.  The disadvantages experienced by educators were the small classroom spaces they had to teach children in.  SF's concerns were mainly directed at educators, who overall seemed to lack appreciation for the essence of what SF's were trying to introduce in the crèches, thus facilitators' means of coping with these concerns was to try and form strong respectful collaborations and relationships with educators, as this was deemed most imperative in initiating and sustaining the intervention.

# CHAPTER 6

## CONCLUSION

### 6.1    Introduction

The current chapter will discuss the conclusions drawn in relation to research questions and the implications for theory, policy and practices.    The limitations of the study and recommendations are also considered.

### 6.2    Conclusions drawn in relation to the research questions

The SE's beliefs about early childhood stimulation were directly related to their upbringing and intervention.  This was due to SE's experiences of growing up using recyclable materials to manufacture their own toys which they used to incorporate during their playful experiences. Since SE's attributed play and toy making to early childhood stimulation, they were able to understand and incorporate the Singakwenza intervention into their lesson plans.  SE's believed that play using recyclable materials could facilitate children's cognitive, emotional, social, physical development, this validated that they do comprehend the role of play as facilitating children's stimulation in childhood.  Furthermore, SE's understanding had great implications on children's learning and how participants' grasp their role as ECD professionals.

SE's expressed that they experienced no challenges with the Singakwenza intervention, but mentioned that parents were particularly problematic as they were not participating enough in children's education.  Parental support is paramount to children's educational success, consequently, participants and facilitators incorporating the parents into intervention strategies could make a difference to how parents could cope with children's homework and could potentially benefit parents educationally in the long run.  SE's experienced their benefits to be the ECD training received from the intervention, keeping abreast of current ECD information, having DSD support and also attributing children's educational success to their hard work as professionals.  The benefits discussed by professionals were important in exposing the needs that ECD educators have in this context, which would better enable them to perform their jobs effectively.  Other professionals, such as facilitators and government organisations support permitted.

SF's expressed the training concerns to be educators' lack of understanding about the intervention process and this they recognized as educators lack of ECD education and training.

SF's expanded and discussed their struggles to build relationships with educators as they were perceived as judges and this further hindered effective ECD intervention training. Facilitator problems named above exposed that for ECD interventions to be effective, strong collaborative relationships between educators and facilitators need to be established and maintained. This collaboration entails educators partaking in more of a leading role when it comes to reasoning about which toys and play ought to be included in lesson plans. Educators need to be given independence by facilitators to use their own judgement on how to teach and create lesson plans using intervention methods, this would give educators esteem to know that they are the directors of the classroom and are considered competent enough to know their professional responsibilities. Facilitators role would be that of overseer and supporter of how well educators are faring in their role in the classroom. This kind of collaboration and support of one another's roles would permit both parties to learn from each other's gained and shared knowledge, which would further contribute to sharing of these teaching strategies with other professionals in other contexts as well.

## 6.3    Implications for theory, policy and practice

Educators in this study seemed genuinely happy about having taken part of the Singakwenza ECD programme. The study showed that educators were able to associate the Singakwenza intervention and the significance of using play as a means of learning, to their past experiences with play and toys. The study showed that having ECD programmes that focus more on play and building of toys using recycled materials, could have a great impact on how the intervention is received by educators as recyclable materials are easily malleable and easy to find. Local ECD intervention programmes should gear their services, not only on training and providing information to educators, but also on trying to use local teaching tools and materials, such as, recyclable materials that are easily accessible to educators and children. The use of locally established tools will enable educators, parents, children and community members to be better access materials from their own environment and not have to seek outside of their community.

ECD programmes should be more culturally relevant when it comes to activity planning and implementation. A culturally relevant and effective ECD intervention can only be successful if the educators, parents and facilitators involved in the programme are able to respectfully agree to collaborate culturally relevant activities that incorporate play and toys to facilitate learning.

The government should consider providing ECD funding for programmes involved in implementing ECD interventions and strategies in disadvantaged communities, as some of the programmes do not reach all ECD centres or crèches in these areas. Government needs to focus on the improvement of ECD infrastructure of disadvantaged crèches, by assisting with funding. Adding additional classroom space and the improvement of children's classroom environment could make a difference in how children receive information when learning, as noted in 5.4.4, where the study by Brussoni, Olsen, Pike and Sleet (2012) stated that children need enough space so that they can be mentally and physically healthy, and that way, they will be able to face tasks posed to them during lessons.

The DBE Intrim Policy for Early Childhood Development (2001) stated that ECD programmes should encompass play and games as activities for children's childhood experiences. Although the DBE intentions of incorporating play activities as a form of learning in early childhood, the findings in this study revealed that the implementation of this concept of play as a form of learning by the department has not yet been established. The findings reveal that all the crèches in this study, including those registered under the DSD, although they receive a stipend for children's needs and also have monitoring from time to time, none of the crèches received toys or educational tools to educate children in classroom or outside settings. The departments' lack of initiative in deploying educational toys in crèche settings is problematic, as what the DBE Interim Policy states is quite different from what is currently taking place in rural crèches.

The DBE's intention of incorporating a play based curriculum is important, but the kind of educational theory applied in early childhood educational settings is important for implications for theory, policy and practice. The Vygotskian approach discussed in the study makes awareness of cultural tools, play, cooperative learning activities and experience processes of self-discovery and the need for educators facilitation in childrens' learning process (Faulkner, Littleton, & Woodhead, 2013). The DBE seems not to take full advantage of incorporating this theory into policy and practice. This is revealed by the studys' findings that rural ECD educators are uneducated and trained about the fundamental concept of how to facilitate children's' education using play as a form of learning. Thus this is precisely because the DSD has yet to collaborate with educators and facilitators on training rural ECD educators on the different methods of teaching. Although crèche educators in this study showed a deep sense of understanding of stimulation in early childhood, they initially, pre-Singakwenza intervention, did not fully recognize how play could be incorporated into their daily classroom

activities or teaching curriculum. DBE and other governmental organisations investment in supporting rural crèche educators training and practice could have a great impact on teaching and learning (Singaram & Pillay, n.d).

## 6.4    Limitations of the study

This study made use of qualitative research which comprised of a small number of participant's detailed descriptions and interpretations of their lived experience and social context. Considering the description of qualitative research, the study could be said to be limited in terms of generalizability. The accounts and beliefs relayed by participants in the study may not be the same for other participants involved in rural ECD education. The participants in this study have their own interpretations and cultural framework they belong to, thus what was discussed in the interviews can be viewed as indicative of participants' daily life. Although the study could be replicated with ease and results possibly transferable to other similar rural settings, other researchers need to be aware that participant responses may differ because of the uniqueness of each individuals' personal experience and background of what constitutes stimulation.

Another limitation is that, as a methodology, qualitative research contains some bias. This bias is revealed in the study, as the researcher has shown an interest in the research topic and further predetermined that the sampling strategy had to reflect a critical case and a homogenous sample and limited the heterogeneous and maximum variation of sample. The exclusion of other samples in the study limited maximum variation of others beliefs, such as parents, chiefs, policy makers, etcetera, but this was done purposefully as there was limited time to conduct the research and the researcher felt the need to examine and describe educators beliefs of stimulation in-depth with a small group of individuals.

## 6.5    Recommendations

The current study found that educators believe in stimulating children through the use of play and toys, therefore it is recommended that educators and facilitators collaborate to establish a more 'sharing of ideas' type of relationship, where educators have the opportunity to give ideas about what types of play they think children should engage in and what types of toys should be made for children, instead of facilitators initiating those ideas. This will encourage rural educators to conceptualize creative ideas of how they should teach children going forward, thus

this also gives educators a sense of independence and confidence that they need as professionals.

It is important to note that lower-income parents have a range of problems, and lack resources, and energy to provide a conducive to play environments for their children at home (Milteer, Ginsburg & Mulligan, 2012). Upon understanding the participants' problems with regards to parents challenging behaviour, the researcher is aware that these challenges may be due to many plausible explanations as to why parents cannot fully connect with educators. It would be wise for educators to consider the socio-economic, behavioural or other obstacles that parents may be facing and try and re-establish lines of communication about what is expected of them as parents with children attending crèche.

It is possible that the SE's perceptions of facilitators as judges and authority figures stems from somewhere. It is all a matter of approach and how facilitators come across. Singakwenza facilitators ought to acknowledge and embrace that educators do possess some knowledge and experience with children. It would be useful and conducive to positive interactions if facilitators valued rural educators as their equal thus "recognizing teacher knowledge and decision making as vital to educational effectiveness" (NAEYC, 2009, p.5).

Although SE's made positive statements about the Department of Social Development concerning funding and support received from the department, the DSD still has a long way to go to ensuring that rural ECD crèches are funded and children are taken care of, as some of the educators in the study revealed that they did not have this support from the DSD. It would be useful for DSD and other government organizations to engage with disadvantaged communities and establish which crèches or centres are in need of financial and other support, and provide training to officials from DSD, local government, DBE and other organisations to "to accurately and meaningfully assess and monitor ECD services" (Giese & Budlender, 2012, p. 19).

## 6.6    Conclusion

This study used qualitative research to investigate crèche educators' involved in the Singakwenza early childhood intervention programme, beliefs of the importance of early childhood stimulation in rural areas in Pietermaritzburg, taking into cognizance educators' beliefs on the role of play with the uses of toys as a form of stimulation in early childhood as

well as the challenges and benefits experienced by educators participating in the Singakwenza early childhood intervention programme. Singakwenza early childhood intervention facilitators' training challenges were also discussed. It is evident from the study that educator's beliefs were informed by their own personal disadvantaged backgrounds of growing up in rural Pietermaritzburg and not having the advantage of going to crèche.

The SE's early childhood experiences and background, coupled with having produced their own toys from scratch out of raw material has led to them developing positive beliefs about play and toys as encouraging stimulation in early childhood. SF's intervention strategies further revived educator's beliefs about the benefits of stimulation in early childhood. The successful intervention training experience referred to by educators was confirmation that educators, when given the right professional opportunity applicable to that specific culture and context, can become skilled individuals in their profession. The hopes for this study was that it would contribute to the improvement of educators' knowledge of early childhood stimulation and to highlight rural educator beliefs of the role of stimulation and further emphasise educator benefits and challenges.

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**APPENDICES**
**APPENDIX 1: ETHICAL APPROVAL**

UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL

INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI

30 June 2015

Ms Palesa Tracy Xulu
School of Applied Human Sciences
Howard College Campus

Dear Ms Xulu

Protocol reference number: HSS/0626/015M
Project title: Exploring the importance of Early Childhood stimulation in rural Howick West in Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

<div align="right">Full Approval – Expedited Application</div>

In response to your application received on 25 June 2015, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol have been granted FULL APPROVAL.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

Dr Shamila Naidoo
On behalf of Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)
Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

/pm

Cc Supervisor: Ms Phindile Mayaba
Cc Academic Leader Research: Prof D McCracken
Cc School Administrator: Ms A Ntuli

# APPENDIX 2: GATEKEEPERS PERMISSION LETTER

Singakwenza Education and Health

Office 3, The Rotunda, 1 Cedara Road, Hilton, 3245

PO Box 260, Hilton, 3245 Tel: 033 343 1650
info@singakwenza.co.za www.singakwenza.org
www.facebook.com/singakwenza
www.twitter.com/@singakwenza

Reg No: 2011/001942/08
PBO No: 9300 364 17
VAT No: 4850 260 904
NPO No: 127-422

22 June 2015

To whom it may concern

Re: Palesa Xulu – Research Study

Palesa Xulu is a Research Psychology Master's student from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg campus.
She is conducting a study which seeks to explore the importance of early childhood stimulation in rural areas in Pietermaritzburg. She will need to interview six crèche educators and two Singakwenza facilitators that are part of the Singakwenza ECD programme running currently in rural areas around Pietermaritzburg. The crèches are not governed or linked to the Department of Education and are run as independent crèches.

I hereby give permission for Palesa to interview two of my facilitators, and I have approached the six crèche teachers and have been given permission by them for her to interview them as well. Yours faithfully

Julie Hay

Director

*We aim to provide low cost, high impact Health and Early Education through empowerment programmes to economically disadvantaged communities.* **DIRECTORS:** Julie Hay, Nondumiso Nzimande, Debbie McCarthy
**TRUSTEES:** Reginald Zammit, Caroline Richter, Kgashane Mohale, Tankiso Parkies

**APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW INFORMATION SHEET**

Exploring the educators' perceptions of the importance of early childhood stimulation in rural Howick West in Pietermaritzburg, Kwa-Zulu Natal South Africa

Hello,

My name is Palesa Xulu and I am a Research Psychology Master's student from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg campus. I am conducting a study which seeks to explore the importance of early childhood stimulation in rural areas in Pietermaritzburg, taking into cognizance educators' beliefs and views on the importance of early childhood stimulation. I am carrying out the study so as to contribute to the improvement of communities' knowledge of the importance of stimulation in early childhood and further become open to intervention, such interventions such as those offered by Singakwenza.

You have been selected as a possible participant in this study and if you do agree to participate you will need to answer questions in the form of an interview which will last approximately 1 hour.  The interview will be audio-recorded in order to accurately capture what is said and you may request that the recording be paused at any time.

Your participation is voluntary and you can choose to discontinue your participation at any time without any penalties. The information that you give will be treated with the strictest confidentiality. The findings of this research will be published in the form of a thesis and a journal article. Your identity will be anonymous and protected in the presentation of the findings.

Unfortunately there are no benefits to participating in this study apart from your contribution to the understanding of experiences of academia at UKZN.

This study has been ethically approved by the UKZN Humanities Social Science Ethics Committee but if you feel that your ethical rights have been violated in any way you can contact the ethics committee on 033 260 4557.

If you need to know more about the study you can contact me on 073 4919285 or you can contact my supervisor, Phindile Mayaba, on 033 2605364.

Your participation is highly appreciated.

By signing the section below you indicate that you understand the information that has been presented to you above and that you agree to participate in this study.

I……………………………………………………., confirm that I have read and understood the information presented to me. I am aware that my participation is voluntary and that I can opt out of the research without any penalties. I am aware that my identity will be kept confidential and that my personal information will be treated with the strictest confidence.

I fully consent to the recording of my responses and I am aware I can request the recordings to be paused at any time.

I therefore confirm my consent to participate in the study.

Signature……………………………………………………………………………

Date………………………………………………………………………………….

## APPENDIX 4: IPHEPHA ELINOLWAZI NGE-INTERVIEW

**Ukuhlola imibono yothisha ' ngokubaluleka kokushukumsa izingane ezincane endaweni yasemakhaya eHowick West e Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu - Natal South Africa**

Sawubona

Igama lami ngingu Palesa Xulu ngingumfundi wase University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg ngenza iMasters kwi Research Psychology. Ngenza ucwaningo elifuna ukuhlola imibono yothisha nezinkolelo zabo ngokubaluleka kokushukumisa kwezingane ezincane endaweni yasemakhaya eHowick, Pietermaritzburg. Ngenza lolucwaningo khona ngizosiza ngokwenza imphakathi ibe nolwazi ngokubaluleka kokushukumisa izingane ezincane futhi kube nezindlela zokusiza ezifana nalezi ze Singakwenza.

Ukhethiwe ukuba ingxenye yalolu cwaningo uma uvuma ukuba ingxenye yalo kuzodingakala ukuthi uphendule imibuzo kwi-interview ezothatha iskhathi esingange hora. I-interview sizoyi rikhoda khona sizokwazi ukuba nerekhodi yezimpendulo zakho, futhi ungacela ukuthi I rikhoda imiswe noma inini.

Ukuba kwakho ingxenye yalolu cwaningo akuyona impoqo futhi mawuvuma uvumelekile ukuyeka noma ingasiphi isikhathi ngaphandle kwezijeziso. Ulwazi lwakho izosipha lona luzogcinwa luyimfihlo. Izinto ezizotholwa ngalolucwaningo zizoshicilelwa ibe yibhuku. Igama lakho lizogcinwa liyimfihlo uma sekuthulwa imiphumela.

Ayikho inzuzo ekhona ngokuba ingxenye yalolu cwaningo ngaphandle kokusinikezela ukuqonda kwakho nesipiliyoni kwezemfundo eUKZN.

Lolucwaningo luganyaziwe ikomidi lokuphatha abantu lase UKZN humanities Social Science Ethic kodwa mawuzizwa ngathi amalungelo akho awahlonishwanga ungaxhumana ne komidi lezokuphatha kwabantu ku 033 260 4557

Mawudinga ukwazi kabanzi ngalolucwaningo ungaxhumana name ku 073 4919 285 noma ungaxhumana nomphathi wami, Phindile Mayaba ku 033 260 5364

Ukuba kwakho ingxenye yalolucwaningo sizolujabulela kakhulu.


Ngokusayina lapha usho ukuthi uyawuqondisisa umyalezo onikwe wona ngenhla futhi uyavuma ukuba ingxenye yalolu cwaningo.

Mina…………………………………………………….., ngiyavuma ukuthi ngiwufundile umyalezo enginikezwe wona. Ngiqaphele ukuthi ukuba kwami ingxenye akuyona impoqo futhi ngizokwazi ukuyeka kulolucwaningo ngaphandle kwezijeziso. Ngiqhaphele ukuthi imininingwane yami izogcinwa iyimfihlo.

Ngiyavuma ukuthi kuthathwe ama rikhoda zezimpendulo zami futhi ngiqaphele ukuthi ngingacela ukuthi i- rikhoda imiswe noma ingasiphi isikhathi.

Ngiyavuma ukuba ingxenye yalolucwaningo

Signature……………………………..

Usuku………………………………...

**APPENDIX 5: ENGLISH INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

Social Sciences, College of Humanities,

University of KwaZulu-Natal,

Pietermaritzburg Campus,

Dear Participant

**INFORMED CONSENT LETTER**

My name is Palesa Xulu. I am a Research Psychology Masters' candidate studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg campus, South Africa.

I am interested in learning about the importance of early childhood stimulation in rural areas in Pietermaritzburg, taking into cognizance educators' beliefs and views on the importance of early childhood stimulation. I am carrying out the study so as to contribute to the improvement of communities' knowledge of the importance of stimulation in early childhood and further become open to intervention, such interventions such as those offered by Singakwenza. I am studying cases from Howick West, Elandskop, Winterton, and Tale Valley. Your community is one of my case studies. To gather the information, I am interested in asking you some questions.

Please note that:

- Your confidentiality is guaranteed as your inputs will not be attributed to you in person, but reported only as a population member opinion.
- The interview may last for about 1 hour and may be split depending on your preference.
- Any information given by you cannot be used against you, and the collected data will be used for purposes of this research only.
- Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years.
- You have a choice to participate, not participate or stop participating in the research. You will not be penalized for taking such an action.
- The research aims at knowing the importance of early childhood stimulation in your community and will consider teachers beliefs and views about early childhood development , specifically looking at early childhood stimulation
- Your involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.
- If you are willing to be interviewed, please indicate (by ticking as applicable) whether or not you are willing to allow the interview to be recorded by the following equipment:

|  | willing | Not willing |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Audio equipment |  |  |
| Photographic equipment |  |  |
| Video equipment |  |  |

I can be contacted at:

Email: palesa8628@gmail.com

Cell: 073 4919285 or 031 5645467

My supervisor is Ms Phindile Mayaba who is located at the School of Humanities, Pietermaritzburg campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Contact details: email: mayabap@ukzn.ac.za   Phone number: +27332605364.

You may also contact the Research Office through:

P. Mohun

HSSREC Research Office,

Tel: 031 260 4557 E-mail: mohunp@ukzn.ac.za

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

## <u>DECLARATION</u>

**I……………………………………………………………………… (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.**

**I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.**

**SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT                                    DATE**


**………………………………….                        ………………………………….**

**APPENDIX 6: YIFOMU YEMVUME YOKUBAMBA IQHAZA KULOLUCWANINGO**

**Ukuhlola imibono yothisha ' ngokubaluleka okuqala ebuntwaneni ukushukuma emaphandleni eHowick West e Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu - Natal South Africa**

**Imininingwane kanye nemvume ukuthi ubuyingxenye yalolu cwaningo**

Sawubona,

Igama lami nginguPalesa Xulu. Ngingumfundi ohlola umqondo ezingeni eliphakeme, ofunda ngocwaningo esikhungeni semfundo ephakeme inyuvesi yaKwaZulu-Natal Pietermaritzburg. Ngitatha iqhaza logukuxilonga noma ukuphenya ngokubaluleka okuqala ebuntwaneni ukushukuma emaphandleni Pietermaritzburg, kanye nokubhekelwa izinkolelo nemibono yothisha ngokubaluleka komqondo wokqala ebuntwaneni. Lolu hlelo lokufunda lwenzele ukuthi ngikwazi ukunikeza ulwazi neqhaza olunzulu noluncono emphakathini. Lolulwazi luzodlala iqhaza ekuphenyeni ngokubaluleka okuqala ebuntwaneni ukushukuma emaphandleni nokuqhubekeka lokukungenela okufana naloku okunikelwa iSingakwenza.

Ukhethiwe ukuthi ube ingxenye yalolu cwaningo. Kuzodingeka uphendule imibuzo mayelana naloluphenyo olungahle cishe imizuzu engamashumi amathathu. Lokuhlola kuzodinga kusentenjiswe umshini wokuqopha ingxoxo, lomshini uzosiza ukuze siqonde kahle futhi sikhumbule ukuthi utheni kuloluphenyo. Lomshini wokuqopha ingxoxo ungawumisa noma inini mangabe kukhona isidingo.

Uma ungagculiseki ngokuzibandakanya nocwaningo uvumelekile ukuhoxa phakathi nocwaningo noma ngasiphi isikhathi ngaphandle kokuphoqwa. Lolucwaningo luzo landela imihlahlandlela evumelekile ocwaningweni lonke, njenge mfihlo, ukugodla igama, kanye nokuhlonipha isithunzi sakho. Ngakhoke igama lakho angeke lihlanganiswe nocwaningo noma ngayiphi indlela, lizohlala ligodliwe

Ukuba usebenzisane nathi siyokujabulela kakhulu. Ayikho imikomelo oziyithola ngokuzibandakanya kwakho kulolu cwaningo. Noma kunjalo ke abacwaningi bayosijabulela kakhulu isikhathi sakho osichithile ocwaningeni lwethu okuzosiza ukuthuthukisa ucwaningo oludingeka esifundweni sethu.

Uyocelwa ukube ufunde lolulwaze umangabe uliqonda uyacelwa ukube ugcwalise ipheshana elishoyo ukuba uyavumelana nokuthi uyaliqonda ulwazi olusephepheni bese uba ingxenye yocwaningo ngokuzithandela.

**Izosetshenziswa kanjani imininingwane yakho**

Imininingwane ezovela ekuzibandakanyeni kwakho izosetshenziswa kumbiko esifundweni sethu kanye nakubantu bomphakathi wePietermaritzburg.

**Wena uvikeleke kanjani**

Uma ukhetha ukuzibandakanya kulolu cwaningo uma kwenzeka uba nezikhalazo noma imibuzo noma unomubona mayelana namalungelo akho ungathintana nekomidi zemiso zokuziphatha.

Mangabe udinga ulwazi olunye noma olubanzi ngalo loluphenyo, ungathinta mina ku0734919285 noma uphathi wami, uPhindile Mayaba ku 033 2605364.

**Igunya lakho mayalana nalolucwaningo**

Ngaphambi kokuzubandakanya uyangxuswa ukubeka izikhalazo zakho ngaphambi kwalolu cwaningo, emvakwa kuba usuthole incazelo bese usayina esikhaleni esingenzansi. Ukuzibandakanya kwakho kuzobe kuveza ukuthi uyavumelana nemigomo yocwaningo.

_____

**Iphepha elisinikeza igunya**

Mina…………………………………………………………………… (igama lakho eliphelele) ngiyavuma ukuthi ngiyifundile, ngayiqonda ngachazeleka mayelana nalolu cwaningo. Nginikweze ulwazi olunzulu ukuze ngikwazi ukuthatha isinqumo sokuba yilunga lalolu cwaningo. Ngiyavuma ukunikeza igunya lami lokuthi ngibadakanye kulo lucwaningo.

Ngiyaqonda ukuthi ngingakwazi ukuhoxisa isinqumo noma ngasiphi isikhathi uma ngenesifiso noma nginga qondi kahle imiphumele yocwaningo.

Isikhala soku sayina………………………….Usuku……………………………………..

**Iphepha elisinikeza igunya loksebenzisa umshini wokuqopha ingxoxo**

Ukuze ngiqonde kahle futhi ngikhumbule ukuthi utheni kululuhlolo, ngingathanda ungiphe igunya lokuthi niqophe konke ozokusho kumshini wokuqopha ingxoxo. Ngizobe sengilalela okuqoshiwe bese ngiyakuloba phansi. Kuyobe sekubhalwa ngolimi londlebe zikhanyelana (isingisi). Uma sekubhalwe phansi ngizobe sengkususa okuqoshwe emshinini. Ngiyafunga ukuthi igama lakho alizukubandakanywa naloku okuzobe kuqhoshiwe phansi noma ngomshini. Ngizosebenzisa igama okungalona elakho ukuze siphephise elingelakho kanye nesithunzi sakho.

Uyavuma ukuthi sisebenzise umshini wokuqopha? Cela usebenzise uphawu emabokisini ngezansi.

| | Uyavuma | Awvumi |
|---|---|---|
| Umshini wokuqopha ingxoxo | | |
| Umshini wokuqopha izithombe | | |
| Umshini wokuqopha ivideo | | |

Inkomba yokuthi uyavuma, sayina

………………………………………….

Usuku

………………………………………….

**APPENDIX 7: EDUCATORS QUESTIONS**

<u>**Interview schedule:**</u>

- Go through informed consent sheet, assure anonymity and encourage truthful disclosure in light of full anonymity.

1) **Section A: Demographics and background information**
    1.1) What is your name?
    1.2) What is your current occupation?
    1.3) Please tell me about your upbringing
    1.4) Did you have toys to play with growing up?
    1.5) Do you have children?
    1.6) Do you have toys for your children to play with?

2) **Section B: Typical day**
    2.1) Please describe the first thing you do when you get to school?
    2.2) How many hours do you spend at school?

    -2.2.1) How many children do you teach in your class?
    -2.2.2) What types of teaching aid do you commonly use?
    - 2.2.3) Are you open to finding or using different teaching techniques?

    2.4) Are there certain expectations in terms of how you should teach children at the crèche?
    2.5) Do you make use of toys as teaching aids? Please elaborate on what you think the functions of using/ or not using toys are
    2.6) Do you think there are benefits to using toys as educational tools?
    2.7) Are there disadvantages to using toys as educational tools, if so, please elaborate?

3) **Section C: Questions on understanding of the concept of stimulation in early childhood:**
    3.1) What do you think early childhood development is?
    3.2) What is early childhood stimulation?

3.3)     What role do you think stimulation plays in a growing child?

3.4)     Please try and recollect what your childhood was like, and refer specifically to early childhood stimulation or lack thereof

3.5)     How do you think your childhood experience of stimulation or lack thereof, has contributed to your views on it as an adult?

**Section D: Teachers views on Singakwenza intervention programme**

4.1)     Are you familiar with the NGO called Singakwenza?

4.2)     What do you think Singakwenza does?

-4.2.1) Describe your relationship with Singakwenza

-4.2.2) What is Singakwenza's relationship like with the kids?

4.3)     What do you think of the Singakwenza programme?

4.4)     What do you think Singakwenza thinks of you as an educator?

4.5)     Do you understand the role of Singakwenza's programme in promoting early childhood stimulation?

4.6)     Do you think Singakwenza's programme is effective in promoting early childhood stimulation?

4.7)     What do you think the advantages and disadvantages of using Singakwenza programme are?

4.8)     What are the challenges faced by you using the Singakwenza programme?

**\*End of interview\***

5)     Is there anything further you would like to add that you feel hasn't been covered?

6)      Are there any concerns or complaints you may have concerning the interview or research project?

Thank you for your time and participation, it is much appreciated. Please don't hesitate to contact me should you have any further enquiries (see contact details on informed consent sheet).

**APPENDIX 8: IMIBUZO YOTHISHA**

- Funda iphepha lesivumelwano, qinisekisa ukuthi imininingwane yakho izofihlwa.

**Section A:**

1.1) Ubani igama lakho?

1.2) Usebenzaphi njengamanje?

1.3) Cela ungitshele indlela okhule ngayo.

1.4) Wawunayo amathoyizi okudlala usakhula?

1.5) Unazo Izingane?

1.6) Izingane zakho zinawo amathoyizi okudlala?

**Section B:**

2.1) Cela uchaze into yokuqala oyenzayo uma ufika esikoleni?

2.2) Mangaki amahora owahlala esikoleni?

    2.2.1) Ufundisa izingane ezingaki eklasini?

    2.2.2) Iziphi izindlela zokufundisa ojwayele ukuzisebenzisa?

    2.2.3) Ingabe uyakwazi ukuthola noma ukusebenzisa izindlela ezihlukile zokufundisa?

2.4) Zikhona izindlela okulindeleke ukuthi ufundise ngazo?

2.5) Uyawasebenzisa amathoyizi njengendlela yokufundisa? Cela uchaze kabanzi ngokuthi ucabanga ukuthi yini umsebenzi wokusebenzisa noma ukungawasebenzisi amathoyizi.

2.6) Uyacabanga ukuthi ikhona inzuzo ngokufundisa ngamathoyizi?

2.7) Zikhona izinto ezimbi ngokufundisa ngamathoyizi?

**Section C: Imibuzo yokuqondisisa imicabango yokushukumiswa kwengane uma isencane:**

3.1) Ucabanga ukuthi yini ukukukhulisa ingane isencane?

3.2) Yini ukushukumiswa kwengane encane?

3.3)	Mangabe ucabanga iliphi iqhaza elidlalwa ukushukuma enganeni esakhula?

3.4)	Cela uzame ukukhumbula ukuthi ubuntwana bakho babunjani, futhi uchaze kakhulukazi kwindima eyadlalwa ukushukuma noma ukweswela ilokhu

3.5)	Mangabe ucabanga ukushukuma kudlale yiphi indima ebunganeni bakho noma ekwesweleni, futhi, lokhu kunesandla kanjani emibonweni yakho mayelana ngokushukuma njengoba usukhulile?

**Section D: Imibono yothisha ngeSingakwenza**

4.1)	Unalo ulwazi mayelana ne-NGO ebizwa nge-Singakwenza?

4.2)	Ucabanga ukuthi uSingakwenza wenzani ?

-4.2.1)	Cela uchaze ngobuhlobo bakho noSingakwenza

-4.2.2)	Bunjani ubuhlobo beSingakwenza nezingane?

4.3)	Ucabangani ngohlelo lweSingakwenza?

4.4)	Ucabanga ukuthi uSingakwenza ucabangani ngawe ngengomuntu owuthisha?

4.5)	Uyaliqonda indima edlalwa uhlelo lwakaSingakwenza ngokugqugquzela ukushukuma ekukhuleni kwengane?

4.6)	Uma ucabanga uhlelo lweSingakwenza liyasebenza ukugqugqumezela ukushukuma ekukhuleni kwengane?

4.7)	Mangabe ucabanga yini okuhle nokubi ekusebenziseni uhlelo lweSingakwenza?

4.8)	Yiziphi izinkinga obhekana nazo uma usebenzisa nohlelo lweSingakwenza?

**\*iphelile imbuzo\***

5)	Kukhona okunye ongathanda ukukufaka ocabanga ukuthi asikubuzanga?

6)	Kukhona okukuxakayo noma isikhalazo onaso mayelana nemibuzo noma nocwaningo?

Ngiyabonga isikhathi sakho neqhaza olidlalile kulolucwaningo, konke kuyancomeka. Cela ungangabazi ukungithinta ngocingo uma unembuzo onayo (bheka imniningwane yokuxhumana kwifomu yemvume yokubamba iqhaza kulolucwaningo).

**APPENDIX 9: SINGAKWENZA FACILITATORS' QUESTIONS**

**Interview schedule:**

- Go through informed consent sheet, assure anonymity and encourage truthful disclosure in light of full anonymity.

**Section A: Demographics**

    1.1)    What is your name?

    1.2)    What is your current occupation?

**Section B: Approaching a rural school**

    2.1)    Please describe how you approach a school in the rural areas?

    2.2)    How many minutes or hours do you spend assessing if it's the right school to receive the intervention?

    -2.2.1)    How do you determine if the crèche needs the intervention?

    -2.2.2)    Who do you approach about the intervention? If not teachers, why?

    - 2.2.3)    How do you go about teaching teachers about the Singakwenza programme?

    2.3)    Are there certain expectations from the school in terms of how you should teach children and teachers at the crèche?

    2.4)    In what language do you communicate the intervention to teachers

    2.5)    What are the benefits of the intervention?

    2.6)    Please describe your relationship with the schools you have facilitated interventions in

    2.7)    Do you think rural teachers understand the concept of early childhood stimulation?

    2.8)    What do you think the feelings or experiences are from teachers who are part of the intervention?

    2.9)    Do you think teachers have problems with interventions itself, if yes, where do you think this stems from?

    2.10)    What are the challenges you face as a facilitator applying interventions in rural schools?

2.11)   What do you think teachers views are of you as a facilitator?

2.12)    How effective do you think the Singakwenza programme has been in promoting early childhood stimulation?

2.8)    What are the challenges faced by you using the Singakwenza programme?

**\*End of interview\***

3)      Is there anything further you would like to add that you feel hasn't been covered?

4)      Are there any concerns or complaints you may have concerning the interview or research project?

Thank you for your time and participation, it is much appreciated. Please don't hesitate to contact me should you have any further enquiries (see contact details on informed consent sheet).

**APPENDIX 10: IMIBUZO YOMKHUTHAZI WASESINGAKWENZA**

• **Funda iphepha lesivumelwano, qinisekisa ukuthi imininingwane yakho izofihlwa.**

**Section A: Demographics**

    1.2)    Ubani igama lakho?

    1.2)    Yimuphi umsebenzi owenzayo njengamanje?


**Section B: Approaching a rural school**

    2.1)    Cela uchaze ukuthi uzisondeza kanjani eskoleni sasendaweni esemakhaya?

    2.2)    Usebenzisa imizuzu noma amahora amangaki uhlola ukuthi isikole kuyiso elsilungelwe ukuthola isingenelelo?

      -2.2.1)    Ubona ngani noma usithatha kanjani isinqumo sokuthi inkulisa iyasidinga isingenelelo?

      -2.2.2)    ukhuluma nobani mayelana nesingenelelo? Uma kuwukuthi akusibona othisha, yingobani?

      - 2.2.3)    Ubafundisa kanjani othishela mayelana ngohlelo leSingakwenza?

    2.3)    Kukhona yini isikole esinakho esikulindele kuwena mayelana nendlela ongafundisa ngayo izingane Kanye nothisha bakwinkulisa?

    2.4)    Usebenzisa luphi ulwimi uma uxhumana nothishela mayelana nesingenelelo?

    2.5)    Ngabe yiziphi izinzuzo zalesingenelelo?

    2.6)    Cela uchaze ubudlelwane onabo nezikole osiza kuzo

    2.7)    Ucabanga ukuthi othisha basemakhaya bayawuqondisisa umbono wokushumisa izingane zisencane?

    2.8)    Ucabanga ukuthi iyiphi imizwa noma iziwombe othishela abaphume nayo kulesingenelelo?

    2.9)    Uma ucabanga othishela banayo yini inkinga ngezingenelelo? Uma kunjalo ucabanga ukuthi kubangwa yini lokho?

    2.10)    Yiziphi izinselele obhekana nazo njengomkhuthazi owenza lezizingenelelo ezikolweni zasemakhaya?

    2.11)    Ucabanga ukuthi othishela bacabangani ngawe njengomkhuthazi

    2.12)    Ucabanga ukuthi uhlelo le SIngakwenza lusebenzile na ekugqugquzeleni ukushukunyiswa kwabantwana abasebancane?

    2.8)    Ziyini izinselele obhekana nazo usebenzisa uhlelo le Singakwenza?

3) Kukhona okunye ongathanda ukukufaka ocabanga ukuthi asikubuzanga?

4) Kukhona okukuxakayo noma isikhalazo onaso mayelana nemibuzo noma nocwaningo?

Ngiyabonga isikhathi sakho neqhaza olidlalile kulolucwaningo, konke kuyancomeka. Cela ungangabazi ukungithinta ngocingo uma unembuzo onayo (bheka imniningwane yokuxhumana kwifomu yemvume yokubamba iqhaza kulolucwaningo).