



**UNIVERSITY OF  
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**INYUVESI  
YAKWAZULU-NATALI**

**USING MUSIC TO TEACH COMMUNICATION TO CHILDREN  
AGED THREE TO FOUR: A CASE OF TWO URBAN ECD  
CENTRES**

**by**

**DEBORAH AVOSUAHI ARASOMWAN 216074145**

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**School of Education University of KwaZulu-Natal**

**SUPERVISOR: PROFESSOR NONTOKOZO MASHIYA**

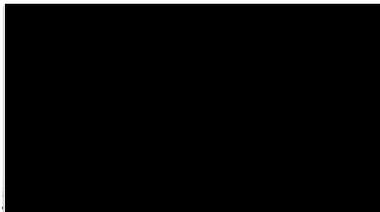
**2020**

## DECLARATION

I, Deborah Avosuahi Arasomwan (216074145), declare that:

1. The research reported in this thesis, except where otherwise indicated, is my original research.
2. This thesis has not been submitted for degree purposes or examination here at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal or at any other tertiary institution.
3. All the sources used have been duly indicated and acknowledged by means of references.
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Date: 19/06/2020

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## **DEDICATION**

I sorely dedicate this thesis to God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, with whose love and mercy the completion of this research work has been made possible.

## **ABSTRACT**

This qualitative case study focused on the use of music as a pedagogical medium to teach communication skills to children in the early childhood care and education (ECCE) phase (children aged three and four). The study was informed by a social constructivist paradigm, and was underpinned by Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, focusing particularly on the ECCE children's interaction with the more knowledgeable other, which was construed as ECCE educators or pedagogical tools. A purposive sample of six ECCE educators at two urban ECCE centres was selected. Data was generated through semi structured interviews, learning environment observation, and document analysis, and then analysed using thematic analysis. This study found that the ECCE children's acquisition of communication skills can be improved by ECCE educators using musical pedagogical strategies. The study shows that using various music are the most appropriate pedagogies for ECCE children. Additionally, the study discovered musical pedagogies requires educators to have continuous professional development to ensure understanding and effective use of these pedagogies, and that factors hindering use of the strategies include: insufficient training in music as pedagogy; shortage of musical resources, non-inclusion of music as independent early learning and development areas in the NCF curriculum and inadequate government support for the provision of musical resources. The findings from this study are relevant for all stakeholders in the education of ECCE children and ECCE educators. The researcher recommends a comprehensive review of the content and implementation of the ECCE curriculum in relation to music pedagogy; a review of the pre-service teachers' curriculum to extend their learning of music pedagogy; and adequate government support and funding for musical resources for ECCE centres.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<b>ANAs</b>	Annual National Assessments
<b>CBOs</b>	Community-Based Organisations
<b>DAMP</b>	Developmentally Appropriate Method and Practice
<b>DPA</b>	Developmentally Appropriately Practice
<b>DoB</b>	Department of Education
<b>DBE</b>	Department of Basic Education
<b>ECE</b>	Early Childhood Education
<b>ECCE</b>	Early Childhood Care and Education
<b>ECD</b>	Early Childhood Development
<b>ECDE</b>	Early Childhood Development and Education
<b>ELDA</b>	Early Learning and Development Area
<b>EFL</b>	English as a Foreign Language
<b>FPC</b>	Foundation Phase for children
<b>ICDS</b>	Integrated Child Development Services
<b>LiEP</b>	Language in Education Policy, 1997
<b>LoLT</b>	Language of Learning and Teaching
<b>MKO</b>	More knowledgeable other
<b>NCF</b>	National Curriculum Framework
<b>NELDS</b>	National Early Learning and Development Standards
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organisations
<b>PIRLS</b>	Progress in International Reading and Literacy Study
<b>SACMEQ</b>	Southern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality
<b>SCT</b>	Sociocultural Theory
<b>TIMSS</b>	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
<b>ZPD</b>	Zone of Proximal Development

# CHAPTER 1

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Early years education forms the building blocks and the basis for creativity, health, and cognitive, emotional, and social wellbeing, and the early acquisition of language and communication skills gives children the foundation to explore the world and new ideas (Adams-Ojugbele & Moletsane, 2019; Rao, Richards, Sun, Weber, & Sincovich, 2019; Richter, Daelmans, Lombardi, Heymann, Boo, Behrman, & Bhutta, 2017). The South African National Curriculum Framework (NCF) recommends that educators of children from birth to age four employ a variety of strategies to teach them communication and language skills, such as dance, musical rhymes, art and pictures, body movement, and musical play (Department of Basic Education [DBE], 2015). Thus, the purpose of this study is to explore Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) educators' use of musical rhymes to teach language and communication skills to children aged three to four years. In addition, it also explores the impact of using musical rhymes to teach communication skills on the children's language development. The study focuses on the ECCE educators' proficiency in going beyond the traditional use of words, phrases, and sentences to employ musical rhymes to teach language and communication skills in a simplified and comprehensive way to enhance the children's intellectual and language development skills.

## 1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) (2014a, p. 1) has stated that

early childhood is a critical stage of development that forms the foundation for children's future well-being and learning and is also the key to a full and productive life for a child as well as to the progress of a nation.

Education has been identified as an important tool for early childhood development (ECD), and researchers such as Vandebroek and Lazzari (2014) and Murriss

(2019) have declared that the provision of rich ECCE services enhances and positively influences children's academic performance in later years.

Mbarathi, Mthembu, and Diga, (2016) observed that ECCE has become a significant educational focus area within South Africa, particularly with regard to ensuring educational equity and a high quality of care for children from birth to four years old. Since the promulgation of the Children's Act 38 of 2005, which advocated for the provision of enriched and comprehensive early childhood services for young children, there has been a renewed focus on and interest in the structure and provision of these services for children from birth to four years old. The South African government has put in place many policies and provisions for the enhancement and funding of ECD. These include the *Interim Policy for Early Childhood Development* (Department of Education [DoE], 1996) and *Education White Paper 5 on Early Childhood Education* (DOE, 2001), which established the broad framework for ECD and placed emphasis on the importance of the roles of the family, caregivers, social services professionals, educators, and parents in child development. The Child Care Amendment Act 96 of 1996 (Republic of South Africa, 1996a) provided the criteria and guidelines for the smooth running of day-care and for financial grants to day-care facilities. The Children's Amendment Act 41 of 2007 (Republic of South Africa, 2007) provided for the protection of children and for preschool and crèche services. Lastly, the NCF for children from birth to four years was initiated in 2015 as a response to the challenges faced by the ECD sector (DBE, 2015). The main purpose of these policies has been to extend the provision of ECD services to all children, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, at local, provincial, and metropolitan levels.

However, equal access to the facilities provided is still a challenge to some children aged 0-4 (Aubrey, 2017), specifically those from inland rural settings and those from disadvantaged, low-income and unemployed families (Adams-Ojugbele & Moletsane, 2019; Marope & Kaga, 2015). School surveys show that children from low-income backgrounds tend to join community schools with undertrained educators, and therefore often suffer from poor language and communication development (Ashley-Cooper, van Niekerk, & Atmore, 2019). In addition, Aubrey (2017) reported that children with physical, intellectual or sensory impairments, and medically fragile

children, are often left out in the provision of ECD services. These children have limited access to ECD services, whether mainstream or specialised. This is in conflict with the South Africa's Children's Charter, which promotes the equal provision of a sustainable basic education to every child as their right (Du Plessis, & Mestry, 2019; Munongi & Pillay, 2018).

Furthermore, the provision of ECD services in South Africa is not universal, and the majority of the ECCE centres remain in the hands of independent and community providers. These services are largely offered by the private sector and by community-based organisations (CBOs), which focus on making a profit, and by the non-profit sector through non-governmental organisations (NGOs). *Education White Paper 5* (DoE, 2001) revealed that most of these centres are fee-based, making them difficult for most parents to access.

The implementation of developmentally appropriate strategies in the ECCE learning environment has been found to be a solution to many of the challenges. Roberts, Kaiser, Wolfe, Bryant, and Spidalieri (2014) conducted a single-subject, multiple-baseline study in the United States to explore the effects of effective teaching strategies on ECCE children's language learning. The authors reported that the effective use of teaching strategies in the learning environment had a positive impact on children's language and communication skills. Roberts et al. (2014) also found that employing constructive teaching methods with young children at an early age was crucial for avoiding long-term, communication-related problems.

A number of local and international ECD researchers have conducted studies on the use of music in the ECD learning environment, and have confirmed that using music as part of the ECD teaching strategy helps to address some of the problems mentioned above (Barrett, Flynn, Brown, & Welch, 2019; Muthivhi, & Kriger, 2019; Gorgoretti, 2019; An et al., 2016; Cloete & Delport, 2015; Van Vuuren & Van Niekerk, 2015). Green (2017) and Bond (2013) find that the use of music as part of an effective teaching strategy in the early childhood learning environment has a significant impact on young children's learning of language and communication. Significantly, recent studies have affirmed that the use of music, rhymes, dramatic play with musical accompaniment, and musical play in the learning environment has a strong positive influence on

underprivileged and at-risk children's acquisition of important skills, including language and communication skills (Hancock & Wright, 2018; Haslip & Gullo, 2018). These authors note that music, musical rhymes, and dramatic play with musical accompaniment are effective teaching strategies that align with and are appropriate to children's development.

However, because employing music to teach communication (speaking and reading) to children is a new field in ECCE, it is not yet a formally structured strategy, hence the inspiration for the choice of this study: the use of music as a strategy to teach communication skills to ECCE children and the impact it has on their language development.

### **1.3 EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION (ECCE)**

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is given different names and terms across the globe. At the international level, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) calls it "early childhood and care", whereas the World Bank and UNICEF use the term "early childhood development" (ECD). Different countries also use different terms. For example, Nigeria, Kenya, and Namibia call it "early childhood development" (ECD) and refer to nursery schools (Adams-Ojugbele, & Moletsane, 2019). Ethiopia refers to "early childhood education" (ECE), while Ghana refers to "preschool" and "kindergarten" (Zhu, 2009). Adams-Ojugbele and Moletsane (2019) state that in China, the ECE programme is divided into three stages: nurseries for children from birth to age three, kindergartens for children aged three to six, and preschool classes for children aged five to six. In certain developed countries, such as Canada and the United States, ECD is referred to as "day-care", "nurseries", and "kindergartens", while parts of Europe refer to it as "early childhood education and care" (Adams-Ojugbele & Moletsane, 2019; Sharpley, 2014). In South Africa, Early Childhood Development (ECD) is the comprehensive programme designed for children from birth to age nine. It is characterised by three important phases: The Foundation Phase, for children aged 3 to 7 years of age; the reception year, for children aged five; and ECCE or the pre-reception year, for children aged four (Hall et al., 2017).

#### **1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The findings of this research may offer support the ECCE educators, caregivers, and children, to brace up their musical skills to enable them to use it as pedagogical strategy to teach communication skills to the children aged 3&4.

In South African context, music is employed in implementing a number of subjects across the grades. Core skills such as listening, reading, and writing, and key skills in subjects such as mathematics and life skills, can be developed using music as part of a teaching strategy (Milne, & Calilhanna, 2019; Khaghaninejad, Motlagh, & Chamacham, 2016; Nortjé & Van der Merwe, 2016). However, in ECCE, which is a new area in South Africa, very little structure has been put in place in relation to employing music to teach communication (listening and reading) skills to ECCE children. This study has the potential to establish the importance and significance of using music as a pedagogical medium to teach these skills to ECCE children, and to enlighten ECCE educators in this regard.

Consequently, ECCE children, as the secondary beneficiaries of this study, may be able to assimilate and comprehend the teaching of language and communication skills with greater ease, and thereby incorporate these skills into their lives. This was demonstrated by Van Vuuren and Van Niekerk (2015), who found that integrating musical rhymes into the ECCE learning environment setting supported the children in constructing their own learning, rather than learning by rote. In addition, this study has the potential to help to bridge certain gaps in the literature by adding to the small existing body of information on the use of musical rhymes to teach language and communication skills. Furthermore, the findings of this study may inform the thinking of teacher-training universities and encourage them to integrate music into the ECD/Foundation Phase pre-service teacher education curriculum. In addition, the findings of this study may also inform the decisions of policy makers and the Department of Education (DoE) to do follow up to ensure the enforcement of music-based pedagogy in the ECCE learning environment.

## **1.5 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY**

My personal and professional experiences as a Foundation Phase educator inspired this research study. Over the years, I have observed a great disparity between the language and intellectual development of children from well-resourced ECD centres and those from disadvantaged areas. This is of grave concern, as language and communication skills are crucial for success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In my previous research on the impact of ECD development facilities on primary school children, most of the children who had a communication problem in primary school were from vulnerable schools where educators had limited teaching strategies. Furthermore, my engagement in both informal and formal activities with children as a Foundation Phase educator, my thirteen years' experience as a high school creative arts educator, and my experience as a university tutor lecturing Foundation Phase pre-service teachers, made me realise the need for this study. From my observations and experiences, the difficulties children have with comprehending lessons, organising their ideas, and expressing themselves across all the educational levels can be traced to the poor acquisition of listening and speaking skills in their early years.

In addition, I have found music as a teaching strategy to be useful for positively influencing the language and communication skills of children aged three and four, for the following reasons. Firstly, music is a pervasive and familiar feature of everyone's lives — at home, in public transport, and in almost every organisation — and ECCE educators therefore need little persuasion to use music to teach ECCE children. Secondly, children aged three and four learn best through a range of play and musical activities that are appropriate for and align to their development. I have taught music for ten years and have seen the positive effects of its use as a teaching strategy. Those skills taught using music as a pedagogical medium have a deeper and more lasting impact on children than the traditional, rote style of teaching. From my own personal experience, I can vividly recall and sing all the songs employed by my primary school educators to teach us numeracy.

The motivation for this study is also informed by local and international research that emphasises the significant impact of the use of musical rhymes in supporting young children's learning of language and communication skills ( Barrett, Flynn, Brown, & Welch, 2019; Muthivhi, & Kriger, 2019; Gorgoretti, 2019; An et al., 2016; Cloete &

Delport, 2015; Van Vuuren & Van Niekerk, 2015). This research suggests that more attention needs to be focused on imparting communication skills to ECCE children using music as an implementation strategy. It is best to acquire and master such skills, which are essential for holistic development, during the early years (Pace, Alper, Burchinal, Golinkoff, & Hirsh-Pasek, 2019; Arasomwan & Mashiya, 2018)

## **1.6 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

It is vital for children to develop effective language and communication skills such as speaking, listening, reading and writing in order to connect with the people around them and with the wider world, and there is a significant relationship between the early acquisition of communication skills and the holistic development of a child. Communication is one of the six early learning and developmental areas for children from three to four years, as proposed by the NCF (DBE, 2015); however, I have encountered high school children and university students who find it difficult to express their thoughts in response to simple questions in the learning environment. Thus, development of communication skills at an early age (from birth to age four) must therefore be a priority in order to ensure smooth educational progress success at the higher levels of education and acquisition of social norms.

The importance of children acquiring language and communication skills has been recognised by the South African government, who have adopted various policies to promote ECD. The South African education system incorporates the eleven official home languages for supporting children's learning. In addition, the Language in Education Policy (RSA, 1997) specifies that children will offer mother tongue and one additional official language depending on the choice of the children's parents (Hanemann, & McKay, 2019). However, Nomlomo, (2019) reports that the majority of Black South Africans prefer English-medium ECD centres for their children in order to make teaching and learning processes multicultural and multiracial. The disparity and confusion between the policy and parents' preferences, coupled with the lack of experience of some ECD educators, pose a challenge to the teaching of communication skills. Besides, the craving of some black-parent for English -medium ECD centres which hampers children's effective acquisition of communication skills is the poverty

rife in majority of African countries. Early childhood centres in rural areas are characterized with factors that negatively impact on the children's acquisition of this important skills. Du Plessis and Mestry (2019)'s recent study titled 'teachers for rural schools – rural schools a challenge for South Africa' highlighted some challenges that restricted children from low socio- economic background in gaining quality education. The authors stated factors such as parents undevoted attitude to their children's education, inadequate funding from the government, poor basic infrastructure, a lack of resources, undertrained educators, bad road, lack of information and communication technology. In supporting children from this type of setting to learn the basic skills with inclusion of communication skills, (Lumadi, 2019), suggested a conducive and positive learning environment with a constructivist and creative teacher.

However, while children from South African and some other African countries are faced with reading difficulty, there is a report indicating that problems with children's language and communication skills are widespread. For example, Dockrell, Howell, Leung, and Fugard (2017) reported that a number of children in England have language and communication needs that, if not addressed, could affect their academic success. A research study on children aged 3–7 in Wales revealed that the spoken language of children entering the nursery and reception years was considerably poorer than it used to be, and that some children had language difficulties (Salomon-Gimmon, & Elefant, 2019). Hence, it has been suggested that teaching these vital communication skills which include speaking, listening, writing and listening with music has a deeper and more lasting impact on children than traditional rote teaching (Torppa, & Huotilainen, 2019; Acquah, 2016).

Several research studies have also established that using music to teach any skill helps children to gain a quick understanding, makes the learning environment atmosphere a positive environment for learning, and promotes social interaction among children, thereby aiding the growth and development of the early childhood children (Milne, & Calilhanna, 2019; Schiavio, van der Schyff, Gande, & Kruse-Weber, 2019; Hawkins, 2016;). In addition, listening, reading, and writing skills, and skills in other subjects such as mathematics and life skills, can be unpacked using music as a teaching strategy for other grades (Barrett, Flynn, Brown, & Welch, 2019; Fairchild & McFerran, 2019; Cloete & Delpont, 2015; Van Vuuren & Van Niekerk, 2015). The use of music as a

teaching strategy has been shown to enhance learning and create a constructive learning environment atmosphere (Eerola & Eerola, 2013). In addition, several studies have suggested that playing peaceful music in the learning environment can decrease hostile behaviour and assist in controlling negative emotions, particularly feelings of apprehension and tension among children (Ba'th & Mychailyszyn, 2017; Quintin, 2019; Ziv & Dolev, 2013).

Some developed and developing countries, including a number of African countries, have incorporated music into their educational curricula. Malaysia, Sweden, Australia, Spain, and England use music as a teaching strategy, and research findings indicate that this is a useful strategy for inclusive learning environments (Fairchild & McFerran, 2019). Ehrlin and Gustavsson's (2015) Australian research recommended music as a teaching strategy based on their finding that it stimulates children's thoughts and imaginations and relaxes their minds.

A number of African countries have adopted music as teaching strategy. In Nigeria, music is used as a medium for educating pre-schoolers (Nwauzor, 2013; Ojukwu et al., 2014), and in Zimbabwe music is a compulsory subject for Grade 1–7 children (Ganyata, 2015; Samkange & Chimbadzwa, 2016). In East Africa, Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda incorporate music into learning and use it as a strategy for implementing their curricula (Quesada-Pallarès, Tacconi, Dreher, Sun, Subasubani, Tamene, & Zhao, 2017). In the South African context, music is employed in implementing a number of subjects across the grades, including music education in Grade R, music in secondary school, using music to teach listening skills, using music in primary school art classes, using music to teach life skills, and using music in pre-service teacher education (Trimble, & Hesdorffer, 2017; Van Vreden, 2016; Cloete & Delpont, 2015; Drummond, 2015).

The main purpose of this study was to determine whether the use of different musical rhymes to teach language and communication skills to ECCE children would positively influence their language development. This study advocates the use of music in ECCE centres, which often still adhere to traditional ways of teaching, in order to help raise the educational standard in the Foundation Phase and therefore reduce the high dropout rate of primary school pupils. Mogashoa and Mboweni (2017) found that one of the

causes of children' absenteeism from school was a poor attitude toward pupils' learning on the part of educators; many parents testified that their children lacked enthusiasm for school, leading many of them to drop out. The NCF guidelines for promoting the communication skills of ECCE children — employing music to teach “different sounds and words”, “sound games”, “rhythm and pitch”, and “songs and rhymes” — may assist in making learning more appealing to children (DBE, 2015, pp. 42–43). As a music educator for over ten years, I have witnessed the positive effects of music on children, and that is what inspired me to choose this research study on using music to teach communication (listening and reading) to ECCE children. Furthermore, I believe that if the older teaching methods have become less effective in imparting the relevant skills to children, educators could adopt a new strategy that children appreciate, as every child loves music.

## **1.7 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

In response to the statement of the problem above, the following aims and objectives were framed for this study. The aim of this study was to explore how ECCE educators use music as a teaching strategy to have a positive impact on children's communication (reading and listening) skills and language development. To achieve this aim, the following objectives were specified:

- (i) To explore ECCE educators' experiences and understanding of using musical rhymes as a strategy to teach communication (listening and reading) skills to children aged three and four.
- (ii) To explore how the ECCE educators, use musical rhymes as a strategy to teach communication (listening and reading) skills to ECCE children aged three and four.
- (iii) To explore why ECCE educators, use musical rhymes as a strategy to teach communication (listening and reading) skills to children aged three and four.
- (iv) To explore the impact that using musical rhymes as a strategy to teach communication (listening and reading) skills has on the language development of ECCE children aged three and four.

## **1.8 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Based on the stated aims and objectives above, the critical questions around the educators' use of musical rhymes as a strategy to teach communication to ECCE children, and the impact it has on their language development, were as follows:

- (i) What are the ECCE educators' understandings of using musical rhymes as a strategy for teaching communication (listening and reading) skills to children aged three to four?
- (ii) How do ECCE educators use musical rhymes as a strategy to teach communication (listening and reading) skills to children aged three and four?
- (iii) Why do ECCE educators use musical rhymes as a strategy to teach communication (listening and reading) skills to children aged three and four?
- (iv) What impact does the use of musical rhymes as a strategy to teach communication (listening and reading) skills have on the language development of children aged three and four?

## **1.9 REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

This section presents a review of literature that is relevant to the phenomenon of this study. It is important to note that this specific area of study (using music to teach communication skills to ECCE children) is relatively new, and that there is therefore a dearth of relevant research, especially from the South African context. However, a great deal of research has been conducted on ECCE, as it makes a positive contribution to children's long-term development and learning by facilitating an enabling and stimulating environment in these foundational stages of lifelong learning (Wahl, 2017). Many different kinds of research have been conducted, articles have been published, meaningful recommendations have been made, and policies have been put in place to ensure that South African children receive a productive and purposeful education. The following literature review is therefore presented under the following themes: a global overview of ECCE; the inception of ECCE in South Africa; music and communication

in ECCE; communication in the NCF for ECCE children; and the links between music and communication.

### **1.9.1 A global overview of ECCE**

Advances in understanding the importance of ECD have stimulated global interest in how best to provide an education that promotes the holistic development of a child. UNICEF (2014a) reported that the provision of effective ECCE improves the efficiency of the school system, thus leading to a reduction in juvenile delinquency, especially among marginalised people. Hence, there has been global commitment, actions, and plans to ensure equal access to sustainable education for all children. In 2016, at the launch of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, Ban Ki-moon, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, declared that by 2030 there must be equal provision of education for all boys and girls (Wals et al., 2017). Furthermore, there has been an emphasis on tailoring education towards the acquisition of basic and higher-order skills, such as basic reading skills and cognitive skills. A survey on ECCE conducted by UNESCO and the World Health Organization found that 67 countries offer ECCE, and that the majority of these, especially the developed countries, had designed effective systems to monitor and oversee the quality of the ECCE (Ibhaze, 2016). However, statistics on 24 countries in sub-Saharan Africa show that the enrolment of children in ECCE is very low (Yoshikawa & Kabay, 2015).

ECCE is understood differently in different developing countries. Colombia, India, and Brazil refer to “day-care centres” (Yoshikawa & Kabay, 2015); Venezuela and Ecuador refer to “non-formal day-care centres”; countries such as Jamaica, Kenya, and Peru refer to “nutrition and health centres”; and countries such as Senegal, Ethiopia, and Ghana simply refer to “work-place child care” (Yoshikawa & Kabay, 2015). In South Africa, ECD is an umbrella term for an all-inclusive approach to programmes designed for children from birth to age nine, which is further broken down into the reception year for children aged five, and ECCE for children from birth to four years (Mbarathi et al., 2016).

The uniform finding on ECCE across the globe is the problem of inequality in the provision of the services. Most rural areas lack basic ECCE facilities, and sub-Saharan African countries are the most severely affected (Ashley-Cooper, van Niekerk, & Atmore, 2019).

### **1.9.2 The inception of ECCE in South Africa**

The inception of ECCE, also known as pre-school, in South Africa dates to 1925, when Lady Buxton opened a facility in Claremont in Cape Town where infants were cared for and women were taught mother craft (Verster, 1989). The school's mode of operation was informal, and there was no defined curriculum for children or for their tutors' strategy of instruction. Verster (1989) stated that many other schools were established with the help of various institutions towards the end of the 1930s. The schools were partially funded by the provinces and by the central government. Aubrey (2017) stated that the ECCE system at that time was characterised by segregation and inequality, and that black South African children had a minimal chance of an education and were largely deprived of the educational necessities for building a life. This situation persisted until 1994, when the African National Congress won South Africa's first democratic election and Nelson Mandela became the first president of an independent South Africa. When the African National Congress assumed power under the leadership of Nelson Mandela, they advocated for education that aligned with the interests and needs of all the people of South Africa (Thobejane, 2013). Caring for and educating young children has since then been an integral part of the South African government's policy.

In 2001, the DoE released *Education White Paper 5 on Early Childhood Education* (DoE, 2001), which established a national system of provision, called Grade R, for children aged 5–6 years. Recently, the ECCE policy was put in place to cater for children from birth to four years, which is the focus of this study. However, ECCE services are not universally provided, and non-governmental organisations such as religious bodies, community-based organisations, and individuals operate most of the centres.

### **1.9.3 Music in ECCE**

Music is a universal social activity and is defined as the organisation of sounds that are pleasant to the ear (Schiavio, van der Schyff, Gande, & Kruse-Weber, 2019). There are many types of music, but this study will only consider the ones relevant to ECCE development. For many years, music in the form of conventional songs, cradle songs, video game music, and traditional music has been confirmed to have a significant effect on young children's learning (Sala, & Gobet, 2017). This resonates with Quintin, (2019) finding that music enhances responsiveness and memory and improves children's cognitive development. Educators are therefore advised to incorporate these types of music into all areas of the curriculum to develop children's communication skills (Salomon-Gimmon, & Elefant, 2019). Burke (2013) listed certain styles of music which are useful for developing the communication skills of early children and are therefore appropriate for ECCE: nursery rhymes, meditation sounds, lullabies, instrumental music, folk music, and dramatic play with musical accompaniment.

In accordance with current research, the NCF stipulates that children in the ECCE phase should be given the opportunity to creatively communicate through dramatisation, singing, musical play, dance, and exploratory body movement (DBE, 2015). The document further states that musical activities help babies, toddlers, and young children to develop their physical skills and creativity, stimulate their memories, and promote socialisation, a collaborative spirit, self-discipline, and self-confidence.

### **1.9.4 Communication in the National Curriculum Framework for ECCE children**

In this study Communication, communication is conceptualized as listening, speaking, reading and writing. it is one of the six early learning and development areas designed for ECCE in the NCF. Effective communication is essential for "building a strong sense of well-being, for building a strong sense of identity and belonging, and for exploring and making meaning of mathematics, the creative processes and a knowledge and understanding of the world" (DBE, 2015, p. 40). There are various approaches to

communication in the ECCE phase, and these include “dance, music, art, pictures, singing, body movement, and creative play” (DBE, 2015, p. 41). The document further advice adults to speak, sing, read to, and listen to young children to support them as they learn to speak and listen, and later to read and write. It is on this basis that researchers suggested that music should be employed as one of the implementation strategies to communicate with ECCE children to aid their language development (Niland, & Holland, 2019; Carpente, 2017)

Due to the importance of communication in early childhood development, Bronfenbrenner (1988) maintained that there is need to involve children’s parents and the community in order to effectively impart communication skills to children. In his research on communication patterns in pre-school educational institutions, Oliver and Azkarai (2019) and Radic-Hozo (2014) found some useful patterns for communicating with young children: ECCE educators are advised to avoid closed-ended questions with yes or no answers, and should ask questions that avail children of the opportunity to construct their own understanding; educators should maintain eye contact with children when talking, establish a good rapport, and give positive reinforcement when necessary; and educators are to use their facial expressions, speak calmly and clearly, and avoid the use of provocative words in class. These points are aligned with Vygotsky’s (1987) sociocultural theory, which emphasised the acquisition of skills through effective interaction and socialisation within the children’s cultural context. Vygotsky’s theory also established that the interaction should be between more knowledgeable others and the children.

The following section presents literature on music and communication in ECCE.

### **1.9.5 Music and communication in ECCE**

Khaghaninejad et al. (2016) found that music and communication share certain characteristics, and that using music as a pedagogical strategy for teaching reading and listening skills to ECCE children is therefore appropriate. For many people across the globe, music is an important part of everyday life. In addition to its cultural importance, many studies have found that music plays a key role in early language acquisition and

can help boost language learning (Torppa, & Huotilainen, 2019; Khaghaninejad et al., 2016). In addition, neurologists have discovered that the left-hemisphere frontal lobe of the brain plays a central role in the comprehension and creation of both language and music (Oesch, 2019). Research carried out by Dutch scholars titled ‘The impact of music on child functioning’ reported that music assists Foundation Phase children in developing their perceptual skills, which affect language learning, and which subsequently affect literacy (Hogenes et al., 2014). Hogenes et al. (2014) therefore also suggest using music as one of the strategies to teach language and communication (reading and listening) skills to these children. A number of other researchers have found that introducing music vocabulary to children in their early years enhances good speech development, and early acquisition of emotional and social skills (Cloete & Delport, 2015; Young, 2016).

In general, ECD researchers tend to discard the behaviourist view of children as ‘blank slates’, and instead see them as clever, adept, and able to respond to their environment (Tronick, 2007; Young, 2016). This shift in perception in relation to children has been one of the reasons for the growth of research into the beneficial effects of music on the language and communication skills of ECCE children. Pezzulo, Donnarumma, Dindo, D'Ausilio, Konvalinka, & Castelfranchi, (2019) explain that communication is the sharing of information from one place to another involving the use of facial expressions and every part of the body. To do this effectively, pre-service educators need preparation in the form of sufficient musical training and the acquisition of various implementation strategies in order to translate basic English communication into music (Van Vuuren & Van Niekerk, 2015).

## **1.10 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS**

This section unpacks the key concepts that are discussed in this study. These are music education, ECCE, communication skills, listening skills, and reading skills.

### **1.10.1 Music education**

Music has no universal or specific definition. It is viewed and defined according to various music scholars' ideas of the concept, but the majority define music as a pleasant and organised sound that is pleasing to the ear, which is created by a human being (Schiavio, van der Schyff, Gande, & Kruse-Weber, 2019). Some view it as “an expression of emotion, tension, human character, identity, beauty, religious faith, and social conditions (Saarikallio, Tervaniemi, Yrtti, & Huotilainen, 2019). Music is present in every culture and is performed on a daily basis in almost every area of our lives — at worship, in celebration, at home, in various institutions, in the military, on public transport, in business centres, and in schools (Gillespie & Glider, 2010). Many researchers have established the importance of music to the cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development of children during the early stages of life (Hawkins, 2016; Holmes & Hallam, 2017). Thus, part of the efforts of to improve children's education in South Africa is the inclusion of life skills education, which is organised into four study areas: ‘beginning knowledge’, ‘personal and social well-being’, ‘creative arts’, and ‘physical education’ (Bentley, 2016). Creative arts in the Foundation Phase enables children to effectively communicate, sing, dramatise, play music, dance, and engage in physical activities that enhance their holistic and healthy development.

Gillespie and Glider (2010) provide a fitting summary on the place of music in human life, and they conclude that humans are born with natural language and musical abilities. In terms of language acquisition, both language and music are means of communication that are aurally and verbally conveyed, and both comprise of ‘phonetic’, ‘syntactic’, and ‘semantic’ elements (Horn, 2007, p. 8). Hence, songs, music, and rhymes are appropriate vehicles for imparting communication skills (listening and reading) to ECCE children. Hampton, Harty, Fuller, and Kaiser (2019) found that methods of teaching that benefit adults may not appeal to children, and that it behoves the educator to present activities for children in an interesting way through music. Burke (2013) finds the following types of music to be relevant to children's development: sacred songs, lullabies, singing games, folk songs, nursery rhymes, instrumental music, and meditation sounds (Burke, 2013). These types of music give children the chance to repeat words during the teaching and learning process. The

repetition of words, accompanied by physical actions, enhances the listening skills of the children and leads to the internalising of content; children with well-developed listening skill will therefore exhibit proficiency in other language skills (Sejdiu, 2017).

Several researchers have also established that using music to teach any skill helps children to gain a quick understanding, makes the learning environment atmosphere a positive environment for learning, and promotes social interaction among children, thereby supporting the holistic development of early children (Milne, & Calilhanna, 2019; Fairchild, & McFerran, 2019; Ojukwu, & Onyiuke, 2019; Varner, 2019). Several other benefits are also associated with the use of music in the learning environment: music can be employed to introduce new content, to simplify tasks for children for easy comprehension, and to stir children' interest to learn a new skill, including communication skills (Wahl, 2017).

In addition to aiding the smooth facilitation of content, music can assist children with different levels of cognitive ability by scaffolding and aiding the understanding of weak children. Vygotsky (1978) suggests that learning should be scaffolded by a more knowledgeable other (MKO), and in terms of Bronfenbrenner's (1986) ecological model of human development this MKO would ideally come from the child's immediate environment — their caregiver, their educators, and their peers — and would engage in music-based activities such as singing folk songs and rhymes, telling or enacting dramas and stories, playing fun musical games, and listening to instrumental music. For example, rhymes could be employed to communicate the alphabet and its sounds (by using words that share the same sounds, or detecting the odd sound among words with the same sounds), phonics, and vocabulary, to enhance listening and reading skills.

### **1.10.2 Early Childhood Care and Education**

Early childhood development (ECD) is all the educational and social provision given to children from birth to the age of nine. Due to the challenges ECD encounters in South Africa, the NCF was designed to cater for children from birth to four years (DBE, 2015). The care and help a child receive from birth to four years in particular are critical and have lasting influences and effects on the social, intellectual, emotional, physical,

and language development of the child (Adams-Ojugbele & Moletsane, 2019). Children are priceless assets for any family and society, and delays in the acquisition of the aforementioned skills can therefore have long-lasting deleterious consequences on them, on their families, and on the broader society (Shaahmadi et al., 2015). Supporting ECCE is therefore not only essential and beneficial to children's development, and their happiness and wellbeing throughout their lifetime, but is necessary for improving the human capital of society.

In the South African context, ECCE is an integrated, all-inclusive method put in place to attend to the multi-dimensional developmental requirements of children from birth to four, and it is connected to healthy prenatal development, a safe birth, postnatal development, nutrition, parental involvement, health, care, play, and education (DBE, 2015). To ensure the smooth implementation of ECCE, the NCF provides a guide and a system for all people working with children, from the programme developers to caregivers, as informed by the National Early Learning and Development Standards (NELDS) (DBE, 2009). The NCF stipulates six early learning and developmental areas, which include well-being, identity and belonging, communication (which is the focus of this study), exploring mathematics, creativity, and knowledge and understanding of the world (DBE, 2015).

The sole objective of ECCE is to provide adequate and relevant education for the optimal and total development of a child that will usher him/her to a productive and successful adult (Barrable, 2019; Meier, Lemmer, & Niron, 2017). Hence, there is a need for well-organised ECCE programmes that provide children with the chance for the accelerated acquisition of cognitive, social, emotional, language, and physical skills.

### **1.10.3 Communication skills**

Anim (2012) defined communication as any act by which one person gives to or receives from another person information about that person's needs, desires, perceptions, knowledge, or affective state. Communication may be intentional or unintentional, may involve conventional or unconventional signals, may take linguistic

or non-linguistic forms, and may occur through spoken or other modes. (p. 3). According to Radic-Hozo (2014), the acquisition of effective and proper communication and language skills in early childhood is without doubt the foundation for the further development of a child in every other area of life. This aligns with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, according to which children are supported by a more knowledgeable other in acquiring language and communication skills (Shabani, 2016). Early childhood educators are encouraged to communicate freely using singing, facial expressions, and body movements to aid children's learning and encourage them to be more imaginative and creative (Anim, 2012). Effective communication is a two-way process, which includes the encoder (the sender) and the decoder (the receiver). In this context, the encoder is the ECCE educator, caregiver, or parent, who organises ideas and information by using gestures, facial expressions, symbols, words, storytelling, drama, music, and play to create a message for the children or decoders (DBE, 2015).

Communication can only occur and have an impact on the receiver when it is clearly and explicitly conveyed, and is well understood (Pezzulo, et al, 2019). ECCE educators should therefore employ communication that is easy for children to comprehend, for example the use of rhymes and songs. Research shows that there are five elements of effective communication that could aid ECCE children' quick comprehension: "clarity of thought and expression, conciseness, a conducive environment, feedback, and completeness" (Akilandeswari et al., 2015, pp. 155–156). Literacy and communication skills include listening, speaking, reading, and writing, which are vital skills that children need to ensure their progressive development. However, the focus of this study is on using music to teach children the listening and the reading aspects of communication.

#### **1.10.4 Listening skills**

Listening skills are integral to effective and meaningful communication, and children's mastery of these skills is a key determinant of their academic success. Listening skills in early childhood are vital to children's development and their acquisition of speaking skills (Brodin, & Renblad, 2019). Their early childhood background has a lasting impact on children's social, intellectual, and language development. The types of

activities they engage in with their educators and caregivers can positively influence their interest in learning or hamper their learning. Listening skills comprise of six stages (Tyagi, 2013), which are explained as follows:

- **Hearing**

Hearing involves encoding sound waves made by a speaker. Listening is deeper than merely hearing, as a children may hear the educator without comprehending the information conveyed by the educator. Hearing may lose its effectiveness and the message may be lost if there are interruptions, as hearing must take place before listening can occur (Tyagi, 2013). Listening is not passive, but is an active and deliberate psychological process that assist children to decode meaning from the information they receive.

- **Understanding**

Understanding involves trying to decode meaning from the conveyed message. This stage can be a bit difficult if the speaker lacks the creativity to present the information in an interesting way. Tyagi (2013) advised educators to use symbols, images, play, and songs to arouse the children' interest in listening to the teaching.

- **Remembering**

This stage involves listening to what is being taught, and assimilating and digesting the information. It shows the impact on a children's language ability. When a children cannot remember what was taught, it shows that the children has a problem with listening skills, and that listening has not really taken place. It is the duty of the educator to use a variety of strategies to support children in learning this listening skill; listening does not just happen, but takes place according to the effort and the types of learning activities presented by educators. To support this process, researchers suggest that music be employed to improve children's memory and recall ability (Miller, 2017; Musliu et al., 2017).

- **Evaluating**

The evaluation stage involves a judgement of the conveyed information or the educator. This stage may not be relevant to ECCE children, as they may not have the cognitive

ability to evaluate their educators or the teaching. However, lessons presented in a clear accent and in an interesting way will have an impact on the children' intellectual and language development.

- **Responding/feedback**

The responding or feedback stage is the result of the lesson on the children, the product. Van den Akker (2013) posited that a clear rationale, goals, and learning outcome must precede teaching and learning, in order to check and see if what was taught had a positive effect on the children. The negative feedback from South African children was their poor performance in foundational subjects and skills in both international and local assessments, showing that they had only heard but had not critically listened to or comprehended what was heard (Spaull, 2013).

Based on my own observations, as well as on the literature (Hugo & Horn, 2013; Nurita, 2017), there are many activities that can enhance children' listening skills: hands-on physical activities; connecting words to action, using songs such as "If you are happy and you know it touch your head, bend down, clap your hands" etc.; using play to teach numbers and colours; employing rhymes to teach the alphabet, alphabetical sounds, and numbers, while the children listen; using gestures or simple signs with words; asking the children questions and waiting for an answer; interpreting the children's non-verbal communication with words; and many more. Music and percussion instruments could be used to teach children to identify the odd sounds amongst other sounds. For example, different pictures of objects whose names are rhyming words, or words with the same sounds, and one with an odd or different sound, can be placed in a sorting tray and the children could be asked to sort and classify them while using simple music as guide.

### **1.10.5 Reading skills**

Reading skills, which are of prominent importance amongst the language and communication skills, elude the majority of children across all educational levels in this era of televisions and computers. Reading skills are receptive, and involve the ability to expressively and meaningfully decode printed graphic and language signs in

the appropriate context (Akubuilu et al., 2015). Research has revealed that poor reading skills in early childhood will affect a child's performance in all other subjects, and effective reading skills are linked to success at every educational level (Dawkins, 2017). Children who lack reading skills in early childhood may likely have difficulty in their future academic pursuits (Hagans & Good, 2013). Hence, it is advisable that educators and caregivers make the ECCE learning environment a print-rich setting or environment that is conducive to helping children achieve the purpose of reading, which is to construct meaning from the text. Factors that are often responsible for children's difficulty with reading skills include neurological and intellectual factors, the child's social and economic background, language factors, and the child's physical context (Iqbal et al., 2015).

The following activities can aid the acquisition of reading skills in children: using word cards to teach vocabulary, using flashcards with pictures associated with words and pictures in storybooks, singing the alphabet song, and repeating nursery rhymes after the educator. Research has found that reading storybooks to children is one of the most important activities for developing knowledge that is vital for effective reading, and that children who are taught using storybooks are better readers by the time they reach age 15 (Akamoglu, & Meadan, 2019).

### **1.11 LOCATION OF THE STUDY**

This research study was a case study of two ECCE centres in an urban settlement in Durban, South Africa. The setting was both multicultural and multi-racial, although the children at the centres were predominantly white, Indian, and Coloured, with black children in the minority. The major reason for the choice of urban setting was the diverse nature of the ECCE centres. They were diverse in terms of language, and in terms of the children's socioeconomic backgrounds. Some of the children were from well-resourced English-speaking families, while others were from families with average economic resources who speak an indigenous language as their home language. (In rural ECCE centres, however, the children tend to all be from the same economic, language, and social background.) The educators at these centres used English as the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) to communicate with the

children. Although all the children lived in an urban environment, they were not equally cognitively gifted, and could not comprehend or learn the same way. Private individuals owned the majority of the ECCE centres in this urban area. The centres were therefore well developed, advanced, and equipped with the appropriate facilities to assist the children. The ECD services provided in urban centres tend to be of considerably higher quality than those in rural areas. Because I am an English speaker, it was easy for me to observe and understand how the educators communicated with their children through music, and the impact it had on the children' language development. This also helped me to collect first-hand comprehensive information to answer the research questions. The next section discusses the methodology employed in this study.

## **1.12 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

The following sections provide an overview of the research design and methodology employed for this study.

### **1.12.1 Social constructivist paradigm**

This is a qualitative study situated within the social constructivist paradigm. The social constructivist paradigm, according to Creswell (2017), is an interpretive structure that enables individuals to explore their environment, thereby deriving meaning that tallies with their knowledge. Social constructivism originated with Socrates, who proposed that children could only construct and interpret their learning when they worked in collaboration with an educator (Amineh & Asl, 2015). Social constructivism claimed that an individual acquires knowledge and understanding through his or her interactions within society (Gealy, Tinney, Macdonald, & Waters, 2020). The social constructivist paradigm employed in this study contrasted with the positivist paradigm, which attempts to falsify a hypothesis or predict situations, and differed from the critical paradigm, which aims at liberating or emancipating the oppressed. Cohen et al. (2011) and Bertram and Christiansen (2014) defined social constructivists as those who try to understand social behaviour, and how people make meaning of their experiences in the challenging contexts in which they function. They further stated that the social

constructivist paradigm enables the researcher to give meaning to the subjective world of those being researched. In view of this, this study aimed at examining the use of music to teach communication skills to children from birth to four years, and the impact it had on their language development.

My reason for choosing this research paradigm was that it enabled me to gather in-depth information from the ECCE educators on their day-to-day interactions with the children using music as a teaching strategy, and the effect or impact it had on the children's language development. The study's qualitative design enabled me to observe and exist in the real world of the participants, and to thereby acquire a deeper understanding of their lived experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2009; Myers, 2013). In this study, the ECCE educators and the caregivers were purposefully engaged in order to explore their experiences and their skill in using music to teach communication skills.

### **1.12.2 Case study**

This study was a qualitative case study situated within the social constructivist paradigm. Rule and John (2011, p. 4) explained a case study as a "systematic and in-depth investigation of a particular instance in its context to generate knowledge". Nwokedi (2015) concurred, stating that a case study is employed in research to examine a specific situation in depth. The purpose of a case study is to provide a detailed explanation of a case or human experience in its real setting. Babbie (2013) stated that a case study enables in-depth examination of a specific situation that eventually produces an explanatory background, which thereby provides clues to the structure and procedures of the situation.

In case study research, the emphasis is placed on the context of the participants' ideas and experiences. Rashid, Rashid, Warraich, Sabir and Waseem (2019) mentioned three distinct types of case studies: intrinsic, instrumental, and collective. An intrinsic case study is a study in which the researchers focus on a specific case in detail in order to acquire a deeper understanding of the case, rather than trying to make broad generalisations from the study. An instrumental case study focuses on a particular issue

and examines cases to explore this issue in depth to redraw a generalisation, and researchers choose their cases for the purpose of developing and/or testing a theory. A collective case study is a product of several instrumental case studies and, according to Tracy (2019), it can be used to generalise and construct theories. This study is an intrinsic case study that focuses on a specific group of six ECCE educators from two centres.

### **1.12.3 Research sampling method**

For this study I used purposive sampling to obtain accurate and authentic data. Bertram and Christiansen (2014) explained research sampling as the process of selecting people, events, settings, or behaviours to include in a research study. Knechel (2019) asserted that the purposive sampling method is appropriate for qualitative research as it allows the researcher to choose participants that are convenient to access and yet have relevant information. I therefore purposively selected six ECD/ECCE educators from two ECD urban centres to share their experiences in using music to teach communication. I visited the centres, established cordial relationships with the educators, and briefed them on the purpose of the research. Thereafter, I selected the educators who were interested and who willingly volunteered to participate in the research. Glenton, and Lewin (2019) stated that purposive sampling involves making decisions about people, groups of people, or organisations (such as schools), who have rich information that can be used to answer the research questions. Thus, the reason for employing this sampling method was to purposively examine how these ECCE educators in urban centres were using music to teach the children communication. Furthermore, qualitative case study research focuses on a few cases, since the intention is not to generalise the findings or predict a situation but rather to understand how knowledge and experiences are created. Hence, six ECCE educators were chosen from two centres in an urban settlement. Data generation was conducted between July and December 2019.

### **1.12.4 Method of data generation**

Bertram and Christiansen (2014) and Wahyuni (2012) explained that data generation is a systematic and logical approach employed by a researcher to generate and analyse

data by using specific techniques and tools. Tracy (2019), and Rule and John (2011), who are well-respected qualitative researchers, refer to it as “data collection”; however, I prefer to use the term “data generation”, since the aim is to generate facts from participants through questioning and observation. Nwokedi (2015) mentioned different methods of data generation in qualitative research, which included focus group interviews, reflective activities (such as life histories), observations, interviews, focus group discussions, and visual media. In this study, I confined myself to three methods of data generation commonly used by qualitative researchers: learning environment observation, document analysis, and semi-structured interviews. The educators expressed their views, beliefs, ideas, and experiences as they related to their use of music to teach language and communication skills, and the impact music had on their ECCE children’ language development. The methods of data generation are presented below.

#### **1.12.4.1 Semi-structured interviews**

Mannay, Staples, Hallett, Roberts, Rees, Evans, and Andrews (2019) explained that semi-structured interviews enable the participants to talk freely about their experiences, and about their views in relation to the research topic. Brown and Danaher (2019) described semi-structured interviews as an instrument of data generation that is used to discover and extract people’s opinions, feelings, and actions during conversations between the researcher and the participants. The semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to explore the interviewees’ feelings and opinions about how they use music to teach language and communication skills to ECCE children, and the impact music has on their children’ language development. The questions were structured to be open-ended, to enable the researcher and the participants to discuss and debate their feeling about their experiences. In the semi-structured interview sessions, the synergy allowed for a wide range of information and ideas, and afforded the researcher the opportunity to generate information to enable triangulation. Semi-structured interviews also enabled the researcher to follow up on issues that needed clarification, and therefore several visits were made to the centres for further verification of the ideas presented.

#### **1.12.4.2 Learning environment observations**

Observation is a research method that enables researchers to see, witness, and record people's behaviours, actions, and interactions in a systematic way (Queirós, Faria, & Almeida, (2017). The method also allows researchers to obtain a detailed description of the social settings of events, in order to situate people's behaviours within their sociocultural context (Queirós, Faria, & Almeida, (2017). Through learning environment observations, the researcher acquired knowledge about the activities of the educators under study, and about how their children participated in those activities. In addition, observing the educators during their learning environment teaching and learning activities helped the researcher to verify the authenticity of the ideas provided during the interviews. Data generation through learning environment observation was conducted in the learning environment within outside and inside. The observation was conducted on both the six educators and the children aged three, and four in order to establish the use of music by the educators and the children's response. Visiting the centres to observe how the educators used different types of music in teaching listening and reading skills to their children constituted an ethnographic method of data generation. The responses of the children and the impact of music on their language development was also observed. The researcher used an observation schedule (see Appendix K) to structure and guide the observation process, and took detailed notes. Thereafter, these notes were scrutinised and analysed.

#### **1.12.4.3 Document analysis**

Document analysis is a method of qualitative research that enables the researcher to examine relevant documents to support and test or challenge the previous information generated. Document analysis is the examination and interpretation of secondary data to gain more meaning and to develop empirical knowledge on the research phenomenon (Bowen, 2009). Including document analysis in this research allowed for triangulation. The relevant documents — such as lesson notes, daily working notes, the working guide for the term, the NCF (National Curriculum Framework) documents, the children's music workbooks, and other documents relevant to this research work — were analysed.

### **1.12.5 Data analysis**

The generated data was analysed thematically, using deductive and inductive reasoning, using the approach designed by Miles and Huberman (1994). Data analysis is a framework of approaches that help a researcher to define facts, identify patterns, and provide details on the data generated to get answers to the research questions (Roberts, Dowell, & Nie, 2019). “Thematic analysis is a type of qualitative analysis used to analyse classifications and present themes (patterns) that relate to the data” (Alhojailan, 2012, p. 40). Inductive analysis involves selecting codes and categories based on the data, whereas deductive analysis involves using a theoretical or conceptual framework to structure the study in the analysis of data (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). Thematic analysis is conducted through the process of coding in six phases to create established, meaningful patterns. These phases are: familiarisation with the data, generating the initial codes, searching for themes among the codes, reviewing the themes, defining and naming the themes, and producing the final report.

Familiarisation with the data entailed reading and re-reading the data generated from the participants’ reflections to ensure it was understood. Generating the initial codes involved identifying recurring patterns in the data set and organising the patterns in relation to the research questions. The data was scrutinised to ensure that only relevant information was used. The researcher then searched for themes among the codes by clearly identifying emerging themes from the data and classifying them into groups. These themes were then reviewed and critically examined to extract relevant information. The themes were then defining and named according to the conceptual framework (Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory) to confirm the emerging categories. Finally, the researcher identified the themes that provided relevant information for answering the research questions, and developed them. These became the final themes, and formed the basis for the presentation and discussion of the research findings.

### **1.13 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (SCT) was used as a framework to structure this study. SCT views language and communication as the means by which children develop higher cognitive skills (Vygotsky, 1986), and emphasises children's interactions with their cultural contextual and their environment as critical for the acquisition of any skills. The three main themes of Vygotsky's SCT — social interaction, the more knowledgeable other, and the zone of proximal development — are explained below.

#### **1.13.1 Social interaction**

Sociocultural theory emphasises the central role of social interaction with the educator and caregiver in the cognitive development of a child, and in the acquisition of language and communication skills. According to the sociocultural perspective, children develop skills when an adult such as the educator, caregiver, or parent provides reinforcement and stimulation. Peeters (2019) posited that learning is embedded within social events and occurs through interacting with people, objects, and events in the community. Similarly, Dongyu et al. (2013) maintained that interactions play an important role in children's acquisition of language and communication skills, and serve as a channel through which learning happens. However, Vygotsky (1987) indicated that the interaction must be between the children and the more knowledgeable other (MKO). The children's environment is an important influence on them in their early years, and they need interaction with more knowledgeable adults (Shabani, 2016). In this regard, the NCF stipulates that teachers must assist children by appreciating the children's rights, by systematically carrying out their responsibilities, by providing activities to aid children's sense of mastery, and by encouraging the children's involvement in constructing their own learning (DBE, 2015). This study therefore examined the roles of educators in employing playful dialogues in the form of musical rhymes, dramatic play with musical accompaniment, gesticulation, and vocalisation to provide ECCE children with sustainable language and communication skills, as recommended in the NCF document.

### **1.13.2 The more knowledgeable other**

The more knowledgeable other (MKO) of Vygotsky's SCT refers to somebody who has a better understanding or more experience than the child does in relation to a task, process, or concept (Shabani, 2016). The MKO in this study, as explained by McLeod (2018), is a person or parent, caregiver, educator, peer, or trainer who is more likely to have knowledge about modern children's music. He further posits that the MKO can be an electronic device, such as a computer with relevant recorded materials to teach the children communication. The NCF document clearly states that adults — parents, caregivers, early childhood practitioners in centres, educators, support staff, and monitoring personnel — are to work with children from birth to four years (DBE, 2015). ECCE children are at a pre-operational stage of development; therefore, to ensure smooth learning, they need the help and support of creative educators (the MKO), who will employ appropriate developmental teaching strategies to support them to learn (Nixon, Smith, & Sudweeks, 2019; Vygotsky, 1980). Teachers play a central role, and they ought to employ a variety of teaching strategies to ensure that learning takes place (Yazan, 2019). To ensure effective scaffolding, they therefore need to understand the zone of proximal development of the child, as discussed below.

### **1.13.3 Zone of proximal development**

Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD) is explained as the real level of a children's development (what they can do without help) and the succeeding level of attainment when supported by the MKO (what they can do with help) (Shabani, 2016). When the MKO scaffolds the children's knowledge through facilitating the children's repeated participation in a variety of activities, the children gradually develop new knowledge and skills (Fernández et al., 2015). However, due to the nature of children, there is a tendency for children to develop anxiety, worry, boredom, and apathy, which could constitute a threat to achieving the teaching and learning goals. With the use of a variety of musical rhymes, the educator, caregiver, or parent could scaffold or construct the children's knowledge (Sohot, & Yunus, 2019). A teacher could use different forms of music (as both an aural, listening exercise, and an oral, performance exercise) for quick and easy learning of certain communication skills. As suggested by Nota (2017), improvised elementary membranophones can be employed as musical instruments to

build upon musical traditions that are part of children' cultures to aid their learning of language and communication. Thus, indigenous music known by the children could be employed to teach them basic language skills. Vygotsky's main claim was that children are entrenched in different sociocultural contexts, and that their cognitive development advances through social interaction with more skilled individuals (the MKOs). Hence, these MKOs, in this case educators, need to acquire more skills, and these could include musical skills.

#### **1.14 ETHICAL ISSUES**

Bertram and Christiansen (2014) explained ethics as norms for conduct that distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable behaviours in research. I understood the importance of respecting the participants' views, privacy, rights, and dignity, and all the necessary ethical protocols were therefore duly observed. Firstly, I sought and obtained gatekeeper permission from the principals of the ECCE centres (see Appendices B and C) and from the University of KwaZulu-Natal Research Ethics Committee (see Appendix A) before commencing with data generation. All ethical measures specified by the university's ethics committee were strictly obeyed. Morley, Floridi, Kinsey and Elhalal (2019) as well as Floridi and Cows (2019) stated the three ethical principles that a researcher needs to follow when conducting research: autonomy, non-maleficence, and beneficence. These are explained below.

- *Autonomy* implies that the participants must participate voluntarily in the study and must have the freedom to withdraw at any time without experiencing adverse consequences (Morley, Floridi, Kinsey, & Elhalal, 2019; Floridi, & Cows, 2019). The researcher must therefore get the informed consent of every person who participates in the study.
- The principle of *non-maleficence* ensures the anonymity of the participants and the confidentiality of their information, in order to prevent any possible emotional, social, or physical harm. This means that the researcher must protect the identity of the participants, by assuring them of the confidentiality of any

information provided by them (Morley, Floridi, Kinsey, & Elhalal, 2019; Floridi, & Cowls, 2019).

- The principle of *beneficence* ensures that the research is of benefit, either directly to the research participants, or more broadly to other researchers or to society (Morley, Floridi, Kinsey, & Elhalal, 2019; Floridi, & Cowls, 2019).

The consent of the participants was duly sought in writing (see Appendices D–I) and they were assured, both verbally and in writing on the consent form, that their opinions, ideas, and personal information would be kept confidential. Their names and the names of their schools were kept anonymous when publishing the results. In addition, the devices used to record the interviews were password-protected to ensure that the interviews were kept confidential. The participants understood that they were free to withdraw from participating in the study at any time should they feel uncomfortable, without any penalty.

### **1.15 TRUSTWORTHINESS**

O’Kane, Smith and Lerman, (2019) described trustworthiness as the efforts made by qualitative researchers to ensure that the research is valid and reliable. This study explored how the ECCE educators used music as a teaching strategy to teach ECCE children language and communication skills, and examined how the adoption of music as a teaching method by the educators aided the children’ language development. To ensure the trustworthiness of this study, efforts were made to strengthen credibility, confirmability, transferability, and dependability.

- *Credibility* in interpretive research refers to the measures taken by the researcher during the data generation and analysis to ensure that the results reflect the exact practices of the participant — that is, that the data generated describes the actual situation in the natural setting that was being explored (Daniel, 2019; Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). To ensure the credibility of this study, a recording device was used to record the interviews, which were then transcribed verbatim, thus allowing the participants to check the transcripts to ascertain the accuracy of the information.

- *Confirmability*, according to FitzPatrick, (2019) and Bertram and Christiansen (2014), refers to the measures taken by the researcher to prove that the findings are transparent, authentic, and unprejudiced. In this study, confirmability was enhanced by generating data using more than one method (learning environment observation, document analysis, and one-on-one semi-structured interviews). In addition, precise evidence of the data generated in this case study was provided by including direct quotations of the participants' responses.
- *Dependability* involves ensuring that the processes involved in conducting the study (the data generation, data analysis, and research procedures) are clearly described. This allows future researchers to repeat the study, if not essentially to gain the same outcome (FitzPatrick, 2019). In order to strengthen the dependability of this study, the research design and its implementation, the operational details of the data generation, and a reflective appraisal of the study were clearly described (see Chapter Four).
- *Transferability* in interpretive research refers to the extent to which the research could apply to other situations with similar features (Daniel, 2019; Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). To ensure transferability in this study, the researcher employed inductive and deductive data analysis to analyse and interpret the data, in order to avoid making any claims that had no substance. However, it is understood that findings from qualitative case study inquiries are generally limited to a small group within a particular context. A clear description of the context in which the study was conducted was provided (see section 4.2.3) so that lessons from the study could possibly be applied to educators who share similar contextual realities to those of this study.

## **1.16 CHAPTER OVERVIEW**

### **1.16.1 Chapter One**

Chapter One has provided a brief background to the study and has clearly stated the purpose and rationale, the focus and significance of the study, the objectives of the study, and the key research questions the study set out to answer. A brief review of

existing literature and key concepts was presented, the theoretical framework underpinning the study was described, and the research design and methodology were outlined. The ethical considerations taken into account and the question of trustworthiness were also discussed.

### **1.16.2 Chapter Two**

Chapter Two discusses the sociocultural theory (SCT) that underpins this study. The origin and concepts of SCT are explained, its main themes presented, and certain critiques of the theory discussed. After a brief discussion of how other researchers have applied SCT in similar research, the application and the relevance of the theory to this research on using music to teach communication skills in an ECCE context is explained. Finally, the relationship between SCT, the data generation, and the data analysis is clarified.

### **1.16.3 Chapter Three**

Chapter Three reviewed existing literature on the following themes: an overview of ECCE globally, the inception of ECCE in South Africa, communication in the NCF, communication in ECCE, and various types of music and communication in ECCE.

### **1.16.4 Chapter Four**

Chapter Four presented in detail the research design and methodology employed for this qualitative case study situated within the social-constructivist paradigm, and the rationale for selecting them. The chapter described the diverse research setting and the purposive sampling strategy, and then described the three data generation methods (semi-structured interviews, learning environment observations, and document analysis). The process of thematic analysis used to analyse the data was then explained. The measures taken to ensure trustworthiness, and the appropriate ethical considerations taken into account during the implementation of this study were described, and finally, the limitations of the study were presented.

### **1.16.5 Chapter Five**

Chapter Five presented the data generated from the six ECCE educators about their experiences using music to teach communication to ECCE children. The five main themes derived from the generated data are presented in relation to Vygotsky's SCT. The data from the learning environment observations was also presented and analysed, as well as the results of the document analysis.

### **1.16.6 Chapter Six**

Chapter Six discussed and analysed the findings presented in Chapter Five in relation to the research questions. The chapter focused on the ECCE educators' understanding of using musical rhymes to teach communication skills, their reasons for using musical rhymes, the different types of music used in the ECCE learning environment and their impact on the children' language development, and various barriers to the use of musical rhymes.

### **1.16.7 Chapter Seven**

Lastly, Chapter Seven reflected on the research design and methodology, and presented the implications of the findings for the various relevant role players: educators, policy makers, teacher training institutions, developers of software and media related to children's music, and ECCE curriculum designers. Various revised stratagems were proposed for employing music to teach communication skills in ECCE learning environments. A general overview and summary of the study was presented, which included recommendations for further research.

## **1.17 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has introduced and described the background to the study and outlined its aims and objectives. The significance of the study, and the rationale for the study, based on gaps in the research and my own personal experiences, have been discussed. Based on this, the research problem was clearly stated, and the research objectives and research questions presented. The chapter has provided a brief overview of previous literature on ECCE, on music in relation to ECCE, and on communication skills (listening and reading) in relation to ECCE and in relation to music as a teaching strategy, and key concepts have been defined. It has also presented the theoretical framework of the study, focusing on key aspects of Vygotsky's SCT. The research design and methodology have been briefly outlined, and the researcher's efforts to comply with ethical considerations and to ensure trustworthiness have been described. The following chapter presents the theoretical framework that informs the study, and discusses various aspects of Vygotsky's (1986)

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION OF THE CHAPTER**

This chapter discusses the theoretical framework underpinning this study. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (SCT) was employed to examine how ECCE educators used music as a pedagogical medium to teach communication (listening and reading) skills to children in two ECCE centres situated in an urban setting. The study further examined how the use of music aided their learning, language development, and readiness for Grade R. The chapter defines what a theoretical framework is, and then discusses the origins and concepts of SCT, and its major themes that were used to guide the data generation and data analysis: social interaction, the zone of proximal development (ZPD), and the more knowledgeable other (MKO) (Vygotsky, 1986). After a brief discussion of how other researchers have applied SCT in similar research, the application and the relevance of the theory to this research on using music to teach communication skills in an ECCE context is explained. Certain critiques of SCT are discussed, and finally, the relationship between SCT, the data generation, and the data analysis is clarified.

#### **2.2 A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK TO UNDERPIN THE USE OF MUSIC TO TEACH COMMUNICATION TO CHILDREN AGES 3-4**

A theory is a structure of interrelated concepts or ideas that explain and organise information about the world (Adom et al., 2018). Theory clarifies and predicts the connections between variables. It assists researchers in organising the productive ideas that are relevant to the research phenomenon, and that eventually inform the theoretical framework (Borg & Sanchez, 2015). Theory is made stronger when it is tested and proved with evidence. Hence, Adom et al. (2018) posit that a theoretical framework should be grounded upon existing, tested, and approved theories.

Grant and Osanloo (2014) explained the theoretical framework as a plan adopted from an existing and approved theory that serves as a guide for structuring a research study. It is a frame upon which a researcher organises and builds ideas and explores the study. Imenda (2014) described the theoretical framework as the backbone of the research, while Braidotti (2019) viewed it as the road map that guides the researcher and prevents the researcher from drifting away from the research phenomenon. Borg and Sanchez (2015) declared that a theoretical framework provides a broader context and dimension that makes the research comprehensive and generalisable.

The two major frameworks usually employed by a researcher when conducting research are a theoretical and a conceptual framework. In this study, I confined myself to a theoretical framework to explain the study. The major reason for using frameworks is to enhance the research findings, the practicality, and the accuracy of the research (Adom et al., 2018). A relevant theoretical framework for a study is one that is connected to all the features of the research and that provides the reader with the accurate information the research intends to present. A theoretical framework also provides details on how the researcher generates and analyses data, and how the researcher arrives at conclusions.

Selecting an inappropriate theoretical framework can make the research weak and incomprehensible to readers, and such research makes no significant contribution to existing knowledge. The choice of theoretical framework, research design, and methodology employed to conduct any research study is highly dependent on the research phenomenon. Hence, the chosen theoretical framework must resonate with all the features of the research variables or phenomena, such as the topic, the problem statement, the research objectives and questions, the approach and methodology, the research findings and discussions, and the conclusion (Grant & Osanloo, 2014).

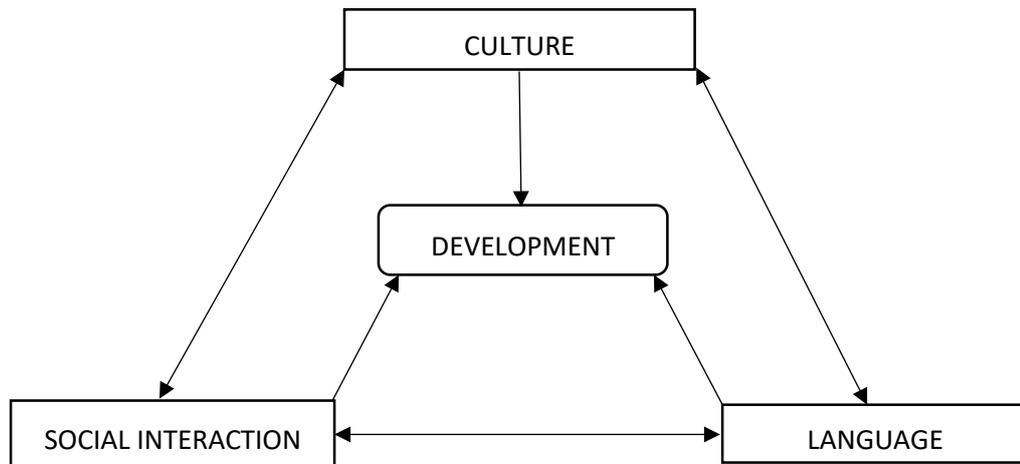
### **2.3 THE ORIGIN OF SOCIOCULTURAL THEORY**

Sociocultural theory (SCT) originated with psychologist Lev Vygotsky in the early twentieth century. The theory places emphasis on the influence of society and culture on the holistic development of a child. From Vygotsky's sociocultural perspective,

effective learning of language and communication skills is embedded in the constructive interaction between educators and children, and children develop skills when an adult, such as an educator, caregiver or parent, provides reinforcement and stimulation. Scott and Palincsar (2013, p. 1) observed that “the focus of the sociocultural perspective is on the roles that participation in social interactions and culturally organized activities play in influencing the psychological development of children”. Vygotsky asserted that people employ tools, such as symbols and signs, to address problems that cannot be resolved in traditional ways (Brodin and Renblad, (2019) added that learning is embedded within social events, and occurs through interaction with people, objects, and events in the community. Similarly, Dongyu et al. (2013) maintained that interactions play an important role in children’s acquisition of language and communication skills and serve as a channel through which learning happens. Thus, SCT was utilised to understand how the ECCE educators employed various musical rhymes as tools to support the children to acquire communication and language skills.

Socio-Cultural Theory (SCT) comprises of three main themes (Stinemetz, 2019). Firstly, Vygotsky argued that cognitive development and learning are embedded in social collaboration with the support of abstract symbols, which he viewed as tools. Secondly, Vygotsky held that these symbols are created via sociocultural efforts, with the support of some active individuals whom he described as the more knowledgeable other (MKO). Finally, Vygotsky asserted that learning is a process, hence the need to focus on the process through which cognitive development can occur. Moreover, the MKO — who could be the ECCE educators, caregivers or parents — must support children to achieve this cognitive development in their zone of proximal development (ZDP).

## 2.4 THEMES OF SOCIOCULTURAL THEORY AS USED IN THE STUDY



**Figure 2.1 Themes of sociocultural theory (Hall, 2007)**

Different disciplines within the social sciences (sociology, psychology, philosophy) and natural sciences (biology) have proposed various theories on child development that have influenced educational ideas and philosophies (Lindon & Brodie, 2016). These theories serve as a lens to critically examine human development, thereby providing early childhood educators with the best strategies to positively impact ECCE children with skills for their holistic development, especially in relation to language and communication (listening and reading) skills. Notable among these theorists were Watson, Skinner, and Bandura, who advocated behavioural or learning theory, and Piaget, who proposed the cognitive developmental theory that posits that children undergo four stages of psychological development and that children have the instinct to learn without adult intervention (Reese, 2013). Gesell and Hall's maturation theory emphasises individual genetics as a determinant factor for growth and development, while for Erikson, nature and nurture influence people's development, adjustment, self-awareness, and uniqueness (Patel, 2016).

The theorists who foregrounded the impact of the environment on human development were Vygotsky (with his SCT); Bronfenbrenner (1994), who proposed the ecological theory of five systems that influence child development; and Piaget, the father of cognitive theory (Ahmad et al., 2016). The trio focused their theories on the acquisition

and development of knowledge and competency through the guidance, care, and structure provided by the individual's cultural setting. Vygotsky posits that the environment as a whole has a strong impact on shaping an individual, and that all the systems around the child must give support that will nurture the child's optimal development (Abrahamson, 2017). However, while Bronfenbrenner emphasised the impact of biology and the environment on child development, Vygotsky and Piaget perceived children as dynamic partners in their own learning. Vygotsky, however, emphasised the impact and the roles of parent, peers, and educators in supporting child development.

This study was grounded in the SCT proposed by Vygotsky, which, according to Marginson, and Dang, (2017) has influenced learning environment pedagogical strategies and educational philosophy in the Western world. SCT is a developing theory in psychology that places emphasis on the impact of semiotic mediation from the cultural context in relation to the language, social, and cognitive development of an individual. SCT portrays learning and the development of human cognition as a product of cultural settings and interactions with adult and peers. As stated by Vygotsky (1978, p. 30), "the social dimension of consciousness is primary in time and fact; the individual dimension of consciousness is derivative and secondary". The theory's emphasis is on the involvement of the MKO in supporting children to learn and develop. In the context of teaching literacy and communication skills to ECCE children, the MKO could use music to accelerate, scaffold, and aid the children' comprehension. In relation to early childhood education, SCT emphasises adopting a contextualised approach to teaching children, rather than implementing a foreign or universal curriculum.

According to SCT, teaching and learning demand interaction to record a positive result, hence the usefulness of introducing music into class activities to facilitate such engagement and interaction. Using music as a teaching strategy eases any possible tension, boredom, stress, and distraction experienced by ECCE children in the learning environment. Studies have revealed that children learn better and interact more effectively when the learning environment is soothing and appealing (Puteh et al., 2015; Sithole, 2017). In support of the idea that effective social interaction aids learning and development, Bronfenbrenner's theory states that the determinant of human development is the social interaction of the person with the community, and the societal

influences (Eriksson et al., 2018). A child's first interaction is with the microsystem, which includes parents, siblings, and peers, and the initial home setting influences the child's development before they proceed to the school environment. Children are first exposed to lullabies by their parents and siblings before proceeding to school to learn nursery rhymes and play songs. Research has revealed that children who come from music-loving families perform better and progress faster in school than their counterparts without musical backgrounds (Ullsten, Söderström, & Mangersnes, 2019). This study therefore suggests the use of folk music, which is familiar to the children, in the process of teaching and learning, as it leads to productive teaching and learning that promotes and enhances children's acquisition of communication skills.

Vygotsky believed that children develop effectively and holistically only if they are first exposed to social interaction. He described children's development on two levels: the interpsychological or social level, and the intrapsychological or individual level, where the sociocultural development of a child occurs. Interpsychological learning takes place through the individual's social interactions with others, and intrapsychological learning takes place when an individual internalises what was learned through interaction, and thus develops his or her cognitive ability. For a child to progress from the elementary cognitive functions acquired through genetics to more complex intellectual development, there is a need to build a strong relationship with adults (Eun, 2019).

Vygotsky emphasised how the educator or MKO mediates and scaffolds support to children by designing tasks commensurate with a child's current cognitive level and systematically moving the child towards a developmental goal. He proposed that language is the best tool for mediating this process, and for assisting the child to acquire language and communication skills; hence, the significant and vital role of the MKO as an expert in motivating and assisting by modelling and providing the necessary support as required.

Furthermore, Vygotsky emphasised the influence of the sociocultural setting on a child's development, hence the need for educators to be mindful of children's cultural settings and to adopt relevant and appropriate pedagogies in the learning environment. One way in which this can be done is by employing as a pedagogy music that the

children are familiar with. The use of familiar songs and language to teach children has been found to aid and facilitate the development of children's language and communication skills (Kalinde & Vermeulen, 2016). Mutekwe (2018) found that unfortunately many ECCE educators and caregivers lack knowledge of such teaching strategies that are suitable for equipping all the children equally with knowledge. Mutekwe (2018) supported Vygotsky's (1987) proposal to incorporate the children's diverse sociocultural contexts into the teaching and learning activities to enable children to learn in an interactive way.

In the following sections three aspects of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory that are relevant to this study are discussed: the more knowledgeable other (MKO); the educator as the MKO; and the zone of proximal development (ZPD).

#### **2.4.1 The elements that comprise the more knowledgeable other**

The more knowledgeable other of Vygotsky's SCT refers to somebody who has a better understanding or more experience than the child does in relation to a task, process, or concept (McLeod, 2018). In the context of this study, the MKO could be described as a person (a parent, caregiver, educator, or peer trainer) who is more likely to have more knowledge about contemporary children's music. The MKO could also be an electronic or technological device, such as a computer, with relevant recorded music that could teach the children to enhance their listening and reading skills. However, such device should not substitute adult in the learning environment, children need human MKO to scaffold them to learn skills adequately. Putman (2014) suggests inclusion of smart boards, electronic games, and hand-held electronic devices that aid in the learning and acquisition of knowledge.

The South African NCF clearly states that adults — such as parents, caregivers, early childhood practitioners, educators, support staff, and monitoring personnel — should work with children from birth to age four to ensure their holistic development (DBE, 2015). ECCE children are at a pre-operational stage, according to Piaget's stages of child development, and to experience smooth learning they therefore need the

scaffolding provided by adults MKOs who use tools, strategies, and methodologies to assist them to learn (Vygotsky, 1980).

Parents and the environment have a great influence on a child's all-round development. Maluleke (2014) stated that parents are the primary educators of their children until they reach school age, by providing them with a moral education based on society's accepted norms and values. Parents as educators must be able to understand their child's personality, interests, temperament, and, especially, their child's emotions. They must be able to identify the positive and negative aspects of their child's temperament, character, and interests. Furthermore, children whose parents assist them with their homework, create daily learning routines, and assist them with other school activities, are likely to have accelerated social and cognitive development (Ceka & Murati, 2016).

However, while Vygotsky focused more on cultural context and social interaction in relation to children's development, Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological systems theory does not exclude children from their own development, but rather emphasises reciprocal collaboration in development. In alignment with Bronfenbrenner's view, Maluleke (2014) suggested that the child must play his or her part by willingly and deliberately submitting to parental guidance.

In addition to parents, other significant MKOs are peers and educators. In the context of this study, the primary MKOs are the ECCE educators. In the following section I focus on them in detail.

#### **2.4.2 The role of educators as the more knowledgeable other**

Educators play a central role as the more knowledgeable other, as they ought to have the correct knowledge to employ a variety of teaching strategies to ensure that learning takes place (Nixon, Smith, & Sudweeks, 2019). They are ideally competent experts with problem-solving skills that can assist the children to achieve their learning goals. In the context of this study, the ECCE educators were the MKOs who needed to communicate the NCF effectively by using visual, symbolic, and/or language skills in

various modes. This is in accordance with research that finds that the best pedagogical approach for children is when an educator adopts various means of engaging a child in an activity, thereby assisting the child to construct his or her own learning (McInnes et al., 2013).

It is rightly emphasised that children understand and learn from their environment through their observation of what adults believe, value, and practise (Feryok, 2013). According to Vygotsky (1978), children can only internalise knowledge (create intrapersonal knowledge) when there is an interpersonal social relationship with an MKO. Similarly, Piaget asserted that education is of benefit to a child when it is provided through rich and motivating experiences. Using music as a pedagogical strategy could assist ECCE educators as the MKO in creating such rich and motivational participatory learning experiences grounded in an interpersonal social relationship. Educators could play a variety of language rhymes and music to the children, and then motivate them to actively participate and role-play. Educators could assist ECCE children to construct their learning by using music that incorporates the information or skill they need to learn, or by composing such music, in order to guide the children through musical participation to build and acquire the communication skill (Alzahrani & Woollard, 2013). The educator could define various activities that enhance reading and listening skills, such as incorporating into basic music the elements associated with reading and listening. For example, using rhyming words could teach children to listen to different sounds in spoken language and thereby develop their effective listening skills.

Hence, Cumming, Wilson, Leong, Colling, and Goswami, (2015) explained music as a form of language that uses tones and rhythm as its medium or universal language. Language development and musical development have many similarities. Way (2019) posited that both language and music are communicative modes, are aurally and orally transmitted, and contain phonetic, syntactic, and semantic components that are developed early in life.

### **2.4.3 Zone of proximal development -Individual Autonomy and the MKO Support**

Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD) is explained as the real level of a children's development (what they can do without help) and the succeeding level of attainment when supported by an MKO (what they can do with help) (Shabani, 2016). This implies that the children depend on others with more experience than themselves, and gradually grasp their learning as they collaborate with others. Through scaffolded learning in repeated participation in a variety of joint activities, children gradually develop new knowledge and skills (Fernández et al., 2015). However, due to the nature of young children, there is a tendency for ECCE children to develop anxiety, worry, boredom, and apathy, which could constitute a threat to achieving the teaching and learning goals. With music, the educator, caregiver, or parent can positively engage these children through participation in a performance activity that involves singing and movement, and can scaffold the information so that the children construct their learning (Yazan, 2019). This can be done using different forms of music, and using both listening and singing activities, for quick and easy learning of communication skills.

Vygotsky's main claim was that children are entrenched in different sociocultural contexts and that their cognitive development advances through social interaction with more skilled individuals. The researcher supported Vygotsky's ideas by suggesting that ECCE educators acquire more skills, which could include musical skills, and that the indigenous music known by the children could be used as part of educators' pedagogy to teach basic language skills to children. These children come from homes and communities with some level of knowledge and understanding of music, hence interacting with the children using music would be appropriate. For example, membranophones could be used to build upon musical traditions that are part of South African children' indigenous cultures to aid their learning.

The educators (experts) need to teach children (novices) the necessary skills for life. Findings from a study I conducted previously revealed that educators must tap into the children' current knowledge with relevant activities that will move them towards the acquisition of new knowledge (Arasomwan & Ntokozo, 2018). Eun (2019) stated that when a childrenacquires any knowledge with the assistance of a more knowledgeable person, he or she will be able to perform the task or a similar task independently. This

aids children' progress from their actual or existing level of development to their potential level of development.

## **2.5 THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THIS RESEARCH AND PRECEDING STUDIES**

Vygotsky's SCT — along with its core ideas related to mediation, ZPD, scaffolding, internalisation, and language as a tool for children's cognitive development — has been adopted by educationists across all fields. Javadi, & Tahmasbi, (2020) employed SCT in second language learning environments, and found that it was important in aiding the metacognition of children when its core ideas were followed by educators in designing teaching and learning activities. In addition, a number of university students have also used SCT as a foundation for their research (Afagbegee, 2016; Lawrence, 2011; Magwa, 2018; Mphahlele, 2018; Mutekwe, 2018; Nwosu, 2013; Saneka, 2014). Magwa (2018) used SCT to explore the role of student-teacher relationships in the educational, social, and emotional lives of high school children in Zimbabwe, while Mphahlele (2018) used SCT to examine how information and communication technologies function as a support mechanism for children experiencing reading difficulties. SCT was also used to foreground participatory action research that explored educator support for young children' second-language learning and cognitive development (Saneka, 2014). In Du Plessis's (2016) exploratory research, SCT was used to detect factors affecting the reading readiness of Grade R children in selected preschools in Gauteng province.

All these studies focused on the importance of MKOs — whether educators, peers or technological devices — interacting with children for the effective acquisition of any skill. This research study uses a similar approach to explore how ECCE educators (as the MKO) use music to scaffold and positively impact ECCE children' communication skills. However, it differs from these previous studies in terms of its purpose and focus, and also in terms of the choice of MKO (the ECCE educator) and the selected pedagogical strategy (music) for teaching communication skills to children. The purpose of this study is to examine how best the educators can follow the core ideas of

Vygotsky's SCT to provide children with the necessary support to learn language and communication skills with the use of music.

## **2.6 APPLICATION OF SOCIOCULTURAL THEORY IN THE STUDY**

Education in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries has seen a paradigm shift from the old teaching strategy of imposing knowledge on children to the modern system that suggests guiding children to effectively construct their own learning. This modern view of education is influenced by Vygotsky's SCT, which focuses on the construction of knowledge through social interaction and the support of MKOs. The purpose of this study was to explore how ECCE educators teach language and communication skills using music as a pedagogical strategy to scaffold ECCE children's quick understanding. The quality of the educator-children interaction is of great importance for children's effective learning. Hence, SCT emphasises providing support that moves children from their current ability to their potential ability. In this study the ECCE children came from homes and communities with some level of knowledge and understanding of music. Interacting with the children using music was therefore contextually appropriate. The application of the core concepts of Vygotsky's SCT — support by the MKO, educators' discernment of the ZPD, and mediation and scaffolding — are presented below.

### **2.6.1 More knowledgeable other as knowledge mediator**

SCT explains how the support provided by ECCE educators can facilitate children's cognitive development. The onus is on educators to use various pedagogical strategies, including borrowing from the cultural tools within the cultural setting of the children, in order to organise activities that aid the development of the children's psychological and cognitive skills, and in the case of this study, communication skills. Diloyan (2017) stated that to teach language and communication skills effectively, adults, and educators in particular, need to establish a cordial relationship with children. The determining factor in whether communication skills are taught effectively is the ability and the competence of the educator to manipulate diverse strategies during teaching and learning activities (Castellà & Fosch, 2017). The role of the MKO (in this case

ECCE educators) in helping children to learn cannot be overemphasised. Lee (2019) stated that educators are agents of change who are able to interact and socialise with children in their sociocultural context, with the aim of imparting the necessary and relevant skills that aid children' growth and development. Educators' agency is requisite to the effective implementation of the school curriculum, which leads to productive and meaningful education. According to Lee (2019), it is the educator's agency that assists and supports children to acquire learning experiences that enable them to become independent.

Studies have revealed that musical activities help babies, toddlers, and young children to develop their physical, cognitive and creative skills, stimulate memory, promote socialisation and a collaborative spirit, and assist with the development of self-discipline and self-confidence (Fairchild, & McFerran, 2019; Chorna, et al, 2019). Walton (2014) states that for ECCE children to acquire communication skills, they need the support of educators to scaffold their learning with tools such as musical activities to teach prereading skills such as phonological skills, articulation, letter-sounds blending, and word reading. Walton (2014) further posits that teaching children using jingles (short songs) accelerates children's learning, memory, and communication skills. For example, children could sing jingles or rhymes while being shown visual or print materials that they can feel and see, involving words with same sounds — *sat, cat, rat, car*, etc. Furthermore, educators could use simple music to teach social interaction, such as polite language and greetings.

Music and communication share similar characteristics, and it is therefore appropriate to use music as a strategy for imparting reading and listening skills to Foundation Phase children. For many people, music is an important part of everyday life. In addition to its cultural importance, many studies have found that music plays a key role in early language acquisition and can help boost language learning (Khaghaninejad et al., 2016).

Listiyarningsih (2017) states that the similarity in music and literacy could make it a good tool for teaching communication skills for easy comprehension to ECCE earners. SCT demands that educators establish a good and positive relationship with children during teaching and learning processes, in order to achieve a productive and

constructive outcome. Vygotsky, along with other researchers, confirmed that MKOs play a critical role in the language development of children (Shabani 2016; Gramelt, 2013; Varga, 2017; Vygotsky et al., 1994). Vygotsky emphasised that the social context of the child is vital to his or her learning, and established that human cognitive function is a product of cultural context and social interaction. The MKO must be more knowledgeable and efficient than the children, and should therefore be well versed in a variety of pedagogies derived from the sociocultural context of the child to make teaching and learning activities interesting, meaningful, and applicable to children's needs, and to generate connection and enthusiasm.

### **2.6.2 Discernment of the zone of proximal development in children**

Vygotsky recommends that adults sensitively discern the child's development ability and capability in learning a task. This knowledge assists the educator in mediating the child's learning by organising appropriate tasks that are commensurate with the child's abilities, and that guide the child towards the ZPD (Saneka, 2014). Vygotsky highlights the importance of language as a tool for mediating learning from the interpersonal plane, based on social interaction, to the intra-personal plane, which involves internalising what was learned, leading to cognitive development that moves the child into the ZPD.

ECCE educators are expected to use the NCF curriculum as a guide in planning tasks for the children. Through scaffolded learning and through repeated participation in a variety of joint activities, children gradually develop new knowledge and skills, including listening and reading skills (Fernández et al., 2015). However, due to the nature of children, there is a tendency for young children to develop feelings of anxiety, worry, boredom, and apathy, which could constitute a threat to achieving the teaching and learning goals. With music, the educator, caregiver, and parent can scaffold the content in order for the child to construct his or her own learning (Nixon, Smith, & Sudweeks, 2019).

An educator could scaffold content through different musical activities involving listening and/or performing, to quickly and easily teach particular communication

skills. This requires that ECCE educators have a good knowledge of their children's abilities, and of what stage they are at in their learning process, before selecting the appropriate musical teaching strategies to teach communication. However, to do this, educators also need to have a good knowledge of the appropriate music that could help to accelerate the psychosocial development of the child, and thereby lead to the acquisition of communication skill. According to Vygotsky, while the adult or MKO's engagement of the children in various activities aids their development, the activities themselves can enhance the ZPD of the children. In the context of this study, activities such as singing a range of educative songs, role-playing, and drawing can produce a ZPD for the children if they are well planned and well organised by the educator.

In short, Vygotsky's ZPD, in the context of this study, would see ECCE children acquiring literacy skills (listening and reading) in accelerated ways when supported by more competent and knowledgeable adults and peers, and/or by rich activities such as the use of music, rather than by working independently.

### **2.6.3 Language as A Tool for Mediating and scaffolding**

Vygotsky saw language as performing two vital roles in the psychological development of children. Firstly, language is the channel through which the MKO communicates and imparts knowledge to the children. Secondly, language is a tool that aids the development of higher-order psychological processes. Mediation is one of the concepts of SCT, and involves the idea of learning language through social interaction. Mediation, according to Vygotsky, is the role played by the MKO in the development of a child. It involves the use of tools by both the MKO and the children to find solutions to a problem or to accomplish the learning goals and objectives (Pathan et al., 2018). Vygotsky posited that tools are effective mediators and mentioned language as one of the important tools for meaningful mediation. Similarly, Maluleke (2014) identified scaffolding as the most suitable approach to support children's learning of skills that would make them independent children and problem-solvers.

Vygotsky recommended that effective interaction between adults and children be mediated with psychological tools that assist children to move from the interpersonal

to the intrapersonal level. These tools, according to Javadi, and Tahmasbi, (2020) as well as Sarker, (2019), could be language, works of art, writing, different types of music, dramatic/role-play activities, or rhythm and song. In the context of this study, ECCE educators could mediate using relevant language that matches the child's ability. With the understanding that children are not equally endowed cognitively, educators must employ their knowledge of the ZPD to identify the relevant tools for scaffolding learning aimed at acquiring communication skills. The scaffolding must be formulated in response to the children's weaknesses and strengths. Educators must therefore design tasks that facilitate their children's internalisation of communication and literacy skills (listening and reading) by progressing from the simple to the complex. This is in line with the focus of this study, which is the use of music to impart communication skills to ECCE children. Hence, it is the responsibility of educators to mediate by using various strategies to scaffold the content in order for children to master these vital skills. In this study, music is suggested as one of the strategies for such teaching. In addition, the application of Vygotsky's (1978) SCT suggests that when the task is well designed and is presented in an interesting way using different types of music that are appealing to the children, the children become enthusiastically involved, and this active enthusiasm aids their development of the language and communication skills. Membranophones could be employed in the process to build upon musical traditions that are part of the children's cultures and thus aid their learning.

The emphasis of Vygotsky's SCT is on collaborative learning by interacting with an MKO. This could be peer-to-peer learning (for example the educator appointing one of the children to sing to the others) (Eun, 2019). It could also be learning that involves parents or family members interacting with children by speaking to them, using facial expressions, and singing lullabies (Berman et al., 2016). It could be a face-to-face discussion in a calm atmosphere, thereby chasing away anxiety and boredom; or an interactive task completed through working in pairs or through role play; or through calling for personal effort, such as calling the children one after the other to make an attempt to read what was taught (Ahmed, 2017). Vygotsky emphasised that all these learning approaches should be constructed within the ZPD of the children to achieve the learning goals. Understanding children's capabilities helps educators to adjust their teaching pedagogy to accommodate all children. Most importantly, the ECCE learning

atmosphere must be an enjoyable one, hence the focus in this study on employing music, rhymes, role-play, dramatic play with musical accompaniment, and lullabies in teaching communication skills (listening and reading). Vygotsky's scaffolding could be a helpful concept to ECCE educators, as it arouses their dedication to their teaching activities on a daily basis; in addition, it offers a healthy and well-organised context for learning.

It seems meaningful to state that Vygotsky (1986) singled out and studied the dynamic social surroundings that indicate the connection between educator and child. Moreover, he focused on the social, cultural, and historical artefacts that play a pivotal role in children's cognitive development, as well as their potential performance.

## **2.7 CRITIQUES OF SOCIOCULTURAL THEORY**

Vygotsky's SCT has provided educators with an understanding of how their knowledge of their children could influence the effectiveness in achieving teaching and learning goals. Vygotsky's emphasis is on children learning skills through collaboration with adults, more knowledgeable peers, psychological mediated tools, and scaffolding them in their zone of proximal development (Javadi, & Tahmasbi, 2020; Sarker, 2019).

However, there are criticisms of certain aspects of his SCT. The critiques pick on the ZPD, non-recognition of the child inborn trait, the inequality of the MKO around the child, and the believe that the Socio-Cultural Theory ascribed to Vygotsky was published after his death and that it was not organized as it is today.

Firstly, the ZPD: Critiques believe that application of the ZPD in the learning environment is challenging, the explanation provided by Vygotsky on the usage is not comprehensive (Pathan, Memon, Memon, Khoso, & Bux, 2018). Lambert and Clyde (2000) critique Vygotsky ideas of ZPD as they stated the following:

“We feel...that Vygotsky's ZPD presents a restricted view of learning processes and reduces the children's role to one of passivity and dependence upon the adult” (p. 29).

Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD) is explained as the real level of a children's development (what they can do without help) and the succeeding level of attainment when supported by an MKO (what they can do with help) (Shabani, 2016). Piaget (1995 as cited in Pathan, Memon, Memon, Khoso, & Bux, 2018) posit that engaging a child in activities without his/her readiness amount to indoctrination by the MKO and as such the child may not benefit adequately from such an activity. Piaget partly believed in a dualist viewpoint on influences of external world and personal trait in child development, he lays more emphasis on guiding the child with self-centred tasks rather than forcing activities on the child by the MKO. While Vygotsky believed that a child is a social being hence social interaction plays a fundamental role in the cognitive development on the ZPD (Padmanabha, 2018).

Secondly, Vygotsky emphasises teacher, textbook, device as MKO that will support children to acquire skills. This is further supported by (Nordlof, 2014) as declares that for a child to acquire and develop language skills such as speaking and writing, there is a need for More Knowledgeable Adult. However, some critiques argue that the idea of teachers as MKO is of behaviourist and does not fully encourage constructing of knowledge. These authors stated below:

“There has been a paradigm shift in the pedagogy of learning environment, which can be described as a shift from behaviourism to cognitivism and then from cognitivism to constructivism” (Kumar & Mubarak, 2017, p. 212).

The authors claim that the ideas of Vygotsky in tagging teachers as MKO contradicts the constructivist philosophy of teaching that encourage active participation and critical thinking of children in their learning. Additionally, some others asserted that SCT does not favour all the social and cultural group as children with learning disability may not benefit equally as other healthy children in teaching and learning activity with the MKO.

Thirdly, Pathan et. al (2018) criticised Vygotsky's SCT for disregarding the biological contribution to a child's cognitive development, and for focusing exclusively on development through the social environment. They argued that a child could develop independently of the social environment due to particular inherent traits that promote

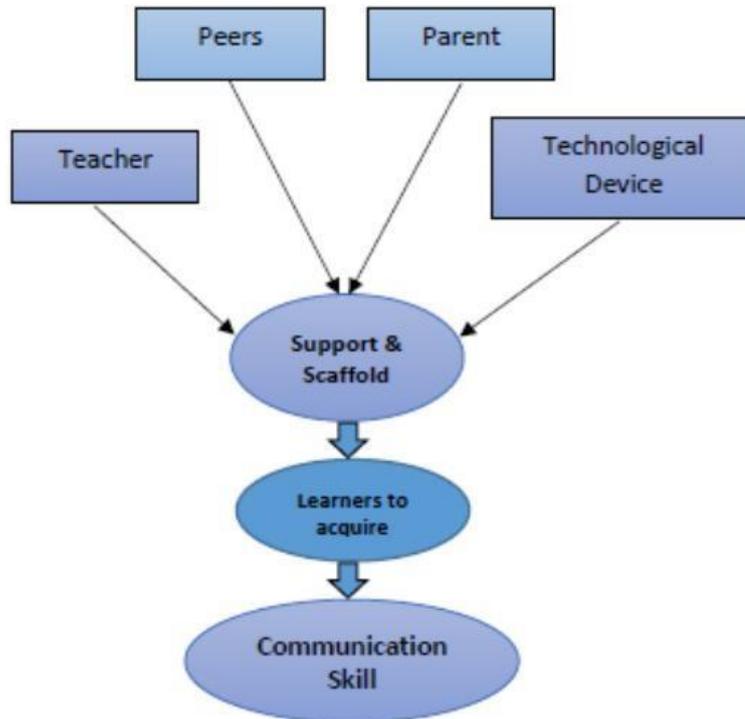
cognitive development. Additionally, Yasnitsky, (2018) added that the notion of dependence on MKO does not encourage higher psychical functionality in children.

Lastly, some numbers of Russian researchers have critiqued the authenticity of Vygotsky current work (Vasileva, & Balyasnikova, 2019; Yasnitsky, 2018; Van der Veer & Yasnitsky, 2016 ). These authors claimed that Vygotsky's works were partly published by his students after his death and that the notes were originally written in Russian and not well polished and organised as it is today They added that, the translation of the original text into languages sift away some of Vygotsky ideas, hence the work is well understood when considered in the context of Russian. Zavershneva (2016) discloses that most of Vygotsky work are yet to be published and that his students censored the aspect that are relevant to their perspective work and published to promote their own work.

The implication of these critiques is that Vygotsky philosophy does not cater for all cultures and social context. Also, the concept of scaffolding by MKO is not applicable in all types of learning, at times observation is suitable for supporting learning and acquisition of skills (McLeod, 2018).

However, on the context of this study SCT is relevant and applicable because it deals with the use of music to support children ages 3&4 to acquire communication skills (listening and speaking). Vygotsky SCT emphasis the ZPD a zone for a child to attain independence with supervision and encouragement that will enable the child to obtain skills and higher cognition (Hill, Spencer, McGee, Scott, Frame, & Cumming, 2020; Bodrova, & Leong, 2018). This is further confirmed by Yasnitsky (2018) and Nordlof, (2014) that employing SCT is best to support children to acquire basic skills. Similarly, the NCF document highlights the importance of more skilful and knowledgeable person to support the children with acquisition of good communication by speaking, singing and through nonverbal expression (DBE, 2015).

## **2.8 APPLICATION AND RELEVANCE OF SOCIOCULTURAL THEORY TO THE STUDY**



**Figure 2.2 Support of MKO to the children (Source: Cicconi, 2014)**

SCT emphasises the provision of support for children to enable them to reach their potential development. Vygotsky highlighted that children can reach their ZPD and acquire relevant skills when they are supported by an MKO — a parent, educator, peer, or technological device (McInnes et al., 2013). This study explores how the MKO could involve musical activities that support children’s learning.

### **2.8.1 The Role of Educators**

The educator provides support for the children in diverse ways. According to Vygotsky’s SCT, teaching and learning are social procedures; hence, the ECCE educators are expected to provide supportive scaffolding to enable children to acquire the relevant skills, especially communication skills. Vygotsky “characterized scaffolding as the help that is provided by caregivers”, educators, peers in supporting children’s development and acquisition of desirable skills (Shvarts, & Bakker, 2019, p. 9). This can be achieved by creating opportunities for a variety of structured activities, such as music, rhymes, and poems derived from the child’s cultural milieu; role play;

communication games such as extempore, telephone, emotional charades, picture storytelling, and alphabetical sound; and other activities that aid children's language development. The educators must take into consideration the children's ZPD and then channel activities towards helping the children to reach the ZPD. They must design tasks according to the following steps: they need to motivate or enlist the child's interest related to the task; simplify the task to make it more manageable and achievable for a child; provide some direction in order to help the child focus on achieving the goal; clearly indicate differences between the child's work and the standard or desired solution; reduce frustration and risk; and model and clearly define the expectations of the activity to be performed (Mishra, 2013, p. 26).

### **2.8.2 Networking among Peers**

Vygotsky stated that children learn and develop when they relate to and engage in with each other (Vygotsky, 1978). However, educators need to facilitate, guide, and monitor them in the activities or tasks that are set. Children are able to understand their social environment, form bonds, and trust each other during play activities, and it is easier for them to learn from one another in a relaxed manner. In addition, when children work in a team, they express their thoughts and knowledge verbally and non-verbally in ways that are well understood (Brusa, 2019) and the development of language and communication occurs through children's collaboration in activities. The setting for this study was an urban ECD centre whose children were characterised by a mix of races, cultures, socioeconomic groups, and languages. Some children were from English speaking or music-loving homes, giving them an advantage over children who spoke a different language at home but were taught with English at the centre. The educator organised the children into groups and paired the highly musical children with those who were less musical.

### **2.8.3 Involvement of Parents or family members on the Child's Learning**

According to Vygotsky, parents or family members as MKOs play a vital role in the development of children's language and communication. There is an acceleration of

childhood cognitive development when parents continue from where the educator stops at school by singing to their children and engaging them in activities that aid their communication skills (Ismail et al., 2015). Takeuchi, Vaala, and Ahn, (2019) advised that parents and family members participate in their children's learning by listening to them as they pronounce words, scaffolding their understanding, and supporting them while reading, and also by assisting them with their homework assignments. Maluleke (2014) added that children become more focused and active, perform better, and achieve better results in their learning when a parent provides them with the necessary support.

The researcher supports the participation of parents and family members in children's learning to help facilitate their communication development. However, in this study the primary MKOs were the educators.

#### **2.8.4 Technological device as sources of scaffolding**

Shabani (2016) postulated that the MKO does not have to be a human being, but could be electronic or technological devices such as computers, programmable toys, communication software and tools, audio equipment, and the Internet. The use of computers and the Internet extends the possibilities for music education and for language and communication, and a technologically rich teaching and learning environment can therefore accelerate the learning of language and communication skills (Wajszczyk, 2014). The ECCE educator can employ any of these devices to aid the teaching of communication through music, as can parents and caregivers at home. In this study, while the educator remained the principal MKO, the theory suggests that as ECCE educators they use a range of approaches to impart communication skills to ECCE children, including digital audio media and technological devices.

## **2.9 THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK, THE DATA GENERATION INSTRUMENTS AND DATA ANALYSIS**

Vygotsky's SCT links the cognitive development of children to the support provided by MKOs (parents, educators, peers, and technological devices). SCT identifies language as the major tool for effective communication, and describes language development as originating in effective interaction with these MKOs (Gámez, Griskell, Sobrevilla, & Vazquez, 2019). SCT highlights the effects of the relationship with the MKO on the psychological development of young children (Gámez, et al, 2019). In this research study, the educators who were interviewed and observed were the primary MKOs in relation to the children's development of communication skills at the ECCE centre. The interviews and observations with them generated data for addressing the study's primary research questions:

- (i) What are the ECCE educators' understandings of using musical rhymes as a strategy for teaching communication (listening and reading) skills to children aged three to four?
- (ii) How do ECCE educators use musical rhymes as a strategy to teach communication (listening and reading) skills to children aged three and four?
- (iii) Why do ECCE educators use musical rhymes as a strategy to teach communication (listening and reading) skills to children aged three and four?
- (iv) What impact does the use of musical rhymes as a strategy to teach communication (listening and reading) skills have on the language development of children aged three and four?

The researcher employed thematic analysis to analyse the data, using the deductive and inductive method designed by Miles and Huberman (1994). Deductive analysis implies the use of the theoretical framework as guide to structure the analysis of the generated data (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014), therefore the main research questions, the interview questions, and the theoretical framework were all connected.

## **2.10 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has discussed the SCT that underpins this study. The origin and concepts of SCT were explained, its main themes presented, and certain critiques of the theory discussed. After a brief discussion of how other researchers have applied SCT in similar research, the application and the relevance of the theory to this research on using music to teach communication skills in an ECCE context was explained. Finally, the relationship between SCT, the data generation, and the data analysis was clarified. The following chapter will review literature related to the study.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

In the previous chapter, the theoretical framework that underpinned this study was presented and discussed. This chapter seeks to systematically review the relevant scholarly literature on studies that have previously been conducted in this research area.

A literature review is a summary of previous studies that relate to the researcher's discipline and topic. It shows what has been achieved in the discipline and identifies gaps that the researcher seeks to address (Aveyard, 2014; Schryen et al., 2017). Conducting a literature review broadens the researcher's knowledge of the field of study, both at the local and the international level, thereby strengthening the justification for the study. According to Thornberg and Dunne (2019), the essence of a literature review is to investigate the similarities and differences between the previous studies, and to identify and define the gap that the research study seeks to address.

For this study on using musical rhymes to teach communication skills (listening and reading) to children aged three and four, the literature review has been presented under the following sections: a global synopsis of ECCE; the inception ECCE in South Africa; communication in NCF document ECCE children; music-based pedagogy to teach communication skills in ECCE; musical rhymes in the learning environment: the global overview; educators' understanding of music-based pedagogy to teach communication skills; different musical rhymes to enhance children acquisition of communication skills ;why music and rhymes-based pedagogy to teach communication skills to ECCE children? the impact of musical rhymes-based pedagogy on ECCE children language development and discussion of gaps in the literature reviewed.

The literature has been reviewed in relation to the four critical questions the study intended to answer:

- (i) What are the ECCE educators' understandings of using musical rhymes as a strategy for teaching communication (listening and reading) skills to children aged three to four?
- (ii) How do ECCE educators use musical rhymes as a strategy to teach communication (listening and reading) skills to children aged three and four?
- (iii) Why do ECCE educators use musical rhymes as a strategy to teach communication (listening and reading) skills to children aged three and four?
- (iv) What impact does the use of musical rhymes as a strategy to teach communication (listening and reading) skills have on the language development of children aged three and four?

These research questions were used as a lens to examine and understand the existing relevant literature in relation to the use of musical rhymes by ECCE educators to teach communication skills to their children. The literature review commences by examining global research on ECCE, and the attempts to address inequalities in the provision of ECCE.

### **3.2 A GLOBAL SYNOPSIS OF ECCE**

Early childhood is identified as the period of a child's life between birth and nine years old. During this period the brain develops rapidly through neurogenesis, axonal and dendritic growth, synaptogenesis, cell death, synaptic pruning, myelination, and glycogenesis, occurring in a rapid sequence. Therefore, any perturbation at this critical period of a child's development may have lasting effects on brain development and functional capability (Scandrett, 2018). Early childhood development refers to the various policies, services, and provisions that aid the holistic development of young children (Britto et al., 2017). Shvarts and Bakker (2019) found that sociocultural setting and biological factors have a strong influence on a child's development. Thus, poverty and its related problems can jeopardise and interrupt young children's development.

The need for the adequate provision of quality, equal, and sustainable education for children is therefore globally acknowledged (Miles & Singal, 2010; World Health Organization, 2017; Yasunaga, 2014). Research has revealed that globally over 200 million young children below the age of five have difficulty in achieving holistic development (Atinc & Gustafsson-Wright, 2013). The majority of these children are vulnerable and suffer from ill health, poverty, and an inferior and inefficient education. One in five children are malnourished, the majority of whom are from Africa and Asia. A report from sub-Saharan Africa revealed that over 61% of children aged 0–4 live below the poverty line and have not reached the required developmental abilities for their age (Gebremariam et al., 2015; Neuman & Devercelli, 2012). In addition, 38% of West African children are faced with challenges such as religious crises, war, malnutrition, and ill-health, which affect their psychomotor and psychological development and lead to stunted growth (Akinrotimi & Olowe, 2016; Boyden, 2015; Sharpley, 2014). These authors also confirmed that in South Africa and Uganda, ECCE centres are unevenly distributed due to economic, social, and racial factors. However, the problem is not confined to Africa and Asia. According to Scandrett (2018), one in five children in the United States lives below the national poverty line.

Governments, private individuals, and organisations have therefore focused on developing and establishing ECCE. International organisations such as UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank provide technical and financial support for organisations that support underprivileged children (Neuman & Devercelli, 2012). Vargas-Barón (2015) stated that about 101 countries have formulated ECCE policies in order to ensure quality education for all. The development of early childhood programmes is recognised as a worthwhile effort to arrest poverty (National Research Council, 2015). UNICEF believes that the provision of a sustainable environment will aid children's brains to develop maximally, thereby making it easier for them to learn the essential life skills that they need to participate in the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy (Council, 2015). This includes communication skills. This was further confirmed by Shonkoff et al. (2012) who found that poverty and early deprivation of basic needs are the major causes of delinquency and chronic diseases in adulthood. Thus, quality ECD interventions can lead to reductions in poverty and social problems. This understanding has motivated most states of the European Union to focus heavily on improving ECD, as they

understand the advantages of high quality ECD initiatives on future wages and economic advancement (Vandenbroeck et al., 2018; Van Laere, 2017).

In addressing the issue of ECD, a practical step was taken in 2016 with the launch of the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, which stated that ECD could assist to achieve the desired goals over the following 15 years (Yoshikawa & Kabay, 2015). The following recommendations were provided to improve ECD: end violence against children; put an end to child poverty, as part of global poverty eradication; renew the global effort to end preventable child and maternal deaths; pay more attention to adolescents and children; leverage the growing data revolution to support the rights of every child; increase investments in all children, especially the most vulnerable and marginalised; break the cycle of chronic crises affecting children; prioritise education so that all children, as well as adolescents, are in school and learning; stop girls being left out, held back and pushed aside, and tackle climate change for the sake of future generations (Malone, 2015).

The Indian government has set up a series of programmes to ensure that children are provided with quality education. Programmes such as Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) are organised by the government to cater for children from birth to age six (Reetu et al., 2017). These services are free and are universally accessible to all and are focused on less privileged children. They focus on “supplementary nutrition, growth monitoring, primary healthcare, immunisation and referral to secondary healthcare” (Blake et al., 2009, p. 1). In addition, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) educate the community about children’s rights. This has resulted in a greater number of children enrolling in ECCE, and 70% of Indian children are enrolled in pre-school (Aldagher et al., 2018). Reetu et al. (2017) observed that private organisations and women’s groups also work in collaboration with the Indian government to support early childhood education. However, Reetu et al. (2017) noted that despite the government’s initiatives to provide quality ECD for Indian children, the facilities provided are not evenly distributed.

Globally, sub-Saharan Africa has the largest number of malnourished children with poor sanitation and improper hygiene, which often leads to stunted growth of the children (Lassi et al., 2013). This was supported by Hoang et al.’s (2018) recent

empirical research, which found that stunting has an adverse effect on children's cognitive development and academic performance. Sub-Saharan African countries have therefore also made efforts to improve their ECD programmes, in response to the current research on socioeconomic problems and on brain development (Hazlett et al., 2017; Liu et al., 2017). These countries, along with most other countries around the world, have passed legislation and instituted national policies to promote ECD. According to Neuman and Devercelli (2012), 23 African countries have approved ECD policies, eight of which have designed comprehensive strategies for implementation. The policies were designed to cater for child nutrition, to enhance the social wellbeing of the people, to protect the rights of the child, to provide quality and equitable education, and to provide pre-natal care (Neuman & Devercelli, 2012). UNICEF in Nigeria has provided tremendous support to half a million children, more than 343,000 pregnant women, and adolescents with HIV (UNICEF, 2017). In addition, a new programme to cover 2018–2022 has been designed for Nigeria to address the admission of out-of-school children, to improve sanitation and hygiene in the rural setting, to feed the socioeconomically disadvantaged, and to stop child marriage and promote gender equality. However, research has shown that most of the policies adopted in sub-Saharan African countries have yet to be effectively implemented to positively influence the lives of African children, as there is no capacity to enforce the policies (Abonyi & Ezeh, 2017; Akombi et al., 2017). Amongst the obvious challenges pointed out by these researchers were terrorism/insurgency, malnutrition, and a lack of inclusive education.

However, there are divergent views on how to address the prevailing challenges to effective ECD, beyond setting up general policies, as most countries have done. The basic pedagogic and content knowledge competencies needed to impart the language and communication skills (reading and listening) required by our children are significant in ECD. Wangila (2017) examined factors that create barriers to the effective teaching and learning of communication skills in ECCE centres, and reported the following challenges: inadequate ECCE educator training, high pupil-teacher ratios, unsatisfactory teaching and learning aids, poor educator remuneration, and environments that are not conducive to teaching and learning (Wangila, 2017). In addition, a lack of incentives for educators and a lack of parental involvement are also barriers to effective teaching of communication skills (Ali & Jameel, 2016; Armstrong,

2015). Some researchers have therefore directed their attention to curriculum design, quality educator training, effective educator subject knowledge, and developing teaching pedagogies in order to promote rich ECD (Hyson et al., 2009).

Pretorius and Klapwijk (2016) and Darling-Hammond (2014) proposed that a curriculum that is designed in a systematic, logical, and comprehensive way, with educators' active participation and input, would enhance the effective teaching and learning of communication skills. Bruce (2011) observed that the complexity of the Foundation Phase demands well-trained, mature educators with the developmentally and culturally appropriate knowledge and life skills to prepare children for holistic development. In Piaget's (1936) view, the foundation stage plays a vital role in the holistic development of a person. Piaget listed the developmental stages that ECCE educators must be aware of as the sensorimotor stage, the concrete operational stage, the formal operational stage, and the pre-operational stage. Vygotsky (1980) supported Piaget in this, and added the concept of highly skilled educators (the MKO) to scaffold learning to aid in the sound development of communication skills. Vygotsky suggested that educators use various tools, strategies, and methodologies to assist children in developing learning skills, including listening and reading skills. However, Logan and McClung (2019) argued that certain factors could hinder or interrupt the effective development of the brain. These factors are emotional and physical neglect by parents, inconsistent and inexperienced caregivers, under-resourced ECCE centres, and teratogenic and psychoactive drugs during pregnancy.

Duncan et al. (2012) emphasised a good learning environment, arguing that adults (early childhood practitioners, parents or family members, caregivers, government monitoring personnel, educators, and support workers) can bring innovation into ECD/ECCE centres. The authors posited that all ECD/ECCE workers should collaborate to provide conducive and healthy learning environments to support children's acquisition of communication skills and learning experiences. Duncan et al. (2012) drew on Vygotsky (1997) and Bronfenbrenner (1992), who argued that the totality of the environment has a strong impact on shaping and aiding the development of a child. This implies that all the systems around the child are important, and must be supported to nurture the child's optimal development (Abrahamson, 2017). Bronfenbrenner (1986) listed these systems as: the *microsystem*, which is the

immediate environment of the child, and which includes the home, school, and friends; the *mesosystem*, which is the collaboration of various parts in the microsystem to support the child to acquire necessary skills; the *exosystem*, which does not involve the child as an active member but still has an indirect effect on the child, for example promotions or demotions in the parents' workplaces, and the neighbourhood; the *macrosystem*, which is the cultural context that influences the child's development, for example the beliefs of society, the socio-economic status of the parents, and the race of the child; and the *chronosystem*, which speaks to socio-historical conditions or changes during one's life span, such as divorce of the parents, which may not only affect the couple but the child's development.

A healthy environment that is conducive to learning, and caring adults with a good understanding of children, are needed to support children's holistic development (Lewallen et al., 2015). Takeuchi, Vaala and Ahn, (2019) and Maluleke (2014) added that adults have a singular duty to assist children to develop socially and emotionally, as such development serves as the basis for children's future healthy development.

The following section explores literature on ECD/ECCE in South Africa. It examines the policies put in place by government since the transition to democracy in 1994, and the efforts made by organisations and individuals to improve ECCE.

### **3.3 THE INCEPTION OF ECCE IN SOUTH AFRICA**

South Africa is located on the tip of the African continent and consists of nine provinces. It is a multiracial and multilingual country with eleven official languages (Rispel, 2016). South Africa has a population of around 59 million, 40% of whom are younger than 18 years, and 11% of whom are within the age group 0–4 (Statistics South Africa, 2010). The inception of pre-school in South Africa dates back to 1925, when Lady Buxton opened a facility for infant care and for teaching women mother craft in Claremont in Cape Town (Verster, 1989). The school operated informally, without a defined curriculum for children or for their tutors' strategy of instruction. Verster (1989) stated that many other schools came into existence with the help of various

institutions towards the end of the 1930s. However, the schools were partially funded by the provinces and the central government.

Aubrey (2017) states that the education system in South Africa has been characterised by segregation, inequality, destitution, and minimal chances for black South African children to receive an adequate education, thus depriving them of one of life's necessities.

According to the 2009 General Household Survey, 61% of South African children live below the poverty line, and the majority of these children live in child-headed households or households where the caregivers are unemployed (Statistics South Africa, 2010). ECD is viewed as a crucial stage in a child's life. At this stage, children develop various traits, competencies, and behaviours, such as their social behaviours, their emotions, their intelligence, and positive personality traits that can help them to cope with the daily challenges of life and eventually become responsible adults (UNICEF, 2014b). Furthermore, ECD has an effect on children's transition to adulthood (Choi, Wang, & Jackson, 2019). Thus, unless prompt and adequate steps are taken to support them, children from disadvantaged and impoverished backgrounds can be deprived of the acquisition of knowledge, communication skills, and positive behaviours that will provide them with opportunities for creating a healthy adulthood. Adams-Ojugbele, and Moletsane, (2019) found that children who were exposed to rich and conducive learning environments in their early lives were less likely to drop out of school or become juvenile delinquents. According to Vygotsky (1997), the environment in which children grow up influences how they think, learn, and develop skills.

The situation began to be addressed and reversed in 1994 when the African National Congress came to power and Nelson Mandela became the president of an independent South Africa (Centre for Development and Enterprise, 2014). The first international treaty that the new government ratified was the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child on 16 June 1995, which promoted children's rights and increased the general understanding of the importance and necessity of ECD (Murriss, 2019; Kindornay et al., 2012). On assuming power, the ANC government advocated for education that met the needs of the people of South Africa (Thobejane, 2013). Since

then the educational system has been progressively restructured to bridge the gaps between apartheid education and education that caters for all children, and caring for and educating young children has been an important aspect of government policy. The primary concern has been to ensure an equitable quality education for young children, and the appropriate implementation strategies have been enacted as policy (Davis & Elliott, 2014).

Developing ECCE is one of the most productive long-term projects any country can engage in (Adams-Ojugbele, & Moletsane, 2019). In South Africa, a number of policies have been put in place to promote the wellbeing of young children. In addition to ratifying the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1995, the South African government made free medical facilities available for children and pregnant mothers (Atmore et al., 2012, pp. 125–126). Atmore et al. (2012) further mentioned the formation of the Directorate for Early Childhood Development within the national Education Department; the publication of *Education White Paper 5 on Early Childhood Education* (DoE, 2001); the completion of a nationwide ECD audit overseeing 23 482 ECD centres in 2000; the provision of subsidies for these ECD locations by the nine provincial social development departments; the availability of Grade R grants-in-aid by the education departments of the nine provinces; and the provision of child support grants for 10.5 million children in April 2011.

The National Integrated Policy for Early Childhood Development (Republic of South Africa, 2015) states the diverse policies, laws, and constitutional provisions put in place by the South African government to protect and uphold the rights and wellbeing of young children. The following are examples of the policies and law that have guided ECD in South Africa since 1994: The *White Paper on Education and Training* (Republic of South Africa, 1995); the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa* (Republic of South Africa, 1996b); the *Department of Education's Interim Policy for Early Childhood Development* (DoE, 1996); the *National Programme of Action for Children* (Republic of South Africa, 1996c); the *White Paper for Social Welfare* (Republic of South Africa, 1997a); the *White Paper on the Transformation of the Health System in South Africa* (Republic of South Africa, 1997b); *Education White Paper 5 on Early Childhood Education* (Republic of South Africa, 2001); the *National Integrated Plan for ECD 2005–2010* (NIPECD)

(Republic of South Africa, 2015); the *Children's Act No. 38 of 2005* (Republic of South Africa, 2005); the *National Plan of Action for Children (NPAC)* in South Africa 2012–2017 (Republic of South Africa, 2012); and *The South African National Curriculum Framework for Children from Birth to Four* (NCF) (Department of Basic Education, 2015).

The aim of all these policies has been to close the gaps created by apartheid education, and to guarantee equitable educational opportunities and productive delivery of education to all children in order to achieve the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. However, in spite of these policies, ECCE is often substandard or unavailable in many areas of Limpopo, KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape, and children from low-income households across the country are not reaching their full potential (Mbarathi et al., 2016). Over 1.8 million children live with unemployed adults in households with poor hygiene and improper sanitation (Seekings & Natrass, 2015). Children living in these conditions have difficulty in accessing life's basic needs, such as health services and nutrition, often leading to stunted growth and poor academic performance.

Children from birth to age four constitute 11% of South Africa's total population. However, in spite of the abovementioned policies and legislation, ECCE services are not universally provided by government. Instead, NGOs, religious bodies, community-based organisations, and individuals operate most of the ECCE centres. Thus, many of the centres are poorly facilitated and managed. Martin et al. (2014) added that ECCE facilities are not evenly distributed across the country.

ECCE in South Africa therefore faces a number of challenges: lack of funding, low family income, lack of access to ECCE centres or substandard facilities for less privileged children, and lack of adequate provision for disabled children (Mbarathi et al., 2016). The NCF for children birth to four years is a response to the challenges that the ECD sector is facing. The NCF offers direction for programmes that cater for babies, toddlers, and young children from birth to age four — in other words, for ECCE.

### **3.4 COMMUNICATION IN NCF DOCUMENT FOR ECCE CHILDREN**

Communication is defined as the transfer of information from one person to another, using language, facial expressions, and every part of the body (Ferrández-Antón, Ferreira-Padilla, del-Pino-Casado, Ferrández-Antón, Baleriola-Júlvez, & Martínez-Riera, 2020). Communication is also explained as any act by means of which one person gives to or receives from another person information about that person's needs, desires, perceptions, knowledge, or affective state (Rosenberg & Chopra, 2015). Communication may be intentional or unintentional, may involve conventional or unconventional signals, may take linguistic or non-linguistic forms, and may occur through spoken or other modes (Way, 2019). Effective and proper communication in early childhood (between parents, children and educators) is the foundation for the further development of the child in every other area of life (Radic-Hozo, 2014). Effective communication is a two-way process between the encoder (sender) and the decoder (receiver). In this context, the encoder is the ECCE educator who organises ideas and information by using gestures, facial expressions, symbols, words, storytelling, drama, music, rhymes, and play to create a message for the children (Fairchild, & McFerran, 2019). Communication can only occur and have an impact on the receiver when it is clearly and explicitly conveyed, and is well understood (Akilandeswari et al., 2015).

Effective approaches to teaching communication require that children comprehend the content and master the communicative competencies. To teach communication effectively, pre-service educators need the appropriate preparation. They need to be equipped with musical skills and implementation strategies for translating basic English communication into musical rhymes (Andrews, & Baker, 2019). Early childhood educators need to be encouraged to communicate freely, for example, singing, and using facial expressions and body movement to aid children's learning and make them more imaginative and creative (Way, 2019). Research shows that there are five elements of effective communication that could aid ECCE children' quick comprehension: "clarity of thought and expression, conciseness, a conducive environment, feedback and completeness" (Akilandeswari et al., 2015, pp. 155–156).

Ahmad (2016) and Astawa et al. (2017) explained communication as a vital skill that includes an organised and continuous process of encoding, decoding, comprehension, interpretation, and response. Communication in the context of this research occurred when the encoder (educators) transmitted a comprehensive message (instruction through music) that decoders (children) were able to comprehend, interpret, and make meaning of, and respond to appropriately (Astawa et al., 2017). Communication is the most important factor in young children's learning, and correlates with social development and the acquisition of all other skills (Erozkan, 2013). Hence, it is one of the six early learning and development areas designed for ECCE by the NCF. The NCF outlines how effective communication promotes overall wellbeing, a strong sense of uniqueness and socialisation, development of strong mathematical concepts, the acquisition of creative skills, and the ability to learn about and explore the world (DBE, 2015). The NCF further states that many children have a natural ability to communicate their needs to adults around them, and a prompt response by adults to their needs instils trust and a feeling of being loved and accepted. It is further learnt from the document that children communicate and express their feelings through signs, body language, chuckling, babbling, gurgling, speaking, 'listening, thinking and understanding'.

Three types of communication are recommended in the document for ECCE children with special needs. These include verbal, non-verbal, and assisted communication (Benbenishty & Hannink, 2015). Verbal communication is the oral use of sound, speech, songs, and rhymes to express our feelings and convey information. Verbal communication includes spoken and written words, and is carried out with conscious effort to ensure that the information conveyed by the encoder is meaningful to the decoder (Benbenishty & Hannink, 2015). Adults must also speak, sing, read to, and listen to young children to support them as they learn to communicate and listen, and later to read and write. It is on this basis that Andrews and Baker (2019) as well as Quintin (2019) suggested music as one of the implementation strategies to communicate with ECCE children in order to aid their language development. ECCE educators (the MKO) are required to employ various means to convey comprehensive information to the children (Vygotsky, 1986). However, because ECCE learning environments are multicultural and multi-social, verbal communication alone is often not sufficient, hence the inclusion of non-verbal communication. Nonverbal communication was

explained by Benbenishty and Hannink (2015) as conveying instruction through various physical means — such as the use of gesture, eye-contact, and facial expression, touch, and the tone and pitch of the voice — for the purpose of emphasis.

The third type of communication recommended by Benbenishty and Hannink (2015) was assisted communication for children with speech difficulty. Assisted communication is augmented by objects or electronic devices that are employed to support children with language impairment. These devices could be picture symbols and voice output communication aids that support children to acquire communication skills (Strasberger & Ferreri, 2014). There are various methods and approaches towards communicating in ECCE, and these include “dance, music rhymes, art, pictures, singing, body movement, and creative play” (DBE, 2015, p. 41). Young children acquire language and communication skills by being attentive to the activities around them, which are carried out by adults. They hear the sounds and the music of the sounds (high and low, soft and loud, slow and fast, sweet and harsh), and make meaning from the sounds.

Radic-Hozo’s (2014) research on communication patterns in pre-school education institutions indicated some useful strategies for communicating with young children, which included the ECCE educator avoiding closed questions (with yes or no answers), maintaining eye contact with children when talking, having a good rapport with the children, and providing positive reinforcement when necessary. Radic-Hozo also recommended that ECCE educators use appropriate facial expressions, speak calmly and clearly, and avoid the use of provocative words, intimidating expressions, and signs of impatience or intolerance during teaching and learning activities.

Another cogent point was that social interaction between children and their parents, caregivers, and educators is crucial to the effective development of communication skills in children (Radic-Hozo, 2014). Bronfenbrenner (1988) maintained that there is a need to involve parents, family members, and members of the community to effectively impart communication skills to children. For Vygotsky, these people were the MKO, who had a better understanding or experience of a task, process, or concept than the children, and were therefore able to give adequate support to aid their maximum development. McLeod (2018) explained the MKO as a person (a parent,

caregiver, educator, peer, or trainer) who is more likely to have knowledge about the children and how best they can learn and acquire skills, including communication skills. The determining factor in the acquisition of effective communication is the educator, who is expected to employ various methods to convey comprehensive, expressive, and developmentally appropriate instructions to the children.

### **3.5 MUSIC-BASED PEDAGOGY TO TEACH COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN ECCE**

The poor performance of South African children in the annual national assessments (ANAs), and in the three international assessments (TIMSS, PIRLS, and SACMEQ), revealed the incongruities and unevenness in the educational system (Spaull, 2013). This was further confirmed by the Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ III), which rated South African school children from middle-income families fourth out of 15 African countries, and children from low-income families 14<sup>th</sup> out of 15 countries (Rule & Land, 2017). Furthermore, Nel et al.'s (2016) exploratory research on literacy teaching and learning at Grade R level in selected South African schools reported that the acquisition of literacy or communication skills of ECD children is below the expected standard, especially for children rural settings. The authors identified pedagogical barriers and socio-economic challenges as the major reasons for this. Similarly, in a case study on reading education at an adult centre and a primary school, Rule and Land (2017) found that the educators' pedagogical strategies, which largely involved rote learning methods, hindered the children' effective acquisition of reading skills. Another recent study by Auerbach and Delport (2018) found that the mental, emotional, social, and spiritual growth of Foundation Phase children from disadvantaged backgrounds is often retarded by the multiple challenges they are faced with. This resonated with research carried out in the United Kingdom which revealed that the development of communication skills in children from low-income families is a year behind that of children in middle-income homes (Council, 2015). In a nutshell, most of the studies reviewed on this topic uniformly ascertain that the pedagogical strategies adopted by South African educators by and large hamper the effective learning of communication skills (Chansa-Kabali et

al., 2014; Modisaotsile, 2012; Sampa et al., 2018). All these challenges call for a paradigm change in the mode of teaching and learning.

Research has shown that in the womb, a foetus starts to perceive sound at about 25 weeks (Chorna, Filippa, De Almeida, Lordier, Monaci, Hüppi, & Guzzetta, 2019). Children aged three and four pay attention to sound, to rhythm and pitch, and to communication relationships, and enjoy sound games and simple melodies (DBE, 2015). In addition, ECCE-aged children are lively, playful, and restless by nature, and love humour and singing (Fairchild, & McFerran, 2019). In view of this, the NCF for children from birth to four years stipulate the use of play-based learning, such as role play, dramatisation, singing, dance, and movement, to assist the young children to learn vital skills, including listening and reading skills (DBE, 2015).

Steinbrink, Knigge, Mannhaupt, Sallat, & Werkle, (2019) found that because both spoken language and music are made up of tone, melody, rhythm, and tempo, when educators employ music to teach ECCE children, communication skills become easy to learn. This is supported by neurological research which has found that the left-hemisphere frontal lobe of the brain plays a central role in both communication and music comprehension and creation (Trimble, & Hesdorffer, 2017). A number of researchers have established that using musical rhymes to teach any skill helps children to gain a quick understanding, makes the learning environment atmosphere a positive environment for learning, promotes social interaction among children, and thereby aids children' acquisition of communication skills (Muthivhi, & Kriger, 2019; Hawkins, 2016). Dutch research on the impact of music in child function reported that musical rhymes assist Foundation Phase children to develop their perceptual skills, which positively influences language learning and subsequently affects literacy (Hogenes et al., 2014). Previous research on this subject has revealed that introducing music vocabulary to children in their early years enhances good speech development, early acquisition of emotional and social skills (Cloete & Delpont, 2015; Young, 2016). Khaghaninejad et al. (2016) as well as Ojukwu and Onyiuke (2019) found that the use of musical rhymes by educators can increase children' acquisition of communication skills, as they enhance effective teaching and learning in the ECCE learning environment setting. Sayakhan, and Bradley (2019) found that musical rhymes used by ECCE educators could be used to signal a shift from one activity to another, and to ease

tension and boredom in the learning environment. This supported McIntire's (2007, p. 44) earlier finding that "musical rhymes and literacy go hand in hand" and are therefore a good tool for teaching communication skills to ECCE children.

However, Windsor, Woods, Kaiser, Snyder, and Salisbury, (2019) stated that effective teaching of communication requires that ECCE educators and caregivers acquire knowledge of multiple implementation strategies, such as having the ability to use music, rhyme, and play to support children to learn the required skills.

The implication of the use of music to support the ECCE children to acquire communication skills are that, firstly the basic communication skills imparted to the children will influence every other level of their education pursuit and their total development. Since communication skills are agreed to be fundamental foundation for acquisition of other skills, learning other skills will be easier (Brodin, & Renblad, 2019). Additionally, these present children, if the learning of communication skills is simplified for them through the use of music, the story about the South African's children inability to read comprehensively will change.

The summary of the implication of this section for children is that communication skills are learnt with ease by the ECCE children when their educators employed music-based pedagogy.

### **3.6 MUSICAL RHYMES IN THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT: THE GLOBAL OVERVIEW**

Some developed and developing countries have been able to adopt a variety of pedagogies in schools, musical pedagogies being one type. Malaysia, Sweden, Australia, Spain, and England use musical pedagogies in the ECCE learning environment, and their results show that using musical rhymes is the best teaching strategy for an inclusive ECCE learning environment (Burnard et al., 2008). Berman (2014) found that musical rhymes aid children' vocabulary development more than traditional rote memorisation. Similarly, Australian researchers Ehrlin and Gustavsson (2015) found that musical pedagogies stimulated children' thoughts and imaginations, leading to relaxation of mind, soul, and spirit, hence the inclusion of music and rhyme as one of their implementation strategies.

In addition to the use of music in Western education, a number of African countries have adopted musical pedagogies. In Nigeria, music and musical rhymes are used as a medium for educating pre-schoolers (Nwauzor, 2013; Ojukwu et al., 2014). Similarly, musical rhymes, like any other subject, is compulsory for children' in Grade 1–7 in Zimbabwe (Ganyata, 2015; Samkange, & Chimbadzwa, 2016). Three East African countries — Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda — integrated musical rhymes in learning and as implementation strategies for other curriculums (Sayakhan, & Bradley, 2019). In the South African context, music is employed in implementing a number of subjects across the grades. These include Music Education in Grade R, music in the secondary school, using music to teach listening skills, implementing music in the primary school art class, using music to teach life skills, and music in pre-service teacher education (Saarikallio, Tervaniemi, Yrtti, & Huotilainen, 2019; Mattern, 2019; Cloete & Delport, 2015; Drummond, 2015; Van Vreden, 2016; Vermeulen, 2009).

Music is also confirmed to be effective in facilitating some science subjects. This is affirmed by Governor et al. (2013), who examined teaching and learning science through songs, and found that music accelerates the students' understanding of key scientific concepts and the formulation of definitions of vital science terminologies and phrases. Likewise, Yoon and Kim (2017) asserted that the use of music in science classes enhances students' motivation to engage with the lessons, and empowers them to acquire scientific knowledge that enables them to construct their own knowledge.

South Africa has a high drop-out rate of primary school pupils. One of the factors that has been proposed as a cause is children' absenteeism from school due to the poor attitude of educators toward pupils' learning; hence, many parents testify that their children lack enthusiasm for school, leading many of them to drop out (Mogashoa & Mboweni, 2017). The NCF guidelines on promoting the communication skills of ECCE children, state that employing music to teach “different sounds and words”, “sound games”, “rhythm and pitch”, and “songs and rhymes” may assist in making learning more appealing to children (DBE, 2015, pp. 42–43). However, because ECCE is a new phase in the South African educational system, very little structure has been put in place to support employing music to teach communication skills (listening and reading) to ECCE children.

### **3.7 EDUCATORS' UNDERSTANDING OF MUSIC-BASED PEDAGOGY TO TEACH COMMUNICATION SKILLS**

This section discusses educators' understanding and appreciation of using musical rhymes as implementation strategies to aid their children' acquisition of communication skills (reading and listening). Some researchers describe teaching as a deliberate and careful goal-orientated act of an educator in a bid to impart certain skills to children (Saarikallio, Tervaniemi, Yrtti, & Huotilainen, 2019; Barrett, Zhukov, & Welch, 2019; Jacobs et al., 2011;). South African National Curriculum Framework (NCF) is designed for ages 0-4. The document introduced six early learning areas and development of which communication is one. The ECCE educators are expected to be conversant with the goals and objectives of the document. Additionally, they are to understand their role and strategize best way to carry it out on the children. The document indicates that the third and fourth years of life and the time before the child enters primary school is very crucial, thus, the ECCE educators are to give maximum attention to prepare them adequately before they proceed to Grade R (DBE,2015).

The NCF for ages 0-4 years list creativity as one of early learning and development areas. Due to the creative nature of children, they engage in exploratory activities to resolve any problems through role play, make believe play, singing and rhymes. On this note ECCE educators are admonished to employ strategy different from spoken word to support their learning. Creative arts comprise of music, dance, drama, and visual arts; for this study, music is relevant as an effective pedagogy for educators to employ to teach communication skills to ECCE children (Van Vreden, 2018). In addition, in their research titled "The importance of music in pre-school education", Ehrlin, and Gustavsson (2015) found that teaching communication skills by employing different creative procedures (songs and music, play, dance and movement, rhyme, drama, and the use of pictures) accelerates the achievement of learning and teaching outcomes.

The nature of ECCE requires that educators employ a diverse range of teaching methods to support their children' holistic development, hence the need for early childhood educators to improve their expertise on developmentally appropriate early

childhood teaching practices (Bolduc & Evrard, 2017). Most countries recognise the role of music in the ECCE curriculum, hence its inclusion in teacher education.

Therefore, the following sections review literature that speaks to ECCE educators' conceptions of using music to teach communication skills to ECCE children, the developmentally appropriate strategies for teaching ECCE children, and barriers to using musical rhymes to teach communication skills to ECCE children.

### **3.7.1 Why the use of music-based pedagogy to teach communication skills?**

The NCF was designed to enhance the equality and quality of basic education in South Africa by establishing a concrete foundation to cater for the holistic development of a child in the early years (DBE, 2015). The curriculum aimed at ensuring that all children, regardless of their race, socioeconomic status, or gender, would be given access to ECD facilities. A curriculum for early childhood is about all the experiences that children from birth to four will have in different settings (Richter et al., 2017). The NCF ECCE curriculum therefore focuses on the provisions and interventions required for young children prior to their birth, after their birth, and through to the time the child proceeds to Grade R. The curriculum includes areas such as children's feelings, hearing, seeing, and doing. The NCF specifies six early learning and development areas (ELDAs) for ECCE children: well-being, identity and belonging, communication, exploring mathematics, creativity, and knowledge and understanding of the world. Furthermore, the NCF curriculum specifies developmentally appropriate activities that give children the opportunity to develop their fine and gross motor skills, and their cognitive, emotional, physical, and social development. These activities, among others, are dance, talking, singing songs, rhymes, and playing make-believe games.

The educator's role is significant and vital in aiding the smooth exhibition and execution of this programme. Alexander (2015) conducted surveys on educators' experiences in facilitating effective teaching and learning, and found that educators are the central resource in teaching and learning activities. They set the stage for activities, facilitate the activities and make them interesting for the children, and help the children to achieve the expected teaching and learning outcomes. Similarly, Urban et al. (2012) found that the quality of ECCE depends on the proficiency of the educators and the

caregivers who facilitate it. Hence, in every country policy maker specify the necessary qualities and qualifications that make a good educator. A qualified educator can be described as someone who has subject content understanding and a variety of pedagogical strategies to impart the knowledge to the children (Asio, & Riego de Dios, 2019; Le Donné et al., 2016). Biersteker et al. (2016) affirmed that better teaching strategies by ECCE educators predicts productive learning outcomes. The National Curriculum Statement Grades R–12 endorsed creative arts content (dance, drama, music, and visual arts) to be taught in schools as part of Life Skills in the Foundation Phase. Music, one of the included contents areas in the newly designed curriculum, has been found to be a good and relevant teaching strategy for pre-schoolers (Fairchild, & McFerran, 2019; Malan, 2015).

However, the majority of ECCE educators lack the necessary musical experience and knowledge to use musical rhymes effectively as a strategy for teaching children. This is because it is not covered in pre-service teacher training and teaching resources (Bolduc & Evrard, 2017; Cloete & Delport, 2015; Ganyata 2015). Welch and Henley (2014) and Garvis and Pendergast (2012) added that the few educators who employ it as a pedagogical approach are generalists and are not music professionals, hence their lack of self-confidence in the effective use of music in the learning environment. Russell-Bowie (2009) conducted research on the challenges faced by primary school educators in teaching music in Australia, the United States, Namibia, South Africa, and Ireland. The two major findings, common to all five countries, were educators' lack of musical experience and the relegation of music education in those countries. Similarly, Van Vuuren and Eurika (2018) found that the small amount of music training given to pre-service teachers was not sufficient to equip them to teach music to Foundation Phase children. A number of empirical studies have confirmed that majority of educators across the grades focus on simply teaching the prescribed knowledge and skills rather than employing a variety of teaching strategies to support learning (Khoza, 2015; Ogar & Opoh, 2015). Khoza (2015) further confirmed that educators prefer to stick to traditional methods of teaching — such as lectures, passive rote teaching, slide shares, and monopolising the teaching and learning — rather than employing a variety of strategies.

### **3.7.2 Sources of ECCE educators' understanding of music-based pedagogy teaching communication to ECCE children**

The first step in the application of musical rhymes in the ECCE learning environment is for the ECCE educators to have the understanding and the ability to employ relevant and appropriate musical rhymes for teaching and learning activities. To achieve this, Windsor, Woods, Kaiser, Snyder and Salisbury, (2019) asserted that all ECCE educators, parents, and caregivers require a good understanding of the nature and principles guiding child development to adopt the best approach to impact skills in both informal and formal settings. Similarly, Thompson, Aizawa, Curle and Rose (2019) confirmed that educator's self-efficacy and understanding of the subject content stimulates positive and productive learning environment performance. Research has revealed that a number of ECCE educators receive training in music and thus have some ability to use music as pedagogy to teach the children (Thompson, Aizawa, Curle, & Rose, 2019; De Vries, 2013). NCF designate creativity as one of the compulsories early learning and developmental area for South African ECCE children. Thus, the inclusion of training in creative arts subjects in pre-service teachers' programmes is imperative. Nearly all South African universities offer creative arts training in their pre-service teacher education programmes; the subject is usually taught in a single semester, and music is only one component of creative arts, but preservice teachers are given basic knowledge of the use of music in the learning environment (Van Vuuren & Eurika, 2018). De Vries (2013) reported that some developed countries give their specialist educators music training, and allocate musical teaching resources and funding to aid their use of music as pedagogical medium.

Gillespie and Glider (2010) explored pre-school educators' use of music to support children's learning, and conducted learning environment observations to establish ECCE educators' understanding of using music to teach children. Their findings showed that all the educators understood music and used it frequently in the learning environment to scaffold children's learning. Nearly all the ECCE educators in the study reported using music every day, both for supporting children's cognitive and social development, and for transition from one activity to another. Ryan (2020) reported that educators employed musical activities that included singing along to CDs or following musical cues.

However, regarding educators' understanding of using music as pedagogy in the learning environment, research has shown that most ECCE educators have limited musical skill due to inadequate training (Beukes, 2016; Van Vuuren & Eerika, 2018). Other factors that limit ECCE educators' use of music as pedagogy are lack of self-confidence, expertise, and time (Welch & Henley, 2014). Van Vuuren and Eerika (2018, p. 2) stated:

The lack of depth in arts knowledge is a contributing factor to educators avoiding the arts in the learning environment; when teachers have not acquired practical skills in the arts (in addition to theoretical knowledge), they will not use them effectively in the learning environment.

In Almutairi and Shukri's (2016) study on educators' understanding of the use of songs to teach verbal skills to pre-schoolers, they found that 80% of the participants confessed to having difficulty in composing appropriate songs and rhymes for all the recommended content. Hence, they tended to stick to their traditional ways of teaching the children.

### **3.7.3 Developmentally appropriate teaching strategies for ECCE children**

Effective teaching and learning involve a process of employing a wide range of implementation strategies and teaching processes that are aligned to the learning need of the children. According to Knight and Rabon (2017), studying young children through a developmental lens can help educators to understand their needs and how they might best help them learn effectively, since young children lack the ability to communicate eloquently. Thus, the educator is expected to organise the learning environment activities, schedules, and interactions in accordance with the socio-economic makeup and the developmental stages of the children. This method of teaching and learning is referred to as developmentally appropriate teaching (Makeleni & Sethusha, 2014). The teaching strategies are developmentally appropriate tasks, plans, strategies, and practices employed by educators to assist children to acquire vital skills.

Research conducted by Liu, Tsai, Wang, & Chen, (2020) on creative teaching found that the effective teaching approaches that aid children's success are stimulating constructivist learning, self-created music and rhymes, creating atmosphere for divergent thinking and guide children on handling disappointment and failure. Liu et al. (2020) also found that developmentally appropriate teaching strategies are closely linked to the educator's ability to organise skills in the learning environment, and create an exciting atmosphere for teaching and learning

Similarly, Taole (2013) found that the ability of the educator to adopt developmentally appropriate teaching strategies is a determining factor in children's acquisition of expected skills, including communication skills. Children who learn from educators who understand how children learn and develop are likely to reach their potential in acquiring the necessary life skills, including communication skills. McKoy (2013) recommended six qualities that educators must exhibit in the learning environment for effective teaching and learning to occur: educators need an understanding of inclusive learning environments; educators need a good knowledge and consciousness of children's different sociocultural contexts; educators need to see themselves as change agents; educators must recognise that children construct knowledge in various ways; educators must have a good knowledge of the children's upbringing; and educators must apply this background information to plan lessons that build on children's previous knowledge.

In his theory of multiple intelligences, Gardner devised nine learning styles that every ECD educator should take into consideration in designing teaching and learning activities (Winarti, Yuanita, & Nur, 2019). He further advised that employing all the intelligences is necessary for children's cognitive development and for their development of communication skills, which serve as the basis for the acquisition of all other skills. Džanić and Pejić (2016) found that songs have a strong positive effect on children's vocabulary development and retention, and suggested infusing music into all the teaching intelligences to accelerate children's acquisition of the relevant skills, including communication skills. The learning style are stated and explained by Sadiq (2019, p.163) as follows:

- (i) Verbal-linguistic intelligence (the skills to present word and speech, and to analyse information in a comprehensive manner)

- (ii) Logical-mathematical intelligence (the ability to think conceptually and abstractly, and the capacity to discern logical and numerical patterns)
- (iii) Spatial-visual intelligence (the capacity to think in images and pictures, and to visualise accurately and abstractly)
- (iv) Bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence (the ability to control one's body movements and to handle objects skilfully)
- (v) Musical intelligences (the ability to produce and appreciate rhythm, pitch and timbre)
- (vi) Interpersonal intelligence (the capacity to detect and respond appropriately to the moods, motivations, and desires of others)
- (vii) Intrapersonal intelligence (the capacity to be self-aware and in tune with feelings, values, beliefs, and thinking processes)
- (viii) Naturalistic intelligence (the ability to recognise and categorise plants, animals, and other objects in nature), and
- (ix) Existential intelligence (the sensitivity and capacity to tackle deep questions about human existence, such as, what is the meaning of life? Why do we die? How did we get here?).

Rusmiati and Dewi (2016) examined teaching listening skills by using English pop songs. They presented three different types of songs that could be used in music as pedagogy in ECCE/ECD centres and could apply to teaching of any lessons: communication songs, language songs, and actions songs. In addition, Rusmiati and Dewi (2016) found that children encountered difficulties in acquiring listening skills due to problems of pronunciation, and problems with organising and expressing sentences, and that music as pedagogy contributed to solving these problems. Çevikbas et al. (2018) added that songs are not only for entertainment but are important teaching resources, as they contain repetition; when children hear the same words over and over, they are able to restore and retain meaning and pronunciation in their long-term memories.

Christiner and Reiterer (2013) conducted research that examined the link between singing talent and speech imitation ability, and found that employing songs as teaching strategies helped to activate children cognitively, emotionally, and physically, leading

to easy comprehension of the learning materials. They suggested playing music suitable for a topic in the background while addressing children and presenting lessons, and found that the more motivating and interesting the music, the more easily the children internalised, retained, and remembered the instruction. A number of early childhood researchers believe that the inclusion of music in the early childhood curriculum is vital for the holistic development of the child, and that including music in students' learning environment activities can have a powerful impact on brain function, memory, motor skills, and social skills (Trimble, & Hesdorffer, 2017).

In addition, some researchers have found that the most effective way of imparting skills to children is through structured and unstructured playful discourses using signal, gesticulation, and vocalisations (Fairchild, & McFerran, (2019). For children aged three and four, musical rhymes and play are recognised as crucial elements of Foundation Phase education (Quintin, (2019). Similarly, Erturk (2015) as well as Bubikova-Moan, Næss Hjetland, and Wollscheid (2019) found that structured play and role play are teaching strategies that enable children to employ their previous experience in acquiring new knowledge, and that role play promotes and improves children's social and communication skills. Fruitful teaching and learning occur when the educator employs a variety of teaching strategies in the learning environment. Thus,

Marzuki et al. (2016) recommended improving children' speaking ability through interactive storytelling. Akamoglu and Meadan (2019) identified different types of musical play activities that help children to explore their world and acquire necessary skills: cooperative musical play, functional play, constructive musical play, dramatic play with musical accompaniment, and kinaesthetic musical play.

#### **3.7.4 Constraints to the use of musical rhymes as strategies to teach communication skills to ECCE children**

Implementing a variety of teaching approaches to help children learn is imperative for the ECCE learning environment (Kamalodeen et al., 2017). The choice of teaching strategy can enhance or prevent effective teaching and learning. However, no method can be recommended for every context. It is necessary that ECCE educators use flexible

methods that meet the needs of all the children and are suitable for different contexts (Adams-Ojugbele, & Moletsane, 2019).

However, educators are faced with a range of barriers to using musical rhymes as a teaching strategy in the ECCE learning environment. Whitcomb (2013) examined the challenges in teaching improvisation in elementary general music and found that a lack of musical aids, a lack of self-confidence, and inadequate musical training were barriers to the effective use of music in the learning environment. Mohangi et al. (2016) found that South African schools in rural areas tend to be under-resourced and to lack basic infrastructural such as roads, electricity, information and communication technologies, sanitation, and teaching resources. These problems are a hindrance to educators' ability to access and use musical resources. Mohangi et al. (2016) also pointed out parents' lack of involvement in their children's education and the need to combine teaching and administrative work as hindering educators' ability to teach what is expected of them. In addition, most ECCE educators, especially those in rural settings, have little knowledge of diverse implementation strategies, leading to a lack of confidence and effectiveness in imparting relevant skills to children (Kamalodeen et al., 2017). Some educators also lack the knowledge and critical understanding of children's development and children's learning styles, and they therefore stick to traditional ways of teaching (Aronstam & Braund, 2015).

### **3.8 DIFFERENT MUSICAL RHYMES TO ENHANCE CHILDREN'S ACQUISITION OF COMMUNICATION SKILLS**

This section examines the various types of music employed by early childhood educators in the learning environment. A recent study by Auerbach and Delport (2018) found that the mental, emotional, social, and spiritual growth of Foundation Phase children from disadvantaged backgrounds is often retarded by the multiple challenges they are faced with. Kokotsaki and Hallam (2011) stated that to provide an education that will promote their holistic development demands the application of a variety of implementation strategies, one of which it is suggested should be music. Furthermore, they stated that the multiculturalism of South African children and the state of inequality in the country demand that music be viewed as the birth right of every child, and should be employed as a teaching strategy to help disadvantaged and vulnerable children.

Bolduc and Evrard (2017), Cawley (2013), as well as Bubikova-Moan, Næss Hjetland and Wollscheid (2019) examined the use of a variety of activities, such as bouncing, tickling, wiggling, and finger playing, as a means of aiding children's language and auditory development. The authors found that music plays a vital role in the holistic development of a child, by promoting social, physical, emotional, and cognitive development, and by introducing new concepts and new vocabulary. Music such as lullabies, folk songs, instrumental music, nature sounds, and video game music have been confirmed to be suitable for promoting children's "spatial-temporal reasoning, numerical reasoning, and phonemic awareness" (Bolduc & Evrard, 2017; Rauscher & Hinton 2011). This resonates with Chorna, Filippa, De Almeida, Lordier, Monaci, Hüppi and Guzzetta, (2019) finding that music enhances responsiveness and memory, and improves children's cognitive development.

Cloete and Delpont's (2015) and Van Vreden's (2016) research on music education in the Grade R learning environment found that musical pedagogies can facilitate the total development of children, but noted the lack of competence in this regard of some Foundation Phase educators, and the lack of available time for musical pedagogies. Research has attested to how invaluable musical pedagogy is to teach literacy, reading comprehension, listening skills, and language development, and the impact it has on children (Orenberg, 2016; Hugo, & Horn, 2013). Quintin, (2019) and Hugo and Horn (2013) attested to the use of music to improve communication skills in children, and advocated employing music to make it easier for Foundation Phase to recall new vocabulary.

MacIntyre, Ross and Sparling (2019) observed that the skills needed for understanding and speaking a language are the same skills needed for musical understanding and performance. He further states that both spoken language and music are made up of, for example, tone and melody, and rhythm and tempo; hence, when an educator employs music as a pedagogical tool to teach children communication skills, these similar elements activate each other. Torppa, and Huutilainen (2019) also found that music and language share similar characteristics. Furthermore, Trimble and Hesdorffer, (2017) reported that exposing children to music helped to improve their brain responses to the changes in pitch that are responsible for language development.

In Burke's (2013) research on the use of recorded music in early childhood settings, she identified certain types of music appropriate for teaching young children various developmental skills: nursery rhymes, meditation sounds, lullabies, instrumental music, folk music, and dramatic music. Some of these are discussed below.

### **3.8.1 Lullabies**

Lullabies are soothing songs that help to calm babies and lull them to sleep (Robertson, & Detmer, 2019). Singing traditional lullabies and nursery rhymes to babies and infants before they learn to speak, is "an indispensable precursor that will aid the later educational success social and emotional wellbeing of the child"; furthermore, lullabies are "universally used to express and control emotion, build community, communicate, extend language, structure and provoke movement" (Barnes, 2014, p. 4). Similarly, Windsor, Woods, Kaiser, Snyder, & Salisbury (2019) found that caregivers singing low-pitched lullabies to children helped to soothe and comfort them when they expressed discomfort or fear. In addition, Bolduc and Evrard (2017) revealed that lullabies sung by a mother to her child drew the child's focus and attention more than when the mother spoke.

### **3.8.2 Meditation musical rhymes**

Meditation sounds are soft musical sounds produced with musical instruments for the purpose of relaxing the mind, alleviating anxiety, and promoting wellbeing (Goldsby et al., 2017). ECCE children are characterised by restlessness and anxiety; hence, meditation sounds could be used to help them learn. Some researchers have testified to the use of meditation sounds to provide a conducive environment for hyperactive children to play and learn (Lee & Welch, 2017; Mattar, 2013).

### **3.8.3 Folk songs**

Folk songs are traditional compositions performed and enjoyed by a particular ethnic group. Folk music is often transmitted orally from one generation to the next. South

Africa's Language in Education Policy (LiEP) of 1997 stipulated that educators and caregivers should instruct children in their home language, as this would encourage children to appreciate their identity (Hanemann, & McKay, (2019). Additionally, Kioko (2015) found that children are able to communicate confidently and effectively in a wide range of situations when they are familiar with the language of instruction. In the same vein,

Kalinde (2017) found that engaging with folk music enhanced ECCE children's creativity and acquisition of communication skills. Hence, employing folk music to positively influence children' communication development was recommended. However, in spite of the presence of folk music in every culture and tribe, Kalinde (2017) lamented that folk songs are not explored as a pedagogical strategy in ECD centres.

#### **3.8.4 Instrumental music**

Instrumental music is music performed with different types of instruments for the purpose of relaxation. Instrumental music can be performed by improvising percussion instruments (Bowers, Cassellberry, Isbell, Kyakuwa, Li, Mercado, & Wallace, 2019) and playing them with the children, and encouraging them to follow the rhythms, dynamics, and tempo. In addition, Bolduc and Evrard (2017) posited that children develop fine and gross motor skills and hand-eye coordination through performing music with instruments. However, despite the numerous benefits of music in the learning environment, Kuśnierek (2016) remarked that the selection of inappropriate forms of music may prevent children from achieving the learning outcomes. He found that in their excitement children often concentrate on the melody of a song and miss the intending learning objectives. In this research the focus is on musical rhymes; therefore, the next section discusses the strategies adopted by ECCE educators in using different types of music and rhymes to teach language and communication skills.

### **3.8.5 Different music and rhymes to enhance communication skills**

The use of different types of music in the learning environment is determined by the type and nature of the activities. The following are the activities prescribed for children aged three and four, as recommended in the NCF document:

Opportunities to develop motor skills; encouragement of language through talking, being read to, and singing; activities that will develop a sense of mastery; experimentation with pre-writing and pre-reading skills; hands-on exploration for learning through action; and opportunities for taking responsibility and making choices to develop full cognitive, emotional, social and physical potential. (DBE, 2015, p. 13)

Awopetu (2016) explored the use of musical activities for the holistic development of children. She suggested short compositions for teaching children different daily actions that they follow. While singing, the educator must pause to explain the action words in the song for the children to understand. For example, using the song below in the learning environment will teach children action words such as “caught”, “brought”, “cooked” and “ate”. The song also helps children to learn some English language rules, such as irregular verbs. Awopetu (2016) added that educators must demonstrate those action words in the song for children to watch and follow.

## We Have Caught a Big Fat Trout

We have caught a big fat trout That is what our song is about

3 We have caught a big We have caught a fat

5 We have caught a big fat trout

Chorus  
Then we brought it home The big fat trout

3 That is what our song is about Then we cook the big

5 Then we cook the fat Then we cook the big fat trout

**Figure 3.1 Musical score for “We Have Caught a Big Fat Trout”**  
**WORDS: Awopetu, (2016); MUSIC: Arasomwan A Deborah, (2020)**

*2. Then we cooked the big, fat trout  
 That is what our song is about  
 Then we cooked the big...  
 Then we cooked the fat....  
 Then we cooked the big, fat  
 trout*

*3. At the end we ate the big, fat trout  
 That is what our song is about  
 At the end we ate...  
 At the end we ate...`*

*At the end we ate the big, fat trout.*

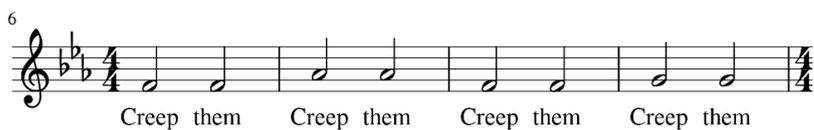
Other action songs or finger play songs are provided by Kay (2010) below:

*Open shut them, open shut them, Give a little clap.*

*Open shut them, open shut them, Lay them on your lap.*

*Creep them creep them, creep them creep them, right up to your chin. Open wide your little mouth, But do not let them in!*

## Open Shut Them



**Figure 3.2 Musical score for "Open Shut Them" WORDS: Kay, (2010); MUSIC: Arasomwan A Deborah, (2020)**

The educators are to carry out the action following the lyrics of the songs by closing and opening their fists. When the hand is about to reach the mouth, then they will quickly withdraw and hide the hands behind their backs. The children will watch and then join in the action. According to Kay (2010) this activity assists the children to develop listen and fluency in communication.

Additionally, Walton (2014) wrote on the use of songs to teach kindergarten pre-reading skills, he illustrated that series of rhyming words are composed into songs to support children to learn sounds in Language. Additionally, Example of rhyming words such as (bed, fed, rat, cat, hat) were given to the children and they were asked to pick the words that rhyme with 'mat' and 'dell' within 30 seconds while the educators keep on repeating the words in form of songs. Furthermore, it is confirmed that 10-15 minutes of singing in the ECCE learning environment on daily basis helps to excites children's attention, reduce anxiety and tension of learning new content and support their phonological, vocabulary and pronunciation development (Sohot, & Yunus, 2019; Almutairi & Shukri, 2016). Also, Andrews and Baker (2019) maintained that music and rhymes are best tools for supporting children to develop listening comprehension, hence he resorted to the use of suitable songs having repetition rhythm in the learning environment. Arevelo (2010) choses songs based on the teaching objectives and the learning purposes.

On the contrary, Almutairi and Shukri (2016) discovered from their findings, that some educators object to the use of music in the learning environment. These educators argued that it is not easy to measure the children' knowledge when music is employed in the learning environment. However, there are not much literature to further buttress this point. Thus, majority believe in the efficacy of the use of music in the learning environment. The next section presented reasons why some educators choose music as pedagogical medium to unpack language and communication skills in the learning environment.

### **3.9 WHY MUSIC AND RHYMES BASED-PEDAGOGY TO TEACH COMMUNICATION SKILLS TO ECCE CHILDREN?**

The nature and characteristics of children, and their way of learning, differ drastically from that of the youth and adults, hence Wegner et al.'s (2013) suggestion to employ a variety of pedagogical strategies to impart essential knowledge and skills to them. Most current research advocates for a change from traditional rote teaching and learning to employment a variety of pedagogies to support children to construct their own learning (Andrews, & Baker, 2019; Sayakhan & Bradley, 2019). Nursery rhymes are old songs or poems for young children. They are linked to the Western world but have lately been adopted in ECCE.

The following points will be discussed in this section: the nature and characteristics of children aged three and four; reasons for using songs and rhymes as pedagogical tools to teach communication; the importance of nursery rhymes in children's communication and language development; different nursery rhyme for ECCE children' development; and practical applications.

#### **3.9.1 The nature and characteristics of children aged three and four**

Children have unique disposition that affect their reaction to learning either negatively or positively and that they exhibit the following temperament namely under-controlled, self-conscious, self-confident, reserved, and well .adjusted (Van Wijk, Huffmeijer, Bosdriesz, Bakermans-Kranenburg, Kolijn, van IJzendoorn, & van den Bulk, 2019). The general characteristics of children's dispositions are judged as negative (impulsive, hyperactive, restless, pessimistic, distractible, unstable, socially reticent, fearful, easily upset, and prone to tantrums) or positive (zealous, exceptionally friendly, and attentive in the learning environment) (Howarth, Fetting, Curby, & Bell, 2016). Additionally, Jerome et al. (2009) stated that some children are socially inhibited and display maladjusted behaviour that is linked to their home environment, which has a significant influence on children at this age. For example, the quality of the home environment has been linked to the formation of a child's temperament, whether positive or negative. It is therefore vital that educators are aware of factors in the child's home environment,

and try to create a healthy and positive school environment that is conducive to learning and to holistic development in the early years (Britto et al., 2017).

Krizan and Hisler (2019) added that children aged three and four often experience intense emotion (anger, happiness, and sadness) and are easily bored. At this age, children can speak 250 to 500 words, and can communicate in complete sentences of five to six words. However, children often do not develop in the same way due to socio-economic inequalities, as various hardships in a child's background can affect their cognitive, social, physical, and emotional development (Guerin, 2014). Since children's characteristics are different from those of adults, and because children aged three and four have very specific characteristics, their educators need to understand the appropriate pedagogical approaches that will meet their developmental needs. Child centred activities, according to Millington (2011), can trigger various response potentials in children. When children are stimulated and excited by the learning environment activities and setting, they enjoy the lessons, thereby leading to the acquisition of the target communication skills.

### **3.9.2 Reasons for using songs and rhymes as pedagogical tools to teach communication**

Once an educator understands the nature of ECCE children, it then becomes necessary to employ relevant and suitable activities that suit their characteristics to support them to acquire communication skills. One of the reasons for employing music to teach communication skills to children was that “children have innate musical behaviour and they used music as a meaningful communication in their early years”; hence, music is the best option and tool to teach them communication skills (Qi, 2012, p. 41). Plato attested to this point when he declared that

I would teach children music, physics, and philosophy: but most importantly music, for the patterns in music and all the arts are the keys to learning other skills. (in Winter, 2015, p. 80)

Izumi-Taylor et al., (2012) stated that young children are active and enjoy physical activities that include jumping and moving around, hence inculcating musical play into

their daily activities will enhance their healthy development. They added that the curriculum designed by the National Association for Music Education (1994) advised ECCE educators to give young children quality opportunities to engage in music and movement activities, and to listen to and play an elementary musical instrument. They also advised educators to compose relevant musical rhymes suitable for the children's development to support their learning of language and communication skills.

According to Hawkins (2016), musical activities enhance the development of certain vital components of brain function — such as aural sensitivity, syntactic retention, and metacognitive knowledge — that are likewise needed for the acquisition of language and communication skills. Most recent research on brain development has revealed that introducing music to children at a young age could positively impact and enhance the brain, thereby making the acquisition of reading, listening, and other mental skills easier (Dukić, 2018; Trimble, & Hesdorffer, 2017). Similarly, Hallam (2010) added that early musical knowledge improves the brain's early encoding of sound which promotes and facilitates children' ability to learn skills such as the discernment of sounds and the development of language pitch patterns.

Another important reason for the use of rhymes and music in the learning environment is the multicultural state of the learning environment. The disparity in the cultural, social, and economic backgrounds of children can make the learning of language and communication skills difficult. Some educators therefore simplify the content by composing it into rhymes and songs for easy comprehension (Sayakhan & Bradley, 2019). In addition, music is confirmed to be best teaching strategy for an inclusive learning environment, as it does not discriminate but rather benefits all children equally (Winter, 2015). It was confirmed by Andrews, and Baker (2019) that when young children participate in musical activities they develop the skills for socialisation, self-confidence, social networking, a sense of accomplishment, teamwork, mutual support, and tolerance, which all promote healthy and harmonious living in the society.

### **3.9.3 The importance of nursery rhymes in children's communication and language development**

Sayakhan, and Bradley (2019) compared how young children's nursery rhyme experiences influenced their acquisition of language and communication skills, and how printed materials influenced the acquisition of these skills. They found that nursery rhymes and songs had a stronger effect on children's development of communication skills than printed materials. According to Sayakhan, and Bradley (2019), nursery rhymes aid a child's acquisition of phonological skills, and also help children's early communication and language development (Elkin et al., 2014). In addition, rhymes help children to learn the English alphabet, letter sounds, vocabulary, and the ability to match words with sounds or pictures (Sayakhan & Bradley, 2019). Read et al.'s (2014) research on 24 children aged 2–4 to examine the benefit of rhymes for children's communication development and word retention revealed that children who were read nursery rhymes on a daily basis were able to acquire communication skills and develop their vocabulary very quickly.

Sayakhan, and Bradley (2019) examined the effect of nursery rhymes on children's reading ability, and reported that singing and reading nursery rhymes with young children promotes language acquisition. When the educator employs a variety of musical rhymes in the learning environment, the children become passionately engaged with the content, which in turn nourishes their capacity for the creative and expressive use of that content. Specifically, nursery rhymes can also lead to different learning environment activities that call for the exchange of feelings and opinions (Millington, 2011). The author added that using songs, rhymes, and picture books is a great way to enhance the development of language and communication skills in children. Children's communication skills develop at different rates, hence educators require a range of musical rhymes and listening activities to help them to develop the skills to read, write, and communicate effectively. Also, singing a variety of songs to them and making them captivating, enhances children's learning because they love changes in variation and vocal tone (Torppa, & Huotilainen, 2019). This keeps the learning environment exciting for them and helps them to learn about the natural sounds of a language (Fairchild, & McFerran, (2019). Giving children a sense of joy and excitement about language will naturally help to boost their desire to read and write.

Musical rhymes also help the children to learn to play with words, which helps to attune their listening to all the sounds in a word. Sejdiu, (2017) affirm that by listening to different sounds, we learn how sounds combine and blend together to form a word. If we learn the sounds and hear the different sounds that make up a word, then we can learn how to play with the sounds, how to change them, and most importantly, we can learn to recognise what sounds can be paired with other sounds. Children who know four nursery rhymes by the time they are four will naturally be better readers at eight years old (Trimble, & Hesdorffer, 2017). When reciting nursery rhymes, we tend to speak more slowly and clearly, and this has a huge positive impact on a child's language and literacy development (Çevikbas et al., 2018). The authors added that children love and enjoy rhymes, rhythm, and repetition, and these three elements can naturally help to boost a child's language and literacy skills. Children's language skills begin to develop long before they can verbalise actual words.

Furthermore, studies have provided evidence of the numerous benefits of using nursery rhymes to teach language and communication skills to children (Pourkalhor & Tavakoli, 2017; Sayakhan & Bradley, 2019). These benefits include enhancing children's phonemic development (phonemes being like the building blocks of language and communication skills), and musical nursery rhymes helping children to pronounce words correctly.

Musical nursery rhymes also help to improve children's memories, as they usually contain rhyming words and sounds that are not common in regular sentences, and thus children learn words with similar sounds and syllables (Çevikbas et al., 2018; Trimble, & Hesdorffer, (2017). Musical nursery rhymes assist children to learn language articles and abstract terms (Awopetu, 2016). Reading rhymes to children in the learning environment on a daily basis aids the development of their listening skills. In Sayakhan and Bradley's (2019) study both educators and pupils not only remembered and understood words and phrases in three languages better, but were more willing to use and correctly pronounce the words, and they seemed to be having fun.

### **3.9.4 Musical rhymes applicable for ECCE children' s development**

Sayakhan and Bradley (2019) stated that the first nursery rhymes were composed in the 1600s and were transmitted orally from one generation to the next. The rhymes were initially composed by adults and consisted of elements taken from culture, from tradition, and from daily life, such as the cries of the street hawkers. Later, rhyming songs were absorbed as part of music as pedagogy in developed countries to facilitate children's learning. Nursery rhymes can be sung and have rhythm, making them enjoyable and easy to remember. Conesa and Rubio (2015) stated that nursery rhymes are present in every culture and in all languages, hence their usefulness in inclusive learning environments to positively impact ECCE children's language and communication skills.

Some musical rhymes are used by educators to emphasise the letters of the alphabet. Others stress and unstress syllables, and can be used to support children to learn different pronunciation of words. The rhythm of the rhymes stimulates lively interest in the learning environment, as children sing, chant, and clap hands. Sayakhan and Bradley (2019) and Conesa and Rubio (2015) explored the use of nursery rhymes as a vehicle for teaching English as a foreign language. These authors provide examples of some of the musical rhymes that could be employed by ECCE educators to support their children's acquisition of language and communication skills: rhyme such as "Little Miss Muffet" teach children to develop a sense of words with the same sound in sentences; "Jack and Jill" teaches children to acquire the skills of gestural meaning, facial expression, and non-verbal expression; "Humpty Dumpty" aids the learning of sounds in words, while the rhyme "What Time is It?" can reduce children's restlessness in the learning environment; the "Solomon Grundy" rhymes teach the children the names of the days of the week, thereby helping them to develop their retentive memory; while the rhyme "12 Months are in a Year" helps children to learn the names of the months in the year.

The rhyme below employs the couplet style to emphasise certain letters of the alphabet:

Little bird of paradise,  
She works her work both neat and nice;  
She pleases God, she pleases man,

She does the work that no man can.

(Gould & Gould, p. 272)

Another example is the musical nursery rhyme, “My Head, My Shoulders, My Knees and Toes”. This can be used to teach the children the parts of the body and the vocabulary for these parts of the body. “Songs of the Rainbow” helps children to learn different colours and to appreciate nature. Rhymes such as “Can I have this please, please, please” teach children the language of courtesy and politeness. Rhymes such as “Humpty Dumpty” offer children warnings and instructions:

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,  
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.  
All the king's horses and all the king's men  
Couldn't put Humpty together again.

Other rhymes help to teach cleanliness and hygiene, such as “This is the way to take your bath” and “This is the way to clean yourself”.

Nursery rhymes form one of the foundations of literary culture (Wolfe & Flewitt, 2010). The organised rhythm and rhyming arrangement of the phonetics and simple narratives provides children with a model for language and communication model (Temple et al., 2011). They also communicate content that forms the basis of reading, such as rhymes for learning letters of the alphabet and their sounds:

*A for Apple, A for Ant*  
*B for Ball, B for Bat*  
*C for Carrot, C for Car*  
*D for Duck, D for Door*  
*E for Elevator, E for Egg*  
*F for Fish, F for Flag*  
*G for Guitar, G for Glass*  
*H for Hammer, H for Hat*  
*I for Indian, I for Igloo*  
*J for Jam, J for Juice*  
*K for Kangaroo, K for Key*  
*L for Ladder, L for Leaf*

*M for Monkey, M for Mouse N  
for Nail, N for Nose  
O for Octopus, O for Orange  
P for Paint, P for Popcorn  
Q for Question, Q for Queen  
R for Radio, R for Rake  
S for Saw, S for Snake  
T for Tree, T for Train  
U for Umbrella, U for  
Unicorn  
V for Vacuum, V for Violin  
W for Whale, W for Watch  
X Axe Box Fox Y for Yo yo, Y  
for Yacht  
Z for Zebra, Z for Zebra.*

In addition, nursery rhymes provide young children with the opportunity to chant appealing phrases, and reciting the words of the rhymes continuously supports the development of language and communication skills (Sayakhan & Bradley, 2019). Today rhymes are recited by children at school, at home, and during play.

### **3.9.5 Practical applications**

Reciting rhymes has been confirmed to promote the early acquisition of language and communication skills. The best method for teaching language to ECCE children is through oral presentation. Educators should select relevant and developmentally appropriate rhymes and read them aloud repeatedly to the children. When the children listen to the educator and then join in, they are able to learn reading skills more easily and more quickly. The educator could also adopt the pocket charts method in the learning environment, and create a language study area where children could play with language and communication words. Another important method that an educator could employ to use rhymes in the learning environment is readers' theatre. The educator

could select two or more rhymes that enhance language learning and produce copies of the rhymes for the children to practice their reading ability with the correct pronunciation, intonation, and expression of words during reading. This readers' theatre method creates an enjoyable environment for all the children to participate in the reading exercise. The educator could video record the exercise and allow the children to watch and assess their performance. In addition, the educator could divide the children into small groups, give them some rhymes to practise, and invite the groups to dramatise the rhymes for the class.

### **3.10 THE IMPACT OF MUSICAL RHYMES BASED PEDAGOGY ON ECCE CHILDREN'S LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT**

The use of music as pedagogy in the learning environment has been shown to have a positive impact not only on a child's language development but on their total development (Herrera et al., 2014). More early childhood researchers are advocating using a variety of communication means — including dance, pictures, videos, rhymes, and musical games — to support children to develop communication competency at an early stage (Sampa, Ojanen, Westerholm, Ketonen, & Lyytinen, 2018). It is necessary for children to understand the operational skills for effective communication, which McPake et al. (2013) name as elements of speech, symbol and sound recognition, reproduction in communication, the purpose of communication, cultural belief, and recognising diversity. The authors further added courtesy, turn-taking skills, and narrative structures as components of communication that could be easily taught to children using music. The following sections present literature on:

- (i) The effect of musical rhymes on the cognitive development of a child
- (ii) The impact of musical rhymes on developing listening skills, and
- (iii) The impact of musical rhymes on speech development.

#### **3.10.1 The effect of musical rhymes on the cognitive development of a child**

Neuroscientific researchers have established the positive effects of music on brain development and have shown that the earlier children are exposed to music, the faster

and firmer their development (Miendlarzewska & Trost, 2014; Moreno et al., 2011). These authors further emphasised the significance of music on the language and verbal development of a child. Sayakhan and Bradley, 2019 as well as Fairchild and McFerran (2019) emphasised the importance of musical rhymes on children's brain development, and found that children who are taught with music show sound verbal recall, an acceleration in language acquisition and pronunciation, and develop their reading aptitude. Thus, music can aid the teaching of language skills to children, irrespective of their socioeconomic background, disability, health status, or culture. Hence, this section will examine literature that speaks to the use of music in the cognitive, listening, reading social, and emotional language of a child.

There are numerous studies on the importance of music that confirm its positive impact on various skills. Pourkalhor and Tavakoli, (2017) states that effective speaking, listening, reading, and writing demand a great deal of responsiveness and high cognition. Sayakhan and Bradley, 2019; Miendlarzewska and Trost (2014) found that children taught using music have good verbal intelligence, pronunciation, and reading ability. Music performance requires the ability to differentiate sound from noise, the ability to discriminate between pitches, and an understanding of harmonious structure. Research has revealed that when music is employed to engage children in teaching and learning, plasticity and functional changes occur in the brain (Oesch, 2019; Herrera et al., 2014). Fairchild and McFerran (2019) found that all musical activities stimulate the brain, leading to high cognition that aids and facilitates the development of communication skills. According to Trimble and Hesdorffer (2017) skills are easily acquired and developed when the whole brain is functional in the learning process.

Music develops higher-order thinking skills in children, thereby helping them to build self-esteem, which according to Fairchild and McFerran, (2019) is important for language skill acquisition. When children are exposed to a variety of percussion instruments in their early years, and have to learn to follow a beat, tempo, and rhythm, their general intelligence is enhanced (D'Souza & Wiseheart, 2018; Muthivhi & Kriger, 2019). Sohot, and Yunus, (2019) found that children who received musical training outperformed those who did not, as the musically trained children developed better cognition and verbal intelligence that further enhanced their vocabularies and communication skills. There is a link between cognitive development and language

development, especially in infancy and early childhood; thus, a child with high cognition will acquire a variety of skills more easily than a child with low cognition (Fairchild, & McFerran, 2019; MacWhinney, 2014). Hence, music can be used to accelerate and stir up children's cognitive development to facilitate the development of communication skills. However, Andrews and Baker (2019) study on the effect of background music on cognitive performance in musicians and non-musicians found that there was no substantial difference in cognitive ability between the two groups, and suggested that any better performance by the musicians may have been due to extra learning or support provided to them.

### **3.10.2 The impact of musical rhymes on developing listening skills**

Listening skills are fundamental for the development of other skills, and are a prerequisite for developing language and communication ability (Hugo & Horn, 2013). Torppa and Huotilainen (2019) found that mastering the acoustics of musical sound is effective in aiding children to acquire speaking skills, as it aids the learning of phonemes, which are the aural building blocks of language and communication. The authors further showed that musical exercises are challenging tasks that demand active engagement with musical acoustic sounds and the ability to produce meaning from the different sounds, and added that this process is crucial for the effective development of communication, language, and vocal response. The development of well-organised sound-to-meaning involves attending to sensory details that include fine-grained properties of sound (pitch, timing, and timbre) as well as cognitive skills that are related to working (Poremba et al., 2013). A review of literature by Stone et al. (2013) showed that effective listening is considered a prerequisite for lifelong learning and for sustainable all-round development. Similarly, research on the influence of music on the development of children conducted by Torppa and Huotilainen (2019) found that listening to music assists children to acquire pitch discrimination that further enhances the development of language and communication skills.

Listiyarningsih (2017) and Quintin, (2019) recommended that early childhood curriculum designers emphasise aural and oral development by including music that speaks to listening activities, such as songs, rhymes, stories, and games. The authors

further stated that the ability of the children to acquire listening skills will accelerate their communication and language development. Similarly, Mobbs and Cuyul (2018) found that singing songs provides an opportunity for the repetition of words, and that accompanying listening activities with songs therefore supports the learning and developing of communication skills. They also found that using songs as an implementation strategy to teach listening skills assisted the children in learning the rhythm of language, enhanced their listening comprehension, and improved their acquisition of vocabulary and idiomatic terms.

However, Molai (2019) and Ardila (2013) asserted that the acquisition of effective listening skills could be hampered by certain factors. Kutlu and Aslanoğlu (2009) conducted research on the factors affecting listening skills by testing the listening comprehension of 265 Grade 5 pupils, and found that children's engagement with other media while being spoken to had an adverse effect on their listening skills. Similarly, Ardila (2013) identified seven factors responsible for children's poor listening skills: children's motivation, paralinguistic features, vocabulary, concentration, educator's methodology, the use of material, and the children's background.

Nevertheless, it is confirmed that using the appropriate songs to teach any subject, including communication skills, will aid children's motivation to learn in the learning environment (Torppa, & Huotilainen, 2019)

### **3.10.3 The impact of musical rhymes on speech development**

Khaghaninejad et al. (2016) declared that the use of music in the learning environment not only enhances cognitive and listening development in children, but also communication and speech ability. Research has shown that speech and music share a similar processing system. Musical activities that increase processing can therefore have a positive impact on the perception of language, which in turn positively influences speech ability. Thus, active involvement with music improves the brain's early encoding of language skills (Sayakhan, & Bradley, 2019; Akhmadullina et al., 2016).

Escalda et al. (2011) conducted a critical review on the effects of music on the auditory processing aptitude and phonological awareness skills of 56 children aged five. They found that the children exposed to music performed considerably better in the acquisition of auditory ability and speech development than their counterparts without musical exposure. In a similar vein, in a study examining the effects of music on the development of children's reading skills, Moritz et al. (2013) found that children with musical training had better speech development than children in a control group without very much music training. Several other researchers have carried out empirical studies on the relationship between musical activities and the development of communication skills (Flaugnacco et al., 2015), and have found that musical activities enhance and facilitate speech development in children.

Baigina, (2019) identified three significant features that show the similarity between music and communication: the affective filter, the monitor model, and natural input. The theory of the affective filter proposes that effective and productive learning happens in an anxiety-free environment that is conducive to learning, and therefore views the emotional state of the children as the determining filter that may aid or prevent the acquisition of communication skills. Early childhood is a period during which the majority of children are in a restless, hyperactive, and inquisitive state. At the same time, they are often emotional and have difficulty adapting or relating freely with other children. Thus, Van Wijk, Huffmeijer, Bosdriesz, Bakermans-Kranenburg, Koliijn, van IJzendoorn and van den Bulk (2019) and Koelsch (2015) declared music to be therapeutic in calming children's brains and emotions, thus making teaching and learning more interesting and enjoyable.

Although, the use of music may have a positive impact on children's communication development, if songs are not carefully and wisely selected, they may stir up disagreement among the children, particularly if the songs contradict their cultural beliefs (Kuśnierek, 2016). Another challenge that could potentially hamper the use of music as a teaching strategy to teach communication is the educator's lack of inadequate knowledge of music that is relevant and suitable for the content (Barrett, Flynn, Brown, & Welch, 2019). The social-constructivist learning environment demands that the ECCE educator have a good understanding of the content in order to guide the children in a systematically way to acquire the necessary skills (Ryan, 2020).

Thus, it is expected that ECCE educators have an in-depth knowledge of music before they adopt it as teaching strategy. However, research reveals that most ECCE educators are not skilled when it comes to the use of music as pedagogy (Henley, 2017; Welch & Henley, 2014). Another challenge pointed out by Kalinde (2017) is the insufficient time allotted to music in the timetable. Kalinde stated that music is seen as an extension of physical education in ECCE centres in Zambia, hence the ECCE educators do not understand its importance as an implementation strategy for teaching and learning.

### **3.11 DISCUSSION OF GAPS IN THE LITERATURE REVIEWED**

Almost all research in early childhood education points to the significance and importance of music as pedagogy in ECCE, and a wide range of research has been conducted on various aspects of how music can support early child development, both in the South African context and globally. Extensive research has confirmed the effectiveness of music as pedagogy for developing the skills of children of all ages.

Both qualitative and quantitative research has been conducted in the United States, the United Kingdom, South Korea, Malaysia, Sweden, Spain, Bangladesh, Australia, and Russia, amongst other countries, to assess the effects of using music in the learning environment (Akhmadullina et al., 2016; Dunst et al., 2011; Herrera et al., 2011; Rauscher & Hinton, 2011). These studies have focused on using music to develop English-language communication skills; the use of songs, rhymes, and games in teaching English to young children; the effects of nursery rhymes on EFL children's reading ability; the effects of music therapy services on the learning environment behaviours of newly arrived refugee students; pre-service teachers' music teaching practices; and the diverse extra-musical benefits of music instruction.

Additionally, in a quantitative study on the effectiveness of musical activities in supporting Spanish and Tamazight-speaking children's readiness to read Spanish, Herrera et al. (2011) found that the use of music to aid the children's learning of Spanish was effective, as the children who were taught with music outperformed the children who were taught without musical activities. The focus of Herrera et al.'s (2011) study was on the learning of Spanish, but most studies have been conducted on using music

as pedagogy to teach English to primary school children. Conesa and Rubio (2015) and Rautenberg (2015) found that musical rhymes are effective tools for supporting primary school children to learn foreign languages with ease. However, the studies listed above were primarily quantitative and were conducted in the Western world. Hence, they are different from the current research study, which is a qualitative case study that speaks to the use of music as pedagogy to teach language and communication skills to South African ECCE children.

A number of research studies from African countries have confirmed that music as pedagogy can support children at different levels. These studies were conducted in Nigeria, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Swaziland, Ghana and Namibia Botswana (Akpoghol et al., 2016; Ganyata, 2015; Nwauzor, 2013; Ojukwu et al., 2014; Russell-Bowie, 2009; Samkange & Chiadzwa, 2016). These studies addressed topics such as the effect of supplementing lecture methods with music and computer animation (Akpoghol et al., 2016); the inclusion of music in the primary school curriculum in Zimbabwe (Esau & Mpofo, 2017); music education in junior secondary schools in Botswana (Segomotso, 2011); the challenges of teaching music in Namibian primary schools (Russell-Bowie, 2009); music for the resolution of peace and conflict in Uganda (Opiyo, 2015); musical contexts as bridge-builders in early childhood music education in Kenya (Andang'o, 2012); a quantitative study on choral music and wellbeing (Acquah, 2016); and incorporating the music of other cultures into the music learning environment of Tanzania (Mapana et al., 2016). The studies listed above explored various aspects of the importance of music in the educational system. However, they were carried out in a different context from the current research study.

In the South African context, a number of studies have found that music plays a vital role in the holistic development of children and adolescents. Devroop (2012) conducted a quantitative study on 84 high-school children to examine the social-emotional effects of instrumental music on economically underprivileged South African students. The study reported high levels of self-confidence and enthusiasm amongst the children after participating in the musical activities. Similarly, Hugo and Horn (2013) conducted a qualitative study on the use of music activities to enhance the listening skills and language skills of Grade 1 English first additional language children. The authors reported a significant improvement in the children' listening skills when using music.

Research has also been conducted by South African researchers on early childhood music education in South Africa (Young, 2016); higher education student learning from a community music service-learning project in rural South Africa (Harrop-Allin, 2017); and music education in South African schools after apartheid (Drummond, 2015).

Furthermore, research shows that skills such as listening, speaking, reading, writing, life skills, technology, and mathematics are taught with the use of music as pedagogical tool in South African schools to educate the whole child (Martin, Loyd, & Abo-Zena, 2019; Sohot, & Yunus, 2019; An et al., 2019; Cloete & Delpont, 2015; Drummond, 2015; Ehrlin, & Gustavsson, 2015; Van Vreden, 2016; Van Vuuren & Van Niekerk, 2015;). However, factors such as educators' lack of music knowledge, scarce resources, and limited support by the subject advisors are reported to be challenges to the effective use of music as pedagogy in South African schools (Cloete & Delpont, 2015; Van Vuuren & Van Niekerk, 2015).

Nevertheless, in the quantitative and qualitative research reviewed above, none examine or explore the use of musical rhymes as a teaching strategy to support children aged three and four to acquire language and communication skills. Research shows that the most effective and cost-efficient time to support the holistic development of a child cognitively, socially, emotionally, and physically is before birth and during the early years (Pagani et al., 2012; VanderWegen, 2013; Vélez et al., 2014). Interruptions in a child's cognitive and total development before they begin the Foundation Phase can have costly and regrettable consequences for the child, for his or her immediate family, and for the whole society.

### **3.12 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has presented a review of relevant literature that speaks to the use of music in the development of children's communication skills and in all other aspects of child development. The development-appropriate practices prescribed for the ECCE learning environment were also explored. Literature on the significant impact of the use of musical rhymes to teach communication skills to ECCE children was examined and discussed. In addition, the various types of musical rhymes that aid and enhance the learning of communication skills were identified from a review of the literature.

The literature reviewed for this study indicated the importance of developmentally appropriate strategies in supporting children to acquire language communication skills. The findings from the literature reviewed in this chapter confirmed the positive impact of using music as pedagogy in terms of closing the gap that exists between socioeconomically disadvantaged children and privileged ones. The findings revealed that music and rhymes are powerful tools that can be employed in the learning environment to support children's acquisition of language and communication skills, since singing and chanting, particularly when accompanied by movement, are appropriate for the nature and characteristics of children at the ECCE stage.

Furthermore, the findings from literature showed that in 2001 the DoE commenced with the development of pre-reception year (ECCE) specialists who would be able to employ best practice models for the management and quality development and delivery of prereception year programmes (DoE, 2001). The reason for this was the finding by neurologists that children's brains develop faster during the first five years of their lives than at any other time; hence, it is important to construct teaching and learning environments that positively influence their brain development (Juslin, 2013).

The literature review was presented under the following sections: a global overview of ECCE; ECCE in South Africa; communication in ECCE; using music to teach communication skills in ECCE; the use of musical rhymes in the learning environment; ECCE educators' understanding of using musical rhymes as a strategy for teaching communication to ECCE children; different music and rhymes as a strategy to teach communication skills to ECCE children; reasons for using songs and rhymes to teach communication skills to ECCE children; and the impact of using musical rhymes on ECCE children' language development and communication skills.

It was confirmed that employing a variety of teaching strategies that are appealing and exciting (as opposed to the traditional teaching methods that involve explaining and classifying) is appropriate for the nature and characteristics of children's in the ECCE phase, hence the necessity of this study on using musical rhymes to teach ECCE children language and communication skills. The following chapter will present the research design and methodology to show how this study addressed the research questions.



## CHAPTER 4

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, relevant literature that speaks to the use of musical rhymes to teach language and communication skills to ECCE children were reviewed. It was shown that a number of countries have adopted music and rhyme as a teaching strategy, and that music is an appropriate teaching strategy for an inclusive learning environment (Burnard et al., 2008; Ganyata, 2015). The chapter also identified gaps in the existing literature that this study could address.

This study explored the use of musical rhymes by ECCE educators to impart language and communication skills to their children. It also explored the impact of the use of musical rhymes on the children's language and communication development and their readiness for Grade R. To adequately explore the phenomenon, four research questions were formulated:

- (i) What are the ECCE educators' understandings of using musical rhymes as a strategy for teaching communication (listening and reading) skills to children aged three to four?
- (ii) How do ECCE educators use musical rhymes as a strategy to teach communication (listening and reading) skills to children aged three and four?
- (iii) Why do ECCE educators use musical rhymes as a strategy to teach communication (listening and reading) skills to children aged three and four?
- (iv) What impact does the use of musical rhymes as a strategy to teach communication (listening and reading) skills have on the language development of children aged three and four?

Addressing these questions required an appropriate plan and methodology. This section therefore outlines the research design and methodology that informed the study. The chapter explains the social-constructivist research paradigm and the case study research design for this qualitative study. The research context is presented, and the population

and the purposive sampling are described. The methods of data generation are then presented — the semi-structured interviews, the participant observations, and the document analysis. The thematic analysis used to analyse the data is explained, after which the ethical considerations taken into account are discussed, and the limitations of the study are noted.

## **4.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Methodology is understood in different ways by different people. It is explained by Wang, Dang, Shaham, Zhang, and Lv (2019) as a design employed in a study to confirm reliability and validity while working towards achieving the research objectives. It is also described as a systematic process for classifying and appraising relevant procedures for collecting and analysing data to address the topic under study (Snyder, 2019). Research methodology can also be understood as an organised and logical exploration of the principles underpinning the research inquiry, which shows how the research conveyed social knowledge and how others can be convinced of the validity of the knowledge (Tarisayi, 2017). In this study, the research design and methodology involved the procedures and measures adopted by the researcher to address the research questions that the study intended to answer.

This study was a qualitative case study, “grounded in an interpretive, constructivist paradigm, which guided an empirical inquiry of contemporary phenomena within inseparable real-life contexts” (Anthony & Jack, 2009, p. 1172). The purpose of the study was to explore how musical rhymes are used to teach language and communication skills to ECCE children. Purposive sampling was employed to select six educators out of the samples of ten. These six were selected based on their experiences and understanding of the phenomenon. The study employed in-depth, semi-structured interviews, learning environment observations, and document analysis to generate data from the participants. The generated data was analysed thematically using inductive and deductive reasoning approach.

## **Qualitative Research Approach**

This study is a qualitative case study and is situated within the social-constructivist paradigm.

“Qualitative researchers purposefully examine and make note of small cues in order to decide how to behave, as well as to make sense of the context and build larger knowledge claims about the culture” (Tracy, 2019, p.3).

Qualitative research demands the researchers to immerse oneself into the context for thick and detail description of the scene under research. The focus is to gather sufficient data to understand how the ECCE educators employed music as a teaching strategy to teach language and communication skills to ECCE children. The qualitative method of research does not only concentrate on ‘what’ the participants think but also ‘why’ and ‘how’ (Hill et al., 2005). Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research enables the researcher to explore and dig deeply into the phenomenon in order to generate enough data to critically analyse to get meaningful and detailed answers to the research questions (Yilmaz, 2013). In qualitative studies, the researcher is the primary instrument for data generation and analysis, rather than inventories, surveys, or machines.

Hence, the qualitative research design gives room for detailed and further exploration, as well as interrogation of the participants based on their replies as the researcher tries to comprehend their experiences and feelings. McMillan and Schumacher (2006) described qualitative research as a means for generating theory that could enhance educational practices and policy development, clarify social problems, and stimulate action. Stickler and Hampel (2019) state that qualitative research allows the interviewer to establish a detailed and intensive comprehension of a situation, and enables the participants to freely and voluntarily express their feelings, experiences, and opinions. Tracy (2019) highlighted the strength of qualitative research as follow:

“is rich and holistic; offers more than a snapshot – provides understanding of a sustained process; focuses on lived experience, placed in its context; honors participants’ local meanings; can help explain, illuminate, or reinterpret quantitative data; interprets participant viewpoints and stories; preserves the chronological flow, documenting what events lead to what consequences, and

explaining why this chronology may have occurred; celebrates how research representations (reports, articles, performances) constitute reality and affect the questions we can ask and what we can know; illustrates how a multitude of interpretations are possible, but how some are more theoretically compelling, morally significant, or practically important than others” (p. 5).

#### **4.2.1 Social Constructivist as the Research paradigm**

The other important aspect of this research is the paradigm. According to Kaushik and Walsh (2019, p.1) “paradigms are sets of assumptions, values or beliefs about fundamental aspects of reality which give rise to a particular world view and serve as the lenses or organising principles through which researchers perceive and interpret reality, hence they represent what we think about the world”. Similarly, Neuman (2006, p. 81) viewed a research paradigm as “an organizing framework for theory and research that includes basic assumptions, key issues, models of quality research and methods for seeking answers”. Neuman (2009) and McKenna (2003) argued that paradigms provide useful guides in undertaking rich and educative research, and that a researcher’s views or beliefs of the research phenomenon under exploration determine his or her choice of paradigm. A research paradigm represents a world view that defines the course or pattern for the researcher about what is acceptable to research, and the procedure for doing so.

The paradigm of research work consists of axiology, ontology, epistemology and the methodology (Brown, & Duenas, 2020). Axiology deals with what the researcher value in the study, which is the influence of using music to teach communication skills on the ECCE children. Ontology is finding out what knowledge is there to know, which is how the ECCE educators employ music-based pedagogy to support the children to acquire communication skills while epistemology seeks for how we can know about the knowledge. Methodology is the overall strategy put in place to acquire the knowledge. Brown and Duenas, (2020) state that our ontological assumptions are those that respond to the question “what is there that can be known?” or “what is the nature of reality?” The ontology in this study explores the nature of the understanding of the ECCE educators in using musical rhymes as a pedagogical medium to support ECCE

children to acquire language and communication skills, and the reality of the impact on the children. The researcher agreed with Vygotsky's ontological notion of the influence of the sociocultural context and MKOs on children's acquisition of language and communication skills. The research was situated within the social constructivist paradigm and was informed by Vygotsky's social-cultural theory. The emphasis of both was that children progress through developmental stages and are influenced by their cultural context and by relationships with others; hence, the use of music as a teaching strategy to aid children's holistic development. This was a qualitative case study of six ECCE educators from two ECCE centres in an urban setting. Hence, the researcher explored the ECCE educators' assumptions about and understandings of using music to teach language and communication skills in the learning environment. Epistemology is concerned with the relationship between the participant and the researcher. The epistemological question for the researcher was how best the ECCE educators' perceptions and experiences could be extracted.

The social-constructivist paradigm, according to Creswell (2013), is an interpretive structure that enables individuals to explore their environment, thereby deriving meaning that tallies with their knowledge. Social constructivism implies that reality is constructed through human interaction and that knowledge is a human product that is socially and culturally constructed. Individuals create meaning through their interactions with each other and with the environment in which they live. Social constructivism emphasises the importance of culture and context in the process of knowledge construction and accumulation (Amineh & Asl, 2015).

Social constructivism originated with Socrates, who advocated that children could only construct and interpret their learning when they worked in collaboration with the educator (Amineh & Asl, 2015). Furthermore, social constructivism claims that an individual acquires knowledge and understanding through his or her interactions within society (Andrews, 2012). The social-constructivist paradigm employed in this study contrasts with the positivist paradigm, which is a methodological viewpoint often used in conducting quantitative studies, and which attempts to falsify a hypothesis or predict situations (Pham, 2018). It is also different from the critical paradigm, which aims at liberating or emancipating the oppressed (Pham, 2018).

Cohen et al. (2011) and Bertram and Christiansen (2014) explained social constructivists as those who try to understand social behaviour and how people make meaning of their experiences in the challenging contexts in which they function. The authors further stated that the social constructivist paradigm enables the researcher to give meaning to the subjective world of the participants. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p. 2) argue that within the social-constructivist paradigm, “the researcher relies on text data rather than numerical data, analyses those data in their textual form rather than converting them to numbers for analysis, aims to understand the meaning of human action and asks open questions about phenomena as they occur in context rather than setting out to test predetermined hypotheses”. Similarly, social constructivism places great importance on daily interactions amongst people and how they employ language to construct their reality.

The social-constructivist paradigm enabled me to gather in-depth information on the phenomenon through interaction with the ECCE educators that explored their day-to-day instruction of the children using music, and the effect it had on the children’s language development. Employing a qualitative approach allowed me to observe and participate in the real world of the participants, thereby acquiring a deeper understanding of their lived experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2009; Myers, 2013).

#### **4.2.2 Case study design**

For this study a case study research design was employed. The case study design contrasts with a statistical, empirical design, which is primarily used for confirmatory objectives when researchers already know how a phenomenon happens and have a robust idea of why it happens and can quantitatively measure all the variables of interest; such a research strategy is usually applied to answer ‘*who, what, where, how many, and how much* questions’ (De Massis & Kotlar, 2014, p. 16). Similarly, Rashid, Rashid, Warraich, Sabir and Waseem (2019, p.2) assert that “qualitative case study is a research methodology that helps in exploration of a phenomenon within some particular context through various data sources, and it undertakes the exploration through variety of lenses in order to reveal multiple facets of the phenomenon. The authors further explained that a case study strategy is relevant to studies designed to

address ‘*why*’ and ‘*how*’, when a researcher cannot influence the action and the response of the research participants; wants to focus on a specific context and people that the researcher believed are relevant to the phenomenon under research and when the boundaries are not clear between the phenomenon and context. Tracy (2019) added that qualitative case study method allows researchers to conduct an in-depth investigation of the topic under study within a precise context.

According to Creswell (2013, p. 97), a case study “explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information and reports a case description and case themes.” Similarly, De Massis and Kotlar, (2014, p.16) defined a case study as a particular strategy for qualitative, empirical research that allows an in-depth investigation of a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context. For Ebneyamini, and Sadeghi Moghadam (2018, p. 1) “A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident and the investigator has little control over events”. The topic of this study was why and how musical rhymes are used by ECCE educators to teach language and communication skills. A case study design was considered relevant for the study because the case (the use of musical rhymes by ECCE educators) could not be successfully explored without understanding its context, hence, the two ECCE centres and the learning environment setting were chosen. Furthermore, case studies are relevant for illustrating and broadening researchers’ understanding of a phenomenon, and are often employed to examine people and educational activities, particularly in the learning environment context (Tracy, 2019). Hence, its relevance to this study.

Ebneyamini, and Sadeghi Moghadam (2018) listed four essential features in research that are valid for both qualitative research and case studies, these include “holistic,” “empirical,” “interpretive,” and “emphatic.” The authors further avow seven distinct types of case studies: intrinsic, instrumental, collective, explorative, explanatory, descriptive, and naturalistic. For an intrinsic case study, researchers focus on a specific case in detail in order to acquire deeper understanding of the case, rather than trying to make broad generalisations from the study. An instrumental case study focuses on a particular issue and examines cases to explore this issue in depth to redraw a

generalisation, in order to develop and/or test a theory. A collective case study is a product of several instrumental case studies, and can be used to generalise and construct theories. Exploratory case studies are employed to explore those circumstances without a comprehensive single finding, and tend to provide answers to questions such as ‘who’ and ‘what’. An explanatory case study is used to explore events that are almost beyond the control of the researcher, and which demand explanation via the prism of life circumstances. Descriptive case studies are used to explain a research phenomenon and the actual context in which it happens (Ebneyamini, and Sadeghi Moghadam, 2018). Bertram and Christiansen (2014) added naturalistic or ethnographic case studies. Naturalistic case studies provide the researcher with insight into the real and natural setting to build an analysis of a real-life situation.

This research study employed an intrinsic case study design, as it focused on a precise group (the six ECCE educators from two ECD centres). These educators had taught at the centres for between five and 12 years. Thus, I found an intrinsic case study to be appropriate for exploring their experiences in using musical rhymes as tools to teach language and communication skills to the children, and for exploring the impact on the children’s language development. The researcher became deeply involved in order to study the situation, and aimed to comprehend their practices from the inside. In light of Bertram and Christiansen’s (2014) description, the researcher’s approach was also naturalistic as the study explore and described the phenomenon in its natural setting (the two selected ECCE centres).

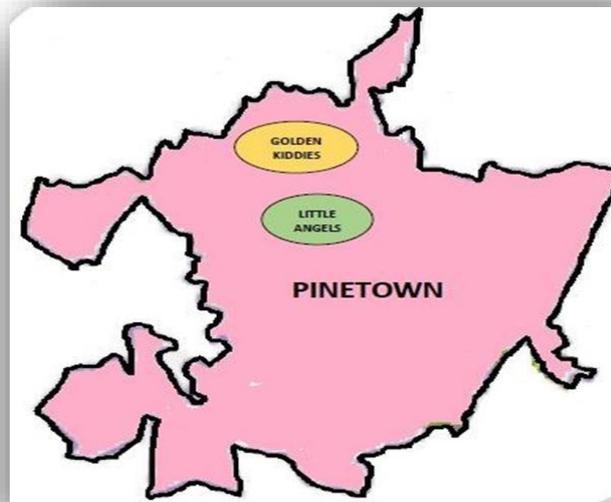
This study was a qualitative, multi-site case study situated within the social-constructivist paradigm. Rule and John (2011) and George (2019) defined a case study by its “particularistic, descriptive and heuristic” features, and its intention to focus on a specific entity with the aim of understanding and describing the findings. Hence, the purpose of this case study was to provide a detailed explanation of a particular case (the use of music to teach language and communication skills) in a real setting (the ECCE learning environment). Babbie (2013) similarly affirmed the purpose of case study research as enabling in-depth examination of a specific situation that eventually produces an explanatory background, thereby providing clues to the structure and procedures of the situation.

In case study research, emphasis is placed on the participants' perceptions and experiences. Case studies produce an understanding of and deeper intuitions into a certain situation, by providing a reliable and rich account of the case, and thereby illuminating it in relation to its wider context (Rule & John, 2011). This implies that a case study can be used to describe a unit of study, such as a precise situation, or to explain a research process. The precise unit or situation for this study was the six ECCE educators from the two ECCE centres, in a specifically urban setting.

Rashid, Rashid, Warraich, Sabir and Waseem (2019, p.5) state that the strength of case studies is in “describing real-life phenomena rather than developing normative statements”.

This point was further developed by De Massis and Kotlar (2014, p. 19), who asserted that “data in the case study method are collected by multiple means that may consist of potential qualitative data sources, such as interviews, direct observations, including ethnographical and anthropological data collection techniques, documentation, and historical records”. The multiple means in this study were semi-structured interviews, direct observations, and document analysis, which were employed to generate authentic perspectives from six ECCE educators from two different ECCE centres of their experiences and understanding in using musical rhymes to teach communication skills. In addition to using multiple means, this study was a multisite case study. Two centres in an urban setting were purposively selected because the researcher believed that the ECCE educators at these sites would be able to contribute valuable information to understanding the phenomenon, and provide rich and explicit data to answer the research questions.

### 4.2.3 Research setting



**Figure 4.1** Map of Pinetown

The location of a study is characterised in several ways — by the research participants, the setting, and the context. This research study is a multi-site case of two ECCE centres in an urban settlement in Durban, South Africa. The major reason for the choice of urban centres was the diverse nature of their settings. There was diversity in terms of the language and socio-economic backgrounds of the children. Some were from well-resourced English-speaking families while others were from families who spoke an indigenous language at home and had average economic resources. The educators at these centres use English as the LoLT to teach language and communication to all the children. The researcher is an English speaker, and thus was able to observe and understand how the educators taught these children using music, and the impact it had on their language development. This also aided the collection of first-hand, comprehensive information to answer the research questions.

The ECD services provided in urban centres tend to be of considerably higher quality. This is supported by Hall and Posel (2012), who found that urban settlements were far more developed than rural settings in relation to social amenities, education, and employment, and as such the ECCE centres in the urban context are in line with the recommendation of the NCF. Private individuals own the majority of the ECCE centres

in this urban area, which tend to be well developed, advanced, and equipped with the appropriate facilities that are helpful to children.

In rural ECCE centres in South Africa, the children all tend to speak the same indigenous language and be from the same socio-economic background. Although urban ECCE centres tend to be much more diverse, the children are not equally cognitively gifted, and the children may not comprehend or learn in the same way. The location of this study was both multicultural and multi-racial. The children were predominantly white, Indian, and coloured, and black children were the minority. In addition, the two ECCE centres selected for this study were owned and managed by white people, and the educators were predominantly white, Indian, and coloured, with very few black educators.

#### **4.2.4 Research population and sampling method**

Bertram and Christiansen (2014) explained research sampling as selecting people, events, settings, or behaviours to include in a research study. Sampling is also described as a “subset of the whole population which is actually investigated by a researcher, and whose characteristics are generalized to the entire population” (Bless & Higson-Smith, 2010, p. 85). According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), it is not possible to explore every component of a research population, hence the need for sampling. Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan, and Hoagwood, (2015) asserted that purposive sampling is useful in qualitative research, as it allows a researcher to choose participants who are accessible and who have relevant information. For this study, purposive sampling was employed in order to obtain accurate and authentic data.

##### **4.2.4.1 Purposive sampling**

Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan, and Hoagwood, (2015) described purposive sampling as a research approach that allows the researcher to select the participants who have the necessary information to provide answers to the key research questions. Similarly, Liu and Zhang (2019) stated that purposive sampling in research involves

making decisions about individuals, groups of people, or organisations that have rich knowledge about the topic of research. Purposive sampling, also called “judgment sampling, is the deliberate choice of a participant due to the qualities the participant possesses” (Etikan et al., 2016, p. 2). Rule and John (2011) explained that people are purposively selected based on their experiences, knowledge, and awareness as it relates to the phenomenon under study. Ames, Glenton, and Lewin (2019) asserted that purposive sampling is relevant in qualitative studies because it enables the researcher to explore information-rich participants. Fraenkel et al. (2012, p. 100) observed that “that qualitative researchers prefer purposive sampling since it allows them to use their personal judgments to select participants that they believe will provide the data they need”.

Six ECCE educators were therefore purposively selected from two urban ECCE centres to share their experiences of using music to teach communication. I visited the centres to establish a cordial relationship with the ECCE educators and briefed them on the purpose of the research. Ten ECCE educators from the two centres were interviewed and observed. Thereafter, six participants were selected based on their experiences and deep understanding of the subject under research. These six were also interested and enthusiastic to voluntarily participate in the study. This resonated with Ames, Glenton, and Lewin (2019) who indicated that purposive sampling should involve selecting participants who have rich information in relation to the research questions, and who are also willing to participate in the research.

Additionally, Cohen et al. (2011, p. 157) affirmed that purposive sampling consists of “knowledgeable people who have in-depth knowledge about a particular issue through their experiences”.

Thus, the reason for employing purposive sampling was to select ECCE educators in urban centres who were experienced in using music to teach children communication skills. Qualitative case study research focuses on a few cases, since the intention is not to generalise the findings or predict a situation but rather to understand how knowledge and experiences are created. Hence, selecting six educators from two ECCE centres was deemed sufficient.

#### 4.2.4.2 The profiles of the participants

Table 4.1 below shows the profiles of the participants.

**Table 4.1 The profiles of the participants**

Participants	Age	Gender	Years of teaching experience	Participants home language	Music training received
Participant A	44	female	4	Afrikaans	Partial musical training had only diploma in music. she uses online children music
Participant B	30	female	6	English	Well trained in music to University level
Participant C	37	female	18	English	No musical training, resulted to self-education through online music
Participant D	33	female	10	Afrikaans	She had one semester of music training at the University, she uses online children music.
Participant E	53	female	8	English	She received music training at the university and uses online children music.
Participant F	40	female	8	English	An account by training. She uses downloaded music from the internet.

Table 4.1 shows that all the educators had the required teaching experience, and all were women between the ages of 30 and 53. Their years of teaching experience ranged from four years to eighteen years. Four out of the six participants had been trained in using music in the learning environment. The other two had taught themselves to understand the use of music to teach communication before, using it as a teaching strategy in the learning environment, and used music videos.

#### **4.2.5 Method of data generation**

Bertram and Christiansen (2014) and Wahyuni (2012) described data generation as a systematic and logical approach employed by a researcher to generate and analyse data by using specific techniques and tools. Cohen et al. (2011) and Rule and John (2011) referred to data generation as data collection; however, in this study the researcher preferred the term “data generation”, since the aim was to generate facts together with the participants through interviews and learning environment observations.

Arifah et al. (2019) established the fact that qualitative study uses multiple data generation techniques to verify the data to enhance triangulation and trustworthiness in research. Hence, the selection of the three discussed data generation instruments.

Cohen et al. (2011) described the different methods of data generation in qualitative research, which include focus group interviews, reflective activity (life history), observation, interviews, focused group discussions, and visual media. In this study, the researcher confined herself to three methods of data generation for triangulation purpose: semi-structured interviews, participants observations, and document analysis. The generated data was a direct expression of the participants’ views, beliefs, ideas, and experiences as they related to their use of music to teach language and communication skills, and the impact it had on the ECCE children’s language development. Arifah et al. (2019) stated that qualitative study uses multiple data generation techniques to verify the data, and to enhance triangulation and trustworthiness in research, hence the selection of the three data generation instruments.

Table 4.2 below shows the data generation methods used in this study.

**Table 4.2 Data generation methods employed in the study**

<b>Research questions</b>	<b>Rationale for data collections</b>	<b>Data generation instruments</b>	<b>The data source</b>
1. What are the ECCE educators' understandings of using musical rhymes as a strategy for teaching communication (listening and reading) skills to children aged three to four?	To establish the ECCE educator's knowledge of using musical rhymes to teach language and communication skills.	Semi-structured interview, learning environment observation and data analysis.	ECCE educator and the learning environment setting.
2. How do ECCE educators use musical rhymes as a strategy to teach communication (listening and reading) skills to children aged three and four?	To explore the different and relevant musical rhymes used for teaching communication skills.	Learning environment observation and data analysis.	ECCE centres, the learning environment setting, and secondary data.
3. Why do ECCE educators use musical rhymes as a strategy to teach communication (listening and reading) skills to children aged three and four?	To explain the reasons for the use of musical rhymes to teach communication skills, instead of traditional teaching using sentences and phrases	Semi-structured interview and learning environment observation.	The ECCE educator and the pupils in the learning environment.
4. What impact does the use of musical rhymes as a strategy to teach communication (listening and reading) skills have on the language development of children aged three and four?	To establish the impact of the use of musical rhymes to teach language and communication skills on the children's language development	Semi-structured interview and learning environment observation.	The ECCE educators and the pupils in the learning environment.

#### **4.2.5.1 Semi-structured interviews (open-ended)**

The first phase of the data generation focused on research questions one and three:

- (i) What are the ECCE educators' understandings of using musical rhymes as a strategy for teaching communication (listening and reading) skills to children aged three to four?
- (iii) Why do ECCE educators use musical rhymes as a strategy to teach communication (listening and reading) skills to children aged three and four?

The first phase consisted of semi-structured, open-ended interviews with the educators to explore their understanding and knowledge of using music to teach language and communication skills, and to establish why they chose to use music as teaching strategy. Brown and Danaher (2019) explained semi-structured interviews (with open-ended questions) as an avenue for enabling the participants to talk freely about their experiences, and to offer their views on the research topic. Creswell and Poth (2017) as well as McGrath, Palmgren, and Liljedahl (2019) described semi-structured interviews as an instrument of data generation that is used to discover and extract people's opinion, feelings, and actions during the course of conversations between the researcher and the participants. The semi-structured interview enabled the researcher to explore the participants' feelings and opinions on how they use music to teach communication skills to ECCE children, and the impact it has on their language development. The questions were structured to enable the researcher and the participants to discuss and debate the educators' responses. The semi-structured interview sessions allowed for a wide range of information and ideas, and afforded the researcher an opportunity to generate information to enable triangulation (Legg-Jack, 2014).

The first step that the researcher took was to pay a visit to the participants to discuss and negotiate with them the most mutually convenient time for the interview. This was in line with the recommendations outlined by Tracy (2019), who pointed out that semi structured interviews require the researcher to set up a formal interview time with the participants in advance. The interviews were conducted at times that were convenient to the participants in their various learning environments. Each interview lasted between forty-five minutes and an hour. This was in accordance with Borg and Gall's (2009) recommendation that enough time be given to research participants during the

interview to allow for significant and rich discussions. An interview schedule was drawn up to guide the semi-structured interviews (see Appendix J), and these questions were thoroughly explained to the participants prior to the commencement of the interviews. The questions were designed to align with the research questions and the theoretical framework supporting the study.

During the interviews, enough time was given to enable the participants to think critically before answering the questions. The interviews were audio recorded with the participants' permission. About ten ECCE educators were initially interviewed, but six were selected for inclusion in the study. These six were found to have deeper experiences of the use of various musical rhymes to teach language and communication skills. After the interview, the researcher observed their teaching using the learning environment observation instrument in Appendix K, to establish coherence between the information provided during the interviews and their learning environment practice. This was in accordance with Seidman's (2013, p. 10) finding that "interviewing provides access to the context of people's behavior and thereby provides a way for researcher to understand the meaning of that behavior".

Adams (2010) pointed out certain possible limitations of semi-structured interviews, including the fact that they require rigorous effort, are time consuming, and necessitate measures to ensure the confidentiality of the interviewees' information. Another weakness pointed out was that the interviewee may try to shy away from certain questions or provide incomplete answers (Hofisi et al., 2014). Nevertheless, the researcher's initial visit to the ECCE centres, during which she provided detailed explanations about the purpose of the interviews, helped to address the above-mentioned limitations. In addition, the autonomy, privacy, and confidentiality of the participants and the information they provided were assured during the course of the research.

#### **4.2.5.2 Learning activities observation**

The second phase of the data generation consisted of participant observation, and focused on research questions two and four:

- (ii) How do ECCE educators use musical rhymes as a strategy to teach communication (listening and reading) skills to children aged three and four?
- (iv) What impact does the use of musical rhymes as a strategy to teach communication (listening and reading) skills have on the language development of children aged three and four?

These questions were used as a guide on the specific issues to observe during the learning environment observation exercises, and were used to formulate the observation instrument (see Appendix K).

Observation is an ethnographic research method that enables researchers to observe and record people's behaviour, actions, and interactions in a systematic way, particularly if it is an unstructured observation. Bertram and Christiansen (2014) explained an "unstructured observation as the type that allows a researcher to write a free description of what she observes rather than going through a check list ticking off boxes or rating a specific activity" (p. 74). This method of observation allows a researcher to obtain a detailed description of the social settings of events, which enables the researcher to situate people's behaviours within their sociocultural context (Hennink et al., 2011, p. 170). Thus, an unstructured observation method was adopted, by means of which the researcher observed and made written notes and descriptions of all the activities associated with musical rhymes observed. Learning environment observations enabled the researcher to observe how the ECCE educators used music, and the types of music they employed in teaching listening and reading skills to the children. Bostic, Lesseig, Sherman and Boston (2019) asserted that observation allows the researcher to note emotions, body language, and facial expressions during the interactions that occur in the learning environment, as well as who participated in the activities and who did not. There are two significant weaknesses of observations: firstly, because they know they are being observed, people may adjust their behaviour, thereby altering the expected result of the observation; secondly, observations can be time consuming (Mair et al., 2013).

The educators had specific periods allotted to the learning activities on the school timetable, hence an appointment was made with them for the appropriate time to observe how they employed a variety of musical rhymes to teach. Detailed notes were

taken on all of my observations of the educators' activities that involved using different types of music and rhymes in their various learning environment. I also focused on the children's responses to the educators. According to Kolb (2012), participant observation enables the researcher to observe a research setting and to fully participate in the setting for data generation purposes. In some of the learning environment, I participated in the songs and in assisting to control the children. Often, participant observation is used concurrently with an interview to gather data directly from the participant's activities.

#### **4.2.5.3 Document analysis**

The third phase of the data generation consisted of document analysis. Document analysis is a method of qualitative research that involves the researcher examining relevant documents to support and test the previous information generated. Document analysis is the examination and interpretation of secondary data to gain more meaning to develop empirical knowledge on the research phenomenon (Mackieson, Shlonsky, & Connolly, 2019). The authors further asserted that document analysis can involve examining physical items found in the research setting, such as agendas, teaching materials, policy documents, educator's workbooks, and syllabi.

Including document analysis in this research allowed for triangulation. Relevant documents such as lesson notes, educators' weekly working notes, policy documents, NCF and the Dolphin school curriculum adopted by the ECCE centres were analysed. (The two centres followed the same Dolphin school curriculum and NCF document adopted by the ECCE centres). These documents were examined in relation to the information obtained during the interviews.

#### **4.2.6 Data analysis**

Data analysis is a framework of approaches that help a researcher to define facts, identify patterns, and provide details on the data generated in order to get answers to the research questions. It is explained as activities that include "gathering, ordering,

(re)labelling, printing, and sometimes reformatting the generated data” (Tracy, 2019, p.185). Data analysis interpreted and provided explanations for the data generated during the interviews, the learning environment observations, and the document analysis. The generated data was analysed thematically (Tracy, 2019), using the combination of deductive and inductive analysis suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994). Elo and Kyngäs (2008) and Duriau et al. (2007) asserted that researchers could choose to use thematic analysis either inductively or deductively. Inductive analysis involves selecting codes and categories based on the data generated from the participants’ ideas, whereas deductive analysis involves using a theoretical or conceptual framework to structure the analysis of data (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). Alhojailan (2012, p. 40) describes thematic analysis as “a type of qualitative study used to analyse classifications and present themes (patterns) that relate to the data”. Similarly, thematic data analysis is described “as a method for systematically identifying, organizing, and offering insight into patterns of meaning (themes) across a data set” (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 57). Thematic analysis enables the researcher to sift and condense the generated data, without leaving out the specific points relevant to the phenomenon.

Thematic analysis involves a six-step process to create established, meaningful patterns: familiarisation with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes among codes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. The researcher conducted open coding on the interview transcripts, observation notes, and document analysis notes to identify the salient themes discussed by the participants.

- (i) The first step was familiarisation with the data (Tracy,2019). All the data generated from the interviews, learning environment observations, and document analysis was thoroughly examined in order for the researcher to comprehend it fully, and to become completely familiar with it. The recorded interviews were carefully transcribed and read a number of times to ensure that the information in them was well understood. The researcher devoted quality time to becoming familiar with the generated information on how the the ECCE educators were using music to teach communication skills to ECCE children.

- (ii) The second step of the data analysis was to identify recurring patterns of salient points from the data set and organise the patterns in relation to the four research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Scrutinizing the data in this way generated initial codes.
- (iii) The third step involved searching for coherent and similar themes among the codes. These themes were identified by sorting and classifying the codes by critically searching through and collating all the sifted information to form themes.
- (iv) The fourth step was to review the themes. The themes that had emerged were critically examined and reflected on to discern whether they provided detailed and convincing information about the data. During this phase some of the theme were collapsed and merged together, while some were split.
- (v) The fifth step was to define and name the emerging themes, which were clearly sorted and assigned names. The themes were sorted and structured using the conceptual and theoretical framework to confirm the emerging categories. Vygotsky's SCT was used to define the themes.
- (vi) Lastly, to produce the results, the themes that provide relevant information for addressing the research questions were developed and interpreted as the concluding themes. The data that spoke to the research questions was identified and interpreted. In the process of writing up the findings, the data was contextualized according to information from the review of existing literature.

### **4.3 TRUSTWORTHINESS**

Trustworthiness is described as all efforts made by qualitative researchers to ensure that the research is valid, reliable and transferable to a similar context (O'Kane, Smith and Lerman, 2019). Some authors define trustworthiness as "a set of standards that demonstrates that a research study has been conducted competently and ethically" (Rallis & Rossman, 2009, p. 264). Trustworthiness needs to be taken into account when planning and conducting research, as it is one of the pre-requisites for ensuring credible

and acceptable research findings (Connelly, 2016). Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 290) described a trustworthy study as “one whose findings are worth paying attention to and worth taking account of”. Smith and McGannon (2018) asserted that the necessary benchmark for trustworthy qualitative research is the presence of rigour and accuracy in the methodology. Thus, to enhance rigour and trustworthiness in this study, the following elements were taken into consideration: credibility, confirmability, dependability, and transferability (Anney, 2014; Cope, 2014; Watkins, 2012).

- (i) Credibility in interpretive research refers to the measures taken by a researcher during data generation and analysis to ensure that the results replicate the exact practice of the participant; that is, that the data generated describes the actual situation in the natural setting that is being explored (Daniel, 2019; Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). To ensure the credibility of this study, a recording device was used to record the interviews. The recorded interviews were then transcribed verbatim, and the participants were asked to check their transcript to ascertain whether it reflected the information they had provided.
- (ii) Confirmability, according to FitzPatrick, (2019 and Bertram and Christiansen (2014), refers to all the measures employed by the researcher to prove that the findings are transparent and authentic, and do not reflect their own prejudice. In this study, confirmability was enhanced by generating data from more than one source — interviews, learning environment observations, and document analysis. In addition, direct quotations of participants’ responses were included to further establish the confirmability of the study.
- (iii) Dependability refers to clearly showing the processes involved in conducting the study — the data collection, the data analysis, and the research procedures employed. This allows future researchers to repeat the study, if not essentially to gain the same outcome (FitzPatrick, 2019). Hence, the report of this study has included a detailed discussion of the research design, its implementation, the operational detail of data gathering, and a reflective appraisal of the study, to ensure the trustworthiness of the study.
- (iv) Transferability in interpretive research is the extent to which the findings can be applied to other situations having the same features (Daniel, 2019; Bertram

& Christiansen, 2014). To ensure the transferability of this study, the researcher used inductive and deductive data analysis to analyse and interpret the data, in order to avoid unsubstantiated claims. However, there is an understanding that findings from a qualitative case study inquiry are limited to a small group within a particular context. Hence, clear descriptions of the specific details of the context in which the study was undertaken have been included, so that lessons from the study may be applied to educators who share the same contextual realities.

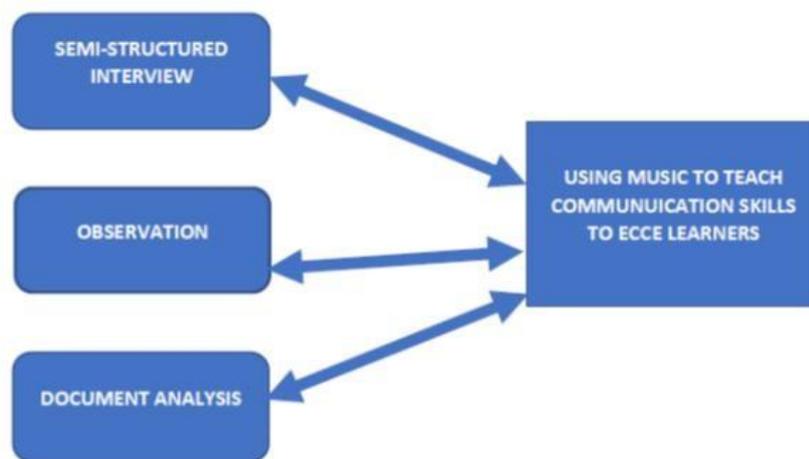
Furthermore, another approach to ensure trustworthiness in qualitative research is member checking. According to Candela (2019) member checking is when researchers involve the participants when analysing the data, by giving them the opportunity to go through the data analysis to ensure that it reflects and aligns with the information they intended to share. Hence, a plan was put in place to meet with the participants so that they could check the data.

#### **4.4 TRIANGULATION**

Triangulation involves generating research data from more than a single source to produce a deep, rich understanding of the phenomenon. Carter et al. (2014) explained triangulation in research as the use of various procedures for gathering and/or managing data to ensure the validity of the findings. The objective of triangulation is “to increase confidence in the findings through the confirmation of a proposition using two or more independent measures” (Heale & Forbes, 2013, p. 98). Carter et al. (2014) state four types of triangulation applicable to qualitative research: method triangulation, investigation triangulation, theory triangulation, and data source triangulation. Method triangulation is explained as the use of multiple approaches to generate data to address the same phenomenon. Investigation triangulation is the involvement of two or more investigators on the same research to provide multiple results and findings. Theory triangulation occurs when a researcher employs two or more theories to analyse and interpret the generated data, with the aim of disproving or supporting the findings. Data source triangulation refers to generating data from a range of sources, such as

communities, families, groups, and individuals, to strengthen the authenticity of the findings.

However, this study adopted method triangulation by using three different methods of data generation: semi-structured interviews with the six ECCE educators on their understanding of using music to teach communication to their children; ethnographic observations at the two ECCE centres to observe the different types of music the educators employed in teaching the children language and communication skills; and document analysis, to test the interview information and the observed activities.



**Figure 4.2** Triangulation of data on the use of music to teach communication skills to ECCE children (Tarisayi, 2017, p. 98)

#### **4.5 ETHICAL ISSUES**

Bertram and Christiansen (2014) explained ethics as norms for conduct that distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in research. Research ethics involve specific requirements in relation to daily work, the protection of the dignity of the research subjects, and the publication of the information in the research (Morley, Floridi, Kinsey and Elhalal, 2019). Ethics are sets of principles, documented or verbal, that guide the activities of the researchers and the participants in the process of conducting research. In this study, several measures and considerations were put in place to ensure that the necessary ethical procedures for this qualitative research were

duly followed and adhered to. Formal permission was sought from all the necessary gatekeepers and informed consent was sought from the participants. In addition, the three ethical principles that a researcher needs to follow in conducting research, according to Morley, Floridi, Kinsey and Elhalal (2019) as well as Floridi and Cowls (2019) — autonomy, non-maleficence and beneficence — were duly adhered to.

These principles are explained below.

#### **4.5.1 Permission to conduct the research**

Singh and Wassenaar (2016) stated that the South African Research Ethics Committee and the various university ethics committees require researchers to consult the community and to obtain formal, documented permission from all the necessary gatekeepers before proceeding with research. A gatekeeper is explained as a person or an institution that stands in-between the researcher and the prospective participants (Singh & Wassenaar, 2016). Ethical clearance to begin this study was obtained from the University of KwaZulu-Natal Research Ethics Committee before proceeding with any research that involved participants (see Appendix A). Gatekeeper permission for this study was then obtained from the principals of each of the ECCE centres at which research for this study was conducted (see Appendices B and C).

Similarly, Tracy (2019) stated that a researcher must obtain permission from the study participants before embarking on data generation. The researcher visited the educators at the ECCE centres to establish a cordial relationship with them, and briefed them on the purpose of the research study. Thereafter, ten interested ECCE educators who volunteered to participate in the research work were chosen interviewed, after which six were selected. The interested participants were provided with informed consent letters (see Appendices D–I), which they willingly signed before becoming involved in the research. They were assured of their freedom to withdraw from the study at any time should they not feel comfortable, without any penalties or adverse consequence.

#### **4.5.2 Autonomy/informed consent**

Autonomy implies that any person or institution involved in the study must be a willing participant who participates voluntarily in the study, whose rights are respected and protected, and who must have the freedom to withdraw at any time should he or she feel uncomfortable about participating in the study. A researcher must get the formal consent of every person or institution who participates in the study (Morley, Floridi, Kinsey & Elhalal, 2019), and this needs to be informed consent. Informed consent in research is a mechanism employed to ensure that the prospective participants understand their expectation in the research so that they can voluntarily make a conscious decision to participate (Tracy, 2019). Participants' informed consent and full participation in any research is possible only if the researcher provides a detailed and comprehensive explanation of the purpose of the study, the extent of the study, and the implications of their involvement (Manti, & Licari, 2018).

Thus, all the participants in this research — the ECCE educators who were initially visited, and the ones who were selected to be interviewed — were duly informed about the purpose of the research, after which their consent was sought in writing and verbally (see Appendices D–I). Their principals were also duly informed, in order to gain informed institutional consent (see Appendices B and C). The participants' autonomy was therefore acknowledged as a right to be respected (Manti, & Licari, 2018).

#### **4.5.3 Non-maleficence**

The principle of non-maleficence requires doing no harm to the research participants and is one of the most important ethical principles in research, which every researcher must strictly adhere to (Tracy, 2019). The principle of non-maleficence entails that the researcher ensures the participants' privacy, dignity, and anonymity, in order to prevent any emotional, social, or physical harm, and that the researcher ensures the confidentiality of the participants' information ((Morley, Floridi, Kinsey, & Elhalal, 2019; Floridi, & Cowls, 2019). Non-maleficence was observed in this research by making sure that the participants were well informed about the nature and purpose of the study, and by assuring them of their anonymity, their privacy, and the

confidentiality of their information. The researcher did not reveal the participants' real names or divulge any of their personal information to the public, and they were referred to using codes instead (Participant A, Participant B, etc.). In addition, to ensure the anonymity of the research setting, the two ECCE centres were given pseudonyms: Golden Kiddies and Little Angels. The participants understood that they were free to withdraw at any time should they feel uncomfortable continuing with the study. The devices used for audio recording the interviews were password protected to ensure the confidentiality of the interview information. Copies of the completed interview transcripts, the memory stick on which the interviews were stored, the permission letters, and other salient information pertaining to this study and the participants will be stored in a locked cupboard in the researcher's supervisor's office for a period of five years, after which it will be shredded and burnt.

#### **4.5.4 Beneficence**

The final principle, beneficence, demands that a researcher tailors his or her research towards the participants' interest. The reason for the involvement of the participants and the way in which the research will promote and enhance their quality of life should be the focus of the researcher (Das & Sil, 2017). Beneficence involves ensuring that the research is of benefit, either directly to the research participants, or more broadly to other researchers or to society. The purpose of the research was to explore the use of various musical rhymes in order to positively impact ECCE children' acquisition of language and communication skills. The research findings will therefore benefit the ECCE educators, as they will gain information on the importance of the use of music in the learning environment, and on the different musical rhymes suitable for teaching language and communication skills to ECCE children.

#### **4.5.5 Feedback to the participants**

Thomas (2017) argued that interview transcripts should be shown to the participants to enable them to check the transcripts for accuracy to ascertain whether it accurately reflects their views and the information they intended to share. This feedback to the

participants is known as member checking, and it increases the credibility and rigour of the research.

Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter (2016, p. 1802) confirmed that “offering results acknowledges the ethical principle of respect for persons, avoids treating research participants as a means to an end and may have direct positive consequences for the participant and indirect benefits to research as a whole”. Participants feedback also known as member checking or participants validation is a procedure for ensuring the trustworthiness of the research result (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016). Candela (2019) reported that member checking could cause harm to the participant thus, she cautioned that researchers that cannot omit member checking should institute it judiciously

#### **4.6 LIMITATIONS**

Research limitations are all the elements that negatively affect the presentation of the findings in one way or another (Price & Murnan, 2004). This study had some constraints. The first constraint was that the study was confined to two ECCE centres in an urban setting in South Africa. The study did not include all the educators from all the centres in South Africa. The findings and result are subjective and context-specific, and therefore it may not be possible to generalise the study. Guba and Lincoln (1994) argue that the size and sample of qualitative case study research does not encourage the generalisation of the study’s findings. However, Thomas (2017) argues that providing a clear description of the qualitative research context in which the study is undertaken may allow the transferability of the lessons from the study to a similar context. These lessons could therefore possibly be applied to schools that share the same contextual realities as those in this study.

Moreover, the objective of the research was to explore the reality of the participants’ lived experiences, ideas, and proficiency in using music to teach communication skills to ECCE children, and to understand the impact it has on their language development. Another area of limitation was the small amount of research conducted to date on the use of music to teach children from birth to four years. Several authors have written on

other phases of ECD, but not much has been done in this area, as it is a new niche in South Africa (An et al., 2013; Cloete & Delport, 2015; Eerola & Eerola, 2013; Foran, 2009; Van Vuuren & Van Niekerk, 2015).

Another constraint of the study was limited finance. The costs of moving from one research setting to the other to conduct the interviews and learning environment observations were all shouldered by the researcher, with no funding or financial assistance from any quarter.

#### **4.7 CONCLUSION**

Chapter Four has presented the research design and methodology employed for this qualitative case study situated within the social-constructivist paradigm, and the rationale for selecting them. The chapter described the diverse research setting and the purposive sampling strategy, and then described the three data generation methods (semi-structured interviews, learning environment observation, and document analysis). The process of thematic analysis used to analyse the data was then explained. The measures taken to ensure trustworthiness, and the appropriate ethical considerations taken into account during the implementation of this study were described, and finally, the limitations of the study were presented. The following chapter presents and analyses the data generated from the semistructured interviews, learning environment observations, and document analysis.

## CHAPTER 5

### DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter discussed the research design and methodology employed for this study, and the rationale for doing so. This chapter presents the data generated on ECCE educators' use of music to teach language and communication skills to children aged three and four. The data was generated through semi-structured interviews and teaching and learning activities' observations at the two urban ECCE centres, and through document analysis. The data generated was intended to respond to the four critical questions underpinning this study.

- (i) What are the ECCE educators' understandings of using musical rhymes as a strategy for teaching communication (listening and reading) skills to children aged three to four?
- (ii) How do ECCE educators use musical rhymes as a strategy to teach communication (listening and reading) skills to children aged three and four?
- (iii) Why do ECCE educators use musical rhymes as a strategy to teach communication (listening and reading) skills to children aged three and four?
- (iv) What impact does the use of musical rhymes as a strategy to teach communication (listening and reading) skills have on the language development of children aged three and four?

The findings are organised into the five main themes, with associated sub-themes, that emerged from the thematic analysis of the data from the semi-structured interviews and from the learning environment observations. For the purposes of the data presentation, and the discussion of the results that follows, and in order to ensure the privacy and anonymity of the participants, they were assigned codes, which are shown in Table 5.1 below.

**Table 5.1 Codes assigned to the participants**

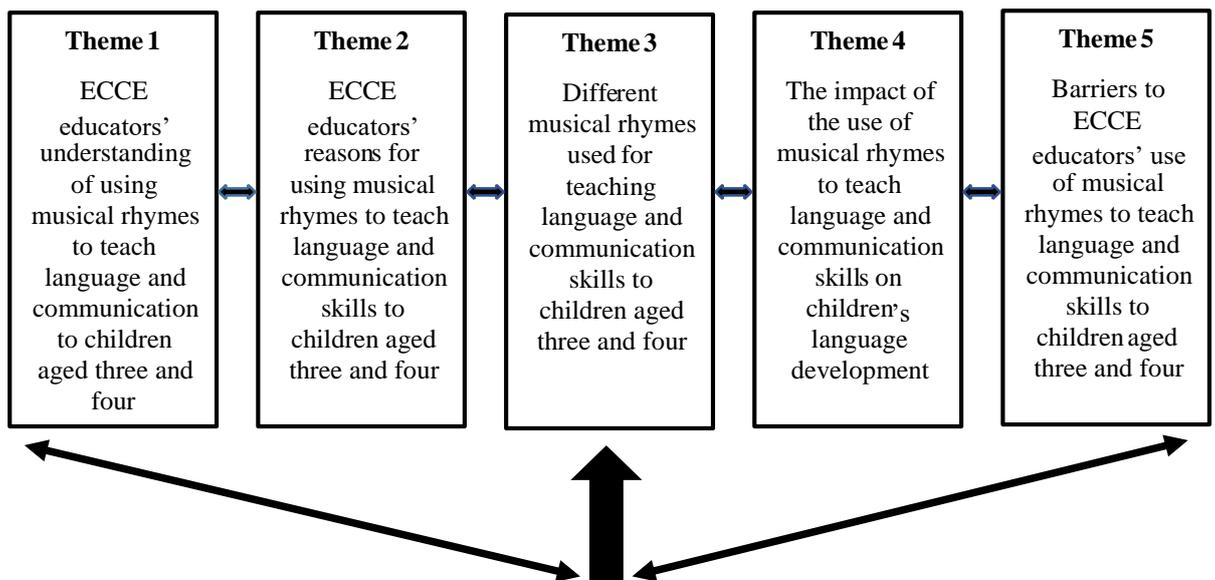
<b>Codes</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
PA	Participant A
PB	Participant B
PC	Participant C
PD	Participant D
PE	Participant E
PF	Participant F

## **5.2 DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION**

The study purposively selected six ECCE educators from the ten educators that were interviewed as participants from two ECCE centres, which were given the pseudonyms Golden Kiddies and Little Angels. Semi structured interviews were employed to generate data from the participants. Observations were also conducted to observe the participants' real-life practices of using of music to teach language and communication skills to their children within and outside the learning environment during the teaching and learning activities. The documents used by these participants that informed their use of music to teach language and communication to the ECCE pupils were analysed to test and confirm the information they provided during the semi-structured interviews.

Five major themes emerged from the thematic analysis of the data: 1) ECCE educators' understanding of using musical rhymes; 2) ECCE educators' reasons for using musical rhymes; 3) different musical rhymes used; 4) The impact of the use of musical rhymes; and 5) barriers to ECCE educators' use of musical rhymes.

These five main themes are presented in Figure 5.1 below.



**Figure 5.1** The main themes that emerged from the thematic analysis of the data

### **5.3 THEME ONE: ECCE EDUCATORS' UNDERSTANDING OF USING MUSICAL RHYMES**

This theme unpacked what the ECCE educators' responses revealed about their understanding and their conceptualisation of the use of musical rhymes to teach language and communication skills to ECCE children. The theme responds closely to research question one (*What are the ECCE educators' understandings of using musical rhymes as a strategy for teaching communication (listening and reading) skills to children aged three to four?*). Three sub-themes emerged from the first main theme. These were: 1) ECCE educators' musical training; 2) ECCE educators' understanding of developmentally appropriate practice; and 3) personal musical development using online audio and video.

These sub-themes are discussed in the following sections.

#### **5.3.1 ECCE educators' musical training**

The researcher began the interviews by asking the participants to explain their conceptualization of music and how they had come about their knowledge of and ability to use musical rhymes effectively to impact ECCE children' language and

communication skills. Their responses showed that most of them had undergone some form of musical training at some level of their education. Some of the participants who had studied at the University of South Africa explained that music was part of some of the courses that were taught in the Early Childhood Education at the university.

One of the participants who had studied outside of South Africa stated that music was part of her curriculum of study, and that she had been taught different types of music during her high school and her tertiary studies. She added that music courses have been made compulsory in teacher training institutions across the country, and that teaching practice in music was mandatory for pre-service teachers. Participant A stated that the formal music training she had received broadened her horizons in relation to the use of different types of music to teach ECCE children:

*I did correspondence courses in Early Childhood Development at UNISA and we took a module in music for just a semester, though not enough to prepare us to teach music or teach with music in the school, but as you can see, I am coping. (Interview with P A, July 12, 2019)*

Participant C stated that she had received partial music training during high school, which had provided her with some background knowledge:

*I received music training partially, that was in my high school, the training gave me some background knowledge on the use of music to teach in the ECCE learning environment, and to some extent I have been using music in my class. (Interview with PC on July 15, 2019)*

PD stated that she had received rudimentary training in using music for education during the course of one module at university:

*I did receive music training but not much, we did a module in music for just a semester. It is just a rudiment of music, however the knowledge received coupled with the fact that I came from a music-loving family helped me to use music to teach the children with ease. (Interview with PD on 18, 2019)*

The response of Participant B clearly revealed that some of the ECCE educators had a good understanding of the use of musical rhymes to teach the children relevant skills, include language and communication skills, which is the focus of this study:

*I did music when I was in teacher college. We were taught how to teach music and how to use music to teach other subjects. Also, we learned how to play musical instruments and how to make or improvise some musical instruments. Music is a mandatory course across all levels of education in the country. I also taught practice in music during my teacher training programme. (Interview with PB on July 18, 2019)*

Similarly, PE stated that she was able to use different types of music to teach any activity, as a result of her training and experience:

*Music is one of the modules I did during my Early Childhood Development training at the university, and when we were doing teaching practice, we were mandated to teach music. Thus, it is not difficult for me to employ music to teach any topic including helping them to learn how to communicate and other skills. (Interview with PE on July 22, 2019)*

These responses showed that the ECCE educators in this study understood the use of music to teach ECCE children language and communication skills. However, only two of the participants (PB and PE) had received sound training in music during their teacher training at university. The other participants had a partial knowledge of music that was not sufficient for them to effectively use music in the learning environment. Some of them relied solely on downloaded children's songs from the Internet.

My observations of the participants' learning environment activities in relation to how the participants used music to teach language and communication skills revealed that most of the educators struggled to align relevant music with the various learning activities. The way in which the educational content was communicated to the children through music, the children's responses and participation, the use non-verbal expression of the educator during the singing activities, and the time it took for the children to grasp the learning objectives varied from one learning environment to the other. The participants' level of musical understanding and musical training received,

and their level of musical experience, affected their ability to use music in the learning environment effectively. The few educators who had received sound training in music performed better in the use of various musical activities to teach in the learning environment. In addition, the responses of the children to the learning activities differed.

### **5.3.2 ECCE educators' understanding of developmentally appropriate practice**

This sub-theme that emerged revealed one of the channels through which the ECCE educators acquired their understanding of the use of music to teach the children language and communication skills. During the interviews I tried to probe into the participants' understanding of the use of music in the learning environment over and above the question of the musical training they had received. They responded that they had been working with children and had a good understanding of their developmental stages and characteristics, and the various activities appropriate for those stages and characteristics. They understood that incorporating songs into all the learning and play activities in ECCE centres are a developmentally appropriate method and practice (DAMP) for children aged three and four. The responses below support their claim. PD stated:

*I have been teaching in ECD now for more than ten years. I was young when I started teaching. I have taught different children with different emotions and temperaments and can tell the importance of music in supporting them to learn because I have been using music in my class. Furthermore, I know how to use my imagination, having understood children's nature and characteristics, that they learn better through play and other means. And, I am musically inclined, I am gifted musically and can compose simple music to guide children to learn, although I did not receive much music training.*  
(Interview with PD on July 18, 2019)

Similarly, Participant E showed that she understood child development as one of the reasons for using music as a teaching strategy:

*I have been teaching for five years now in the ECCE section of the school. Teaching has been part of me because I have been teaching in the children's department of my church. The major channel of teaching them is through songs, hence using music to teach when I started my teaching career in the ECCE section was not a problem. (Interview with PE on July 22, 2019)*

Participants F stated that although she did not have formal musical training, she had knowledge of how children develop from her experience of motherhood:

*I do not have formal music training, but music is in all of us, you do not need too much stress for the children to learn through music. As a mother we learnt how to sing to pacify and lure a baby to sleep. A child is born with music, so is easier to use it in our classes. (Interview with PF on July 3, 2019)*

However, Participant A stated that she had received explicit training in child development in university during her teacher training:

*We are taught in school that children are different in terms of cognitive development and background from the cognitive theory of Piaget so combining music with poems and rhymes to teach them is the best method to help them acquire skills. (Interview with PA, July 12, 2019)*

The responses above showed that the participants were conversant with the developmental stages and nature of children. Some had been working with children in an informal setting, such as their church, before embarking on their teaching careers. Some claimed to have learned the essence of the use of music to aid children's development through their experience of motherhood. Many of them saw music as an innate language, and pointed out that because children are raised in an atmosphere of music, it is easy to use music to teach them appropriate skills. Some had specifically been taught child development during their teacher training, and one of the participants specifically mentioned that the best way of assisting children to learn is to understand their developmental stages and to also have a knowledge of various child development theories.

### 5.3.3 Personal musical development using online audio and video

Personal musical development emerged as a sub-theme that showed the ECCE educators' understanding and conception of the use of music to teach ECCE children, as they were motivated to support their children to learn language and communication skills through music by learning further skills themselves. Most of them confessed that they did not have formal musical training but rather engaged in personal learning by listening to and watching different videos on children's music on the Internet to enhance their ability to teach young children effectively with music. Participant C confessed:

*I cannot sing, do not have a singing voice, am struggling and get embarrassed at times before the children. I now committed myself to watching video and singing when at home or driving to upgrade myself. I go through the Internet to learn various music that I can use to teach children and currently am better and can use music to teach. (Interview with PC on July 15, 2019)*

Participant F described a similar experience to Participant C:

*I was a trained accountant, but God called me to establish an ECCE centre. I watched some good music relevant for children on the Internet and used it. As an aside, we use basic music. There is no music as independent subject in NCF document, only creativity, and we use music to teach different content such as numeracy, rhymes, and all other activities. There are varieties of music on the Internet that can be used to support children to learn language and communication skills and that is what we have been doing. (Interview with PF on July 18, 2019)*

In congruence with the participants above, Participant A attested that she acquired her understanding and knowledge of using music to teach children by visiting the Internet:

*As I earlier said, I have partial training in music, but I go through the Internet to learn about various types of music that I can use to teach children, especially different videos on children's music such as Jack Hartmann*

*Kiddies videos. I also take time to practise music at home just to gain more knowledge to give my best. (Interview with PA, July 12, 2019)*

Most of the respondents showed that they used the Internet to teach themselves about the different types of music suited to teaching children language and communication skills. They confessed to the fact that since they did not have formal training in using music, they resorted to self-education by listening to and practising music from the Internet, as they were aware that children aged three and four learn best through music. However, Participant D, who did not have formal training in using music, expressed a wish that music could be included in the NCF curriculum and that training in using music in ECCE education could be included in the teacher-training curriculum:

*I have got a series of CD players with different recorded children's music from the Internet, see them [she showed them to me], we apply different ways of teaching them such as story, dramatic play and virtually all the activities. I love music, and am from a musical family, hence it is not difficult for me to know the different types of music to use for the children. I have different music to teach them communication vocabularies, two-letter words, sounds, learning how to read, and how to speak. However, I wish music were included in the NCF curriculum and in the teacher training curriculum for Early Childhood Development educators. (Interview with PD on July 18, 2019).*

According to these participants, the musical training received during their teacher training was not enough to equip them with the musical skills and experience to teach the ECCE children using music. Some of them confessed to having difficulties in using music to teach during the early years of their teaching careers. However, most of them resorted to self-education and personal development by watching and listening to different children's music videos, and practiced by devoting time to singing at home, in the car, and with colleagues during their music classes.

The learning environment observations revealed that most of the participants had CDs of children's music in their cupboards or downloaded from the Internet. At one of the centres, the school principal showed the researcher a summary of different content themes for the subjects taught at the school and the educators' sources for different

online music that matched each of the themes. However, there was no indication of how to use the music during the teaching and learning process.

#### **5.4 THEME TWO: ECCE EDUCATORS' REASONS FOR USING MUSICAL RHYMES**

This theme addressed the various reasons given by the participants for using music, as opposed to the traditional methods of learning environment teaching and learning, as a pedagogical tool. It responded closely to research question three (*Why do ECCE educators use musical rhymes as a strategy to teach communication (listening and reading) skills to children aged three and four?*). The participants clearly stated why the ECCE learning environment cannot operate like learning environments for other age groups and levels of education. The participants showed that they had a good knowledge of the nature and characteristics of ECCE children. Their responses were discussed according to the three sub-themes that emerged from this theme. These were: 1) the nature and characteristics of ECCE children; 2) music in every facet of life; and 3) music for developmental and therapeutic purposes.

##### **5.4.1 The nature and characteristics of ECCE children**

This sub-theme showed the participants' awareness of the unique nature and characteristics of children, and how that makes them different from adults and demands that the method of impacting them with any skills must also be different from the methods used for children at other developmental stages. All the respondents agreed that children learn best when music is employed. Participant B stated that young children's lively nature demands a lively teaching method:

*I think there should be more of music to make teaching more effective because of their age. Using traditional methods of teaching will be boring, hence music makes teaching and learning interesting for the children. Also, the use of music aids and facilitates quick learning, as the children are lively and restless, and the teacher must give activities that suit their nature. (Interview with PB on July 18, 2019)*

Participant D gave similar reasons for the use of music in the ECCE learning environment, stating that children are enthusiastic, playful, and full of life, and that using music in the learning environment excites them, enabling them to learn more effectively:

*The reason why I believe that music is better to teach children is that children are very young, restless, playful and hyperactive. If you are only glued to the traditional way of teaching, they will be bored, lose interest and start making noise. Also, they understand better when you use music and rhymes, as they recite and repeat the content taught through music and rhymes, they can hardly forget.*

*When you introduce music, you will see the children clapping, dancing, moving and happy. Whatever you teach them in this mood will stick to them, because their nature at this stage is to play. (Interview with PD on July 18, 2019)*

Participant F stated that music ignites the children's interest in learning any skills, especially language and communication skills:

*Age three and four is the stage of mimicking adults in learning how to communicate and learn language. The repetitive nature of music makes it the best instrument for supporting children to learn language and communication skills. As the children sing the song repeatedly, whatever they learn sticks to them. (Interview with PF on July 18, 2019)*

Participant E expressed similar opinions on the suitability of music for ECCE children's characteristics and nature:

*Children aged three and four are at the stage of speech and language development, hence music is perfect in supporting them to develop those skills. Music helps children to learn better, because when we use music to teach children at school, we discover that children sing those songs at home to their parents, helping them to develop communication skills. Repetition in songs also helps children a lot to remember whatever they learnt. Music*

*make concepts simple and easy for the children to learn and remember.*

(Interview with PE on July 22, 2019)

The participants showed an in-depth understanding of nature and characteristics of ECCE children, and of the developmental milestones of children aged three and four, and understood which types of activities were suitable for the children's acquisition of skills. Thus, they all agreed that the best and appropriate method of teaching them is through music.

#### **5.4.2 Music in every facet of life**

This sub-theme reflected how the participants felt that music is universal and pervasive, and that people are exposed to music throughout their lifetime, hence its suitability for teaching ECCE children. They stated that music is part of our lives from the cradle to the grave, and is included in almost every life activity and event, as they had experienced in their own lives, and so they felt that music was the best strategy for teaching children. Participant F emphasised how music is innate:

*I said earlier that we all born with music, no human being is without some measure of music in him or her, so as teachers, especially ECCE educators, we use music for all the activities. Hence some of us without formal musical training are forced to learn it because I found it to be the best teaching method.* (Interview with PF on July 18, 2019)

Participant D mentioned how music had been an integral part of her family life and church life while growing up:

*I think because I grew up with music in our family, then the church, I have the trait of music in me. I am gifted musically and can compose simple music to guide children to learn. I have also discovered that those skills taught using music sticks stay with the children more than when they are taught with traditional methods of teaching.* (Interview with PD on July 18, 2019)

Participant E's first musical inspiration was also through her family and her church, and she believed that children naturally have music in them:

*I developed a strong interest in music when I was a child. I learned different songs at Sunday school and can still sing some of those songs now. Also, we sing a lot at home during prayer time. Music is in my family. This was an added advantage for me when I eventually found myself in the ECCE section. And I also believe that these children have a measure of music in them, thus using music to teach them is appropriate. (Interview with PE on July 22, 2019)*

Participant C also stated that children naturally have music in them, and that therefore teaching them with music is the best option:

*Kids have music in them such as rapping, clapping, dancing, and singing. Kids are very skilled in rapping. My five-year-old son raps a lot. I wish all content could be composed into music for children to learn better. When we use music to teach them, they remember quickly because it is in them, but mere talk in the class can easily be forgotten. They may remember some and misunderstand some. We use music because music is in the nature of children. (Interview with PC, on July 18, 2019)*

Participant B emphasised the connection between music and play, and how both are an integral part of children's lives:

*Children aged three and four learn best through varieties of play and music. Through play some vital skills such as communication, socialisation, and others are developed. Different types of children's play, such as associative play, dramatic play, parallel play, and cooperative play, all have music incorporated into them. I can vividly recall and sing all the songs we sang during the physical exercises by our games master in my primary school days. Music is part of children activities, whether at home or in the school. (Interview with PB on July 18, 2019)*

The responses of the participants revealed that they had good reasons for employing music to teach ECCE children. The stated that the presence of music in almost every person and in nearly all aspects of our lives make it the best tool for teaching children. The participants revealed that educators with children's interests at heart need little

motivation to use music to teach them, because music is part of children, and is integrally linked to play and development.

### **5.4.3 Music for developmental and therapeutic purposes**

This sub-theme emphasised and reported the participants' responses on the efficacy of music for aiding the cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development of children. The participants stated that music has therapeutic power that can help to calm restless young children, particularly those with emotional challenges and those who are hyperactive. Participant D stated that music helps to settle unruly children during teaching and learning activities, thereby supporting them to learn whatever skill is being taught:

*Early childhood development is the foundation of life and when the foundation is faulty it will affect all the areas of life. For the development of a total child, music is needed. How I wish the Department of Education knew this was important and would support the ECCE centres by donating musical instruments and other musical resources to the schools. From my experiences, some children that are very hyperactive, unruly, and disruptive are calmed with music. Some of them show signs of depression because of the situation in their family. Music has been very useful in making the learning environment conducive for all the children to learn. (Interview with PD on July 18, 2019)*

Participant F shared similar views on the positive effects of music on children's behaviour and cooperation, which helps them to develop a range of skills — emotional, cognitive, and communicative:

*As a Christian school, we use music to impact into good behaviour such as tolerance for others, emotional stability, cognitive skills, and vocabulary for courtesy and communication. Also, in teaching any content, when I notice that a child is not cooperating, or he or she is disrupting the class, music has been the best tool to calm and make the children to relax before they can learn any skills.*

(Interview with PF on July 18, 2019)

Participant E stated that because music such a positive effect on a child's ability to memorise information, it is critical for language and speech development:

*Music arouses, excites, and aids their memory. My son in Grade 9 said every student would learn better if music could be made part of the curriculum. Music has the power to charge the children's memory. Using music to repeat content assists them to remember the content, and not only that, it aids children's speech development. For example, when you teach with music, it is easier for the children to remember and recollect what they had learned the following day. Thereby the pass rate of the children increases. I think music is the best method for their age.*

(Interview with PE on July 22, 2019)

Participant A emphasised that music aids children's gross and fine motor skills.

*We use music to teach them movement, the playing of simple percussion instruments, and dance to support their physical development. When they try to play a toy keyboard, it aids their development of fine motor skills, such as helping them with hand-eye coordination. Also, dancing helps them to develop gross motor skills, and prevents obesity. (Interview with Participant A, July 12, 2019)*

The developmental and therapeutic benefits of music for children are innumerable.

Participant B stated:

*From my experience, music aids children's cognitive development, like those children that came from the other school with low performance. I discovered that they caught up so fast with the others because I used music for virtually all my activities. Whenever I noticed that the students were becoming bored and tired, I would chip in music to ease their tension and help them to learn whatever I wanted to teach. (Interview with PB on July 18, 2019)*

The participants' responses revealed the effectiveness of music in aiding the holistic development of children — cognitively, socially, physically, and emotionally. The

participants provided a series of positive examples of how they had used music to benefit the ECCE children' cognitive, physical, and emotional health. They all agreed that music is effective in calming those children who are hyperactive or disruptive, and in supporting emotionally unstable children to learn. One participant mentioned that some children come from homes experiencing tension, crises, and other problems, but stated that she used music to calm such children and help them to learn.

## **5.5 THEME THREE: DIFFERENT MUSICAL RHYMES**

This theme addresses the various musical rhymes used by the ECCE educators to impart language and communication skills to the children. It closely responds to research question two (*How do ECCE educators use musical rhymes as a strategy to teach communication (listening and reading) skills to children aged three and four?*). Three subthemes emerged from this theme which include 1) Action songs 2) Downloaded online children songs, and 3) Speech development songs

### **5.5.1 Action songs**

There are different types of music, but the participants' responses showed that they used action music that was specifically composed for teaching children. They stated that teaching children aged three and four requires that educators have the musical skills to compose simple songs that are aligned with whatever theme or content is being taught. When the children are bored and are not attentive, some action songs are introduced to stir them up to learn.

Participant B, who had studied music, described how she composed simple songs and also sourced music online:

*As I have said, I studied music and often compose simple songs based on what is on the timetable for that week. Also, I We also have songs downloaded from the Internet to teach the alphabet, two-letter words, phonics, sounds in language, and songs with repetition to help them develop speech ability. (Interview with PB on July 18, 2019)*

Participant B elaborated further on how she uses action songs in class, and provided an example of one:

*We use music virtually for all the activities, teaching colour, seasons, different animals, weather, courtesy, and actions. I have CDs of different children's songs and select relevant and suitable ones to teach the topic. We also use simple percussion instruments such as tambourines, rattles, and drums to accompany the songs. The children are always happy when they are given instruments to play, as you can see when you enter the class. Beside what I have said, we also have some simple songs to teach them actions of simple cleanliness and showing courtesy to elders, for example songs such as: [singing] "When we wake up in the morning, we say good morning, to mummy and daddy, we say good morning, to grandma and grandpa, we say good morning, and that make us good children". (Interview with PB, July 12, 2019)*

Similarly, Participant D shared her process of selecting and creating music:

*We select music and nursery rhymes according to the theme for the day and sing to the children. We pick the topic to teach and prepare music based on the theme for the day. For example, if we are teaching them nature, such as trees, animals that live in the water and animals on land, we look for relevant songs around the topic and teach them. At times we play instrumental music where we use percussion to accompany the music, we play for the children especially when teaching them communication skills. We play instruments to teach stress and pitch when teaching them sound. (Interview with PD on July 15, 2019)*

Participant E is musically sound, and uses different action music to maintain orderliness and calmness in the class. She said:

*I use a lot of action music during my teaching activities. Children are very young, restless, playful and hyperactive. And a times emotional and bored, so I use action songs a lot during learning and teaching exercise (Interview with PE on July 22, 2019).*

### 5.5.2 Children online music

Participant C elaborated further to explain that selecting the type of song to use in class depended on the theme for that week, and that virtually there are songs for all the activities in the internet:

*As earlier said, I have a series of CDs on children's music. Since I do not have much skill to compose, I make use of the downloaded songs. We have themes on parts of the body, learning colours, weeks, and seasons. There are songs to teach them all of these. We also have simple lullabies to calm them and make them pay attention whenever they are making a noise or are tired. Among these are isiZulu songs, since the majority of my class pupils are Zulu. I make use of isiZulu songs that I downloaded from the Internet. I listen to them before using them in class. (Interview with PC on July 22, 2019)*

Participant D stated the same thing as participant C above

*I have got a series of CD players with different recorded children's music from the Internet, see them [she showed them to me], we apply different ways of teaching them such as story, dramatic play and virtually all the activities. I love music, and am from a musical family, hence it is not difficult for me to know the different types of music to use for the children (Interview with PD on July 18, 2019).*

Participant A claims she had partial training in music, hence she downloaded children music to use during the learning activities. She said that:

*I had partial training in music. I did a diploma in music, which is not enough for me, but I search the Internet to find music that I can use to teach children, especially different videos on children's music such as Jack Hartmann's kiddies' videos. I also take time to practice music at home, just to gain more knowledge and to give of my best (interview with PA).*

Also, participant F uses music gotten from the internet. She stated below that:

*I was a trained accountant but found myself here. There are varieties of music on the Internet that can be used to support children to learn language*

*and communication skills and that is what we have been doing.* (Interview with PF on July 18, 2019).

### **5.5.3 Songs to aid speech development**

Some of the participants mentioned songs that promote speech development in children which they use in the teaching and learning activities. Participant E specifically mentioned songs that help children to develop speech and communication skills:

*We have songs in the form of call and response that support children to gain speech and communication skills in an easy way. We just compose the content into simple music and sing it to children and the children repeat after me. The repetitive nature of this song helps the children to learn the intended skills. We also have songs that are integrated into stories to teach them whatever skills we want to teach, we organize simple dramatic play activities to support them to learn. There is another important type of song, a movement and matching song, to teach them hand-eye coordination and to help them develop physically. As I am musically literate, I have different compositions to teach different content, such as showing appreciation, greetings, songs on how to behave well in class, and how to concentrate. There are songs to communicate self-confidence to them, also as a Christian school, we have songs that teach them to have confidence and hope in God.* (Interview with PE on July 18, 2019)

The next educator also declares that she uses songs to support the children to develop their communication skills. She stated below that:

*I have different music to teach them communication vocabularies, two-letter words, sounds, learning how to read, and how to speak. However, I wish music were included in the NCF curriculum and in the teacher training curriculum for Early Childhood Development educators.* (Interview with PD on July 18, 2019)

The above responses of the participants explained the different musical rhymes and songs they employed in teaching ECCE children language and communication skills and other relevant skills. They use three major types of songs namely, action songs, online songs, and speech development songs. The participants chose songs based on the theme or content to be taught. There are songs to teach the children about different animals in the water and on the land, courtesy, colours, weather, seasons, days of the week, numbers, and so on. While these songs convey content, they also enhance language development. Those educators who were musically literate composed simple songs to teach their children, while others relied on downloading children's songs from the Internet.

The participants stated that they incorporated songs into all the learning activities. However, two of them confessed that there were topics that they still taught using traditional teaching methods, but that there were very few of these. They mentioned songs incorporated with dramatic play; songs to support children to develop speech, language and communication skills; movement and matching songs for physical development; songs to teach children tolerance, to help them to develop socially; and songs for cognitive development. The respondents also mentioned nonsensical songs, purely for the purpose of calming hyperactive, disruptive, and emotionally unstable children. One of the participants stated that she used a series of isiZulu songs to teach the children, because isiZulu speakers constituted the majority of her class.

## **5.6 THEME FOUR: THE IMPACT OF THE USE OF MUSICAL RHYMES**

This theme addresses how the participants' use of music to teach language and communication skills influenced their children's language development, and it closely responds to research question four (*What impact does the use of musical rhymes as a strategy to teach communication (listening and reading) skills have on the language development of children aged three and four?*).

Participant C stated that the use of music positively influenced her children's memory and language development, and she contrasted her current teaching methods using music with the methods of her former school, where music was not used:

*Definitely music aids the children's language development. Whenever I use a song to teach them, even after the lesson they continue to sing the song repeatedly and through that they are able to develop how to talk and say the right thing. Especially the use of isiZulu songs to teach them how to communicate are very effective. I told you initially that we didn't use music like this in my former school. I can tell that the use of music in this school has a significant impact on the children's speech development. The children are very sharp in responding to questions. I believe that the use of rhymes aids children's speech development faster than the traditional ways of teaching. (Interview with PC on July 22, 2019)*

The other participants below disclosed that they did not have specific content for children aged three and four as they were too young for such content. However, they used music to teach them respect and courtesy. According to Participant D, there was a great development in their communication, especially at age five:

*We do not have specific content on communication skills because we are an English-speaking school, but we use music for virtually all the activities and children learn quicker when you teach them with music, including speech development. As you can see, we are a multiracial school, so we use music to teach the children about different cultures and about tolerance for other races, thereby teaching them courtesy, and teaching them how to talk in a polite way. And we witness great development in them, especially at age five. They could make simple polite sentences and could respond to questions from the teachers. Some of the children that were restless and did not pay attention when they were new could now communicate well and respond to questions. (Interview with PD on July 18, 2019)*

Similarly, Participant A agreed that music improves children's language skills acquisition, especially their speech development, as a result of the repetition and rhythm:

*From my observation of the children, great improvement was noticed in their general performance and especially their ability to listen and comprehend*

*what we are teaching. Also, the use of call-and-response songs where the children are made to repeat the songs several times help them a lot in communication. The use of rhymes, with a clapping rhythm to teach them listening skills, facilitates their language skills acquisition, because as we ask them to repeat the rhymes, they are learning the speech vocabularies imbedded into those rhymes. The vocabularies are blocks for speech development. (Interview with PA, July 12, 2019)*

Participant E concurred with Participant A that singing songs repeatedly improves speech development. She emphasised the importance of explaining the words and meanings of the songs to the children before singing them, in order to enhance the children's language development through full engagement and understanding:

*Music definitely aids the holistic development of children's language and communication skills. In all the songs I sang for the children, I will first explain the words that may be difficult for the children, ensure that they understand the words and what the songs stand for. As the children repeatedly sing the songs, they could easily convert that to speaking, thereby their ability to communicate is enhanced. Besides, music has a strong effect on the cognitive development of the child and a child with high cognitive development can intelligently express themselves and can easily learn other skills. When I started with these children some of them were not coping because the teacher that was with them before me did not use music to teach them, but because I am musically inclined you can see the improvement in the way they respond to questions. (Interview with PE on July 15, 2019)*

The responses of the participants revealed that music has a very positive impact on the development of the total child. They mentioned that the repetitive nature of musical rhymes supported the children's development of speech and listening skills. The songs used were not just any songs, but were songs with various skills incorporated into them for the children to learn. The songs were chosen to purposely teach the children specific skills. Even though the educators unanimously stated that there is no specific language and communication skills content for children aged three and four because of their age,

they all agreed that songs are very effective tools for helping children to develop language and communication skills quickly.

## **5.7 THEME FIVE: BARRIERS TO ECCE EDUCATORS' USE OF MUSICAL RHYMES**

This final main theme presents the various challenges the participants encountered in their use of music to teach ECCE children language and communication skills. The theme does not address one specific research question, but as it emerged throughout their responses to all the questions. The participants stated that as effective as music is in supporting the children to learn the relevant skills, there are barriers that sometimes prevent the educators from using music in the learning environment. From the participants' responses, the following subthemes emerged: 1) educators' insufficient musical training; 2) lack of musical resources to accompany the songs; and 3) non-inclusion of music in the NCF curriculum and teacher-training curriculum.

These sub-themes are discussed below.

### **5.7.1 Educators' insufficient musical training**

The educators complained that they had only received partial training in using music as a pedagogical tool during their teacher training. Some said it had only been mentioned in one module during one semester at university. Hence, they stated that their training in using music as a pedagogical tool was insufficient. Participant B decried her insufficient training in music at university, and wished she could have received more:

*I cannot sing, do not have enough training and do not have a singing voice. I am struggling and get embarrassed at times. Imagine, we did just a module in music during my teacher training and for only a semester. Do you now see the reason why I am struggling with how best to use music to teach? Now I spend a lot of time on trying to upgrade myself because I now realize the importance of music in teaching these children. Virtually all the activities*

*are taught using music. I wish the university knows the great importance of music and gives more training to preservice teachers. (Interview with PC on July 22, 2019)*

Similarly, Participant D had received only partial training in using music as a pedagogical tool during her teacher training at UNISA. However, because she was musically gifted and self-motivated to learn, she made the effort to upgrade her skills on her own:

*I attended UNISA and not much was done in music. We took a module just for a semester, and prior to that I had never received any musical training. When I started this teaching career, especially in the ECCE section, it was not easy initially. I used my imagination, having understood children's nature and characteristics, but if I had had a solid background in music it would have been better. However, I am musically inclined, I am gifted musically, and can compose simple music to guide children to learn whatever skills I want to teach, including teaching them how to listen and communicate in simple sentences correctly. However, I upgraded myself by listening to some children music CDs. (Interview with PD on July 15, 2019)*

Most of the study participants did not believe they had received enough training, or enough depth of training, in using music in children's education. Participant F was an accountant by training; hence she had a limited ability to use music in the learning environment. She stuck to downloaded children's music and relied on her informal knowledge and experience of children as a mother:

*I was a trained accountant but felt called to work with children. I watch some good music for children on the Internet and select the relevant songs for whatever skills I want to teach. I use basic music for the children. I do not have the skill of using complex music to teach. How I wished the curriculum designers for teacher training knew the value of music in teaching children and gave it space in the curriculum. (Interview with PF on July 18, 2019)*

Participant A also expressed how receiving only partial music training was a constraint on her effective use of music in the ECCE learning environment:

*I received training in music partially, and that made it difficult for me to use music to teach at the initial stage of my teaching. I only knew basic music. I could not use the different types of music to teach some complex content, but I have spent eight years in teaching. I have developed myself by going through the Internet to learn various types of music that I can use to teach children. I just take the content to be taught from the curriculum and pick a relevant song that I have downloaded from the Internet. We have a lot of music from the Internet, so I don't get stuck with any content. I also take time to practise singing and even try to learn how to dance, to give of my best. I think every ECCE teacher should have knowledge of music so that we can be more effective in our teaching because music helps the children to learn better and more easily. (Interview with PA on July 15, 2019)*

Many of the ECCE educators who participated in this study did not have enough musical training and did not know the rudiments of music; thus, it became difficult for them to use music effectively as a pedagogic tool. One of the participants categorically confessed that she does not have training in ECD or the Foundation Phase, but depends on her informal education from the church and the Internet. Some do not even know how to play an instrument, so they cannot use all the instruments meant to teach children, such as percussion instruments (triangles, cylinders, tambourines, bells, and so on). Most of the participants claimed that they relied on downloaded children's music from the Internet.

### **5.7.2 Lack of musical resources to accompany the songs**

This sub-theme discusses the issue of the lack of musical resources raised by the participants. They stated that using music as a pedagogical tool requires that there be at least simple percussion instruments to accompany the songs, especially for teaching the children sound, pitch, stress, and phonics in language. However, they complained of a lack of effective resources at the ECCE centres.

Participant F emphasised the lack of musical instruments:

*The big challenge we have in this school is not just that we the teachers are not very sound in music but there are not enough musical instruments. Teaching the children, the rudiments of learning language and communication skills demands a huge effort from the educators. As I earlier said, the major challenge of children is in the area of reading to comprehend, and music is helpful, but we need musical instruments. I wish the Department of Education would come to our aid and support the school with musical instruments. (Interview with PF on July 18, 2019)*

Participant E raised a similar complaint. She believed that the provision of musical instruments to accompany the various songs she uses to teach her children would speed up their learning of any skills. In addition, accompanying songs with instruments makes the learning environment environment livelier and more participatory, thereby making teaching and learning easier to accomplish:

*I have a good understanding of music and have been teaching with it. The only challenge I have is the shortage of musical resources. There are simple musical instruments that teachers are supposed to use to accompany the music, especially for teaching sound, stress, and other concepts, such as helping them with hand eye coordination and fine motor skill development, but these are not available. To achieve the aims and objectives of using songs to teach the children, there is a need for musical accompaniment. How I wish the Department of Education knew this was important and would support the ECCE centres by donating musical instruments. (Interview with PE on July 18, 2019)*

Participant A also voiced the same complaint:

*As I have earlier said, children are very receptive, and music suits their characteristics. For some of us without enough musical training, we download different music from the Internet to teach them, but we cannot download musical instruments from the Internet. There is a need for simple musical instruments, whether already made or improvised, to support them in learning communication skills, but we lack these instruments. (Interview with PA on July 15, 2019)*

However, Participant B had improvised some simple percussion instruments for her class. She decried the fact that her colleagues did not have any musical instrument, and did not know how to improvise:

*I have fewer challenges because I studied music and have knowledge of how to improvise simple percussion instruments, which I did for my class to use, such as the triangle, cylinder, tambourine, bell, clappers, drums, etc. Additionally, I showed the children how to perform body percussion to accompany the songs. This includes clapping their hands and tapping their feet. But some of my colleagues do not have any instruments and do not even know how to play one instrument, so they cannot use all the instruments meant to teach children. The children are small and lack the ability to concentrate if we don't add spice and make the teaching interesting. For instance, the teacher that taught this class before was not musically literate, and I must do a lot for the children to cope with what they are expected to learn. The knowledge and the use of musical instruments to accompany songs for children is very important. (Interview with PB on July 18, 2019)*

The participants complained about the lack of musical resources as one of the challenges hindering them from effectively using music to teach the ECCE children. They all believed that musical instruments to accompany songs — especially simple percussion instruments such as improvised drums, tambourines, woodblocks, gongs, and maracas — are needed in the ECCE learning environment.

### **5.7.3 Non-inclusion of music in the NCF document and in the teacher-training programs**

Under this sub-theme the participants mentioned another issue that constrained their use of music as a tool for teaching their ECCE children. They complained that the NCF document attached music only to the creative arts early learning and development areas, and hence there was no official curriculum time allotted to musical activities other than under creative arts.

Participant F felt that music must be considered in the NCF document as a subject on its own, rather than being integrated with creative arts. She believed that to effectively teach children aged three and four any skills, music is the best tool to use. She felt strongly that music is more relevant than any other subject for children of this age, and that more time needed to be allocated for it in the curriculum:

*The big challenge is that as important as music is to the children, there is no music in the NCF document. So, there is a need for the curriculum designers to specifically consider music so that more time will be given to it. There is only creative arts, but we use music to teach different content such as numeracy, rhymes, language development, and other skills. I think music is more relevant than any other subject for these children at this age.*  
(Interview with PF on July 18, 2019)

Participant B believed that the reason why many ECCE educators did not use music in their learning environments was because they did not know how to, because music as a subject is not compulsory in teacher education. She suggested that the curriculum planners for teacher education should remedy this situation:

*I want to suggest that teacher education be reviewed to add music as a compulsory module for ECD pre-service teachers. The teacher education curriculum designers should do something about this. Music must be included in the teacher training programs, so that pre-service teachers, especially in ECD/Foundation Phase, can be fully equipped with musical knowledge. Music really helps a lot, but some teachers do not have the knowledge of how to use music in their learning environment because it is not made compulsory in the teacher education curriculum.* (Interview with PB on July 18, 2019)

Participant E below echoed much of what Participant B had to say:

*I think the ECCE curriculum designers should consider adding music to the NCF curriculum as a content on its own and on teacher training programs, seeing the importance of music in children development, they feel ECCE is just for children to play. But we the ECCE teachers usually organise the*

*play, and spice it up with educative music and support the children to learn any skills. For the development of a total child, music is needed. To me traditional teaching is indoctrinating children with concepts, but using music helps the children to construct learning easily.* (Interview with PE on July 18, 2019)

The participants' responses showed that a single module in music education in the teacher-training curriculum is not enough to equip ECCE educators to use music to teach their children. They also suggested that music be made a compulsory subject in teacher education to adequately prepare the ECCE educators to use this important subject effectively to benefit the children. In addition, music is seen as a strong tool for aiding effective learning of ECCE children, and it therefore must be considered as a subject on its own in the NCF curriculum.

## **5.8 ANALYSIS OF DATA FROM PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION**

This section discusses the learning environment observations conducted by the researcher to observe how the participants practically demonstrated and enacted what they had said during the interviews. The observations were conducted according to an observation schedule drawn up by the researcher (see Appendix K), which focused on the educators' understanding of using music in the learning environment to support the children to learn language and communication skills, the various types of musical rhymes employed, and the children's responses during the teaching and learning activities. Some of the observed activities were recorded for the purpose of analysis. This section is analysed under two themes: The ECCE educators' understanding of the use of music in the learning environment and the various musical rhymes used, the learning environment atmosphere, and the children's response.

### **5.8.1 The ECCE educators' understanding of the use of music in the learning environment**

The learning environment observations were conducted both inside and outside the participants' learning environments to examine how they carried out their teaching

activities with the children. The researcher arrived before the commencement of the activities in order to avoid disrupting the class, and also introduced herself to the children by greeting them and shaking hands with them, to ensure comfortable familiarity with the children and to avoid any apprehension or discomfort because of her presence. The researcher also became involved in the activities by singing along with them and assisting the educator to organise them.

The educator of the first class observed (Participant C) had already told me that at their school they seldom taught communication skills to the children because of their age. However, because I had earlier told them the focus of the study, some try to use music that speaks to communication development in children, she brought out a file containing different songs, picked one, and started singing while the children sang after her. It was a call-and-response kind of song. The educator was musically literate and was able to select a relevant song that suited the topic.

This class happened to be the first period of the day, and the first song was meant to welcome and communicate orderliness. Most of the children followed but there were two new children who had joined the class that very day, and who were unruly and could not concentrate. However, by the time the educator had shifted to another song, the new children had caught up and joined the others in singing the content. The educator rewarded those who sang well with a gift, and nearly all the children received the gift. In this learning environment the educator had various instruments which she shared amongst the children. She used a song to teach words with stresses, and when the educator reached the point of stress, she signalled to the children and most of them used the percussion instruments they were playing to show the stress while watching the educator. Two or three of the children struggled with the teaching style, especially the new pupils. However, Participant E was musically inclined and had a good understanding of how to align the songs with the content.

The second learning environment observation was more organised than the first one. Participant E had sound training in music and could create simple compositions to teach the children.

Participant E explained the researcher's presence before commencing with the teaching activities. She introduced the topic in a traditional way before including music, and

because the educator had been using music in the learning environment for a while, the children all sang along well with the educator. Participant E then introduced the content she intended to teach the children, which had already been incorporated into the songs, and explained and read it to the children while they recited after her. She explained the meaning and the correct pronunciation, and made the children pronounce the words one after the other. The next song taught the children three-letter words with the same sound. This was done in the form of rhymes, with the children happily reciting the words after the educator.

The third learning environment observation was conducted at the second ECCE centre, with two classes of children aged three and four combined. The participants in charge of this class (Participant A and Participant C) had partial knowledge of music, and depended heavily on a series of songs downloaded from the Internet. The first topic was courtesy, so they used songs that were about appreciating grandparents, and which contained vocabulary relevant to courtesy and appreciation. This vocabulary was taught to the children through the songs, some of which were just choruses, while some were call-and-response songs. The other topic the participants discussed with the children was listening skills. The children were made to sing the songs several times for them to get the learning outcome.

There were differences observed in the way the participants carried out the teaching and learning activities with the use of songs. Participant A and Participant C, who had combined their classes, did not have a comfortable teaching flow using the downloaded songs, as did Participant E and Participant B from the other ECCE centre, who had a sound knowledge of music. However, the songs selected were relevant to the content taught and they were able to convey the intended learning outcomes.

The learning environment observations showed that the ECCE educators understood the use of music to teach the children. Both the composed songs and the downloaded songs were well selected and were in line with the content being taught. However, the way in which the participants used the various music and rhymes revealed that they did not have the same level of musical knowledge and experience. The participants with musical training were able to apply their experience and absorb themselves in the activities and flow while using music to teach. Additionally, these musically trained

educators (Participants B and E) used music in their classes more often than those who were not. While those with partial musical training stuck to downloaded songs from the Internet, they did use music in their teaching.

### **5.8.2 The various musical rhymes used, the learning environment atmosphere, and the children's response**

At the two ECCE centres, a series of themes were lined up to be taught to the children, such as two-letter words, listening skills, learning about animals in the water and on the land, and speech development. Some songs and rhymes were chosen for their ability to teach communication, such as how to show appreciation, how to greet someone, and how to show courtesy. Other songs were chosen for their ability to teach self-confidence. There were songs to teach the alphabet, phonics, and different colours, and action songs were used to help the children to learn. The songs took different forms: there were call-and response songs, elementary pieces of instrumental music to help them learn sound and pitch, and short stories with accompanying songs. The themes taught by the educators were divided into two groups: content to teach speech development, and content meant to teach general skills.

The songs were performed with the children in two major formations: a circle or a line formation. The formation was chosen based on the theme being taught and the type of songs being used. For songs that were being used to teach vocabulary, sounds, or two letter words to aid the children's speech development, the children were made to sit in a circle formation with their instruments, while the educator sat in the centre with the content to be learned written on small cards. Songs to support learning in general were performed with the children sitting in a line formation. The children formed lines depending on how many of them were involved in the singing activities. The content to be learned was incorporated into the songs. For example, the vocabulary of appreciation, greetings, and courtesy were unified into the songs, with the purpose of teaching the children how to show courtesy and appreciation. Songs that demonstrated a process or activity were often sung as call-and-response songs.

The learning environment observations confirmed that using music and song is the best method to teach children aged three and four. The participants taught certain content in the traditional way, but when they shifted to music, the children shouted and screamed with joy. The children who were fatigued or sleepy would suddenly perk up and join in the singing. Most of the participants had stated that the children were enthusiastic and lively when learning through music and song. The researcher witnessed this at first hand during the learning environment observations, where the children's active participation in the learning activities and enthusiasm were clear.

## **5.9 RESULTS OF THE DOCUMENT ANALYSIS**

This section addresses the various documents used at the two ECCE centres, such as the ECCE curriculum, and the educators' weekly and daily guides. The two centres had similar curricula. They both use the NCF curriculum and the Dolphin school curriculum. For the ECCE unit, they focused on the Dolphin curriculum and the NCF for children from birth to four years. The participants complained that there is no allocation for music in the NCF curriculum apart from a small allocation in the creative arts section of the Life Skills programme; hence, they adopted the Dolphin curriculum and organised the content into various themes that serve as guides for the educators on a weekly basis. However, the researcher scrutinised the curriculum and found that there was not much content related to teaching communication and language skills, especially at the first centre. The reason given was that children from birth to four years are too young to learn these skills, and that they start teaching communication skills to children when they are five years old. There was therefore very little content that spoke to the children's communication and language development.

The major content prevalent in the curriculum was: me and my body, home, pets, jobs people do, garden insects, animals in the water and on land, seasons, days of the week, colours, and special days such as Grandparents' Day, Heritage Day, Mothers' Day, Fathers' Day, and Christmas Day. There was no specific content to support children's learning of communication skills. However, they used songs that taught courtesy, love, tolerance, and appreciation.

The second centre had a similar syllabus; however, they did have some content for supporting the children's learning of communication skills, such as two-letter words, sounds, digraphs, and phonics. They also had content on emotional development, tolerance for other cultures, and self-confidence. These two centres had collections of songs that they used to communicate the aforementioned content to the children. Some of the songs were as follows:

### **SONG FOR SPEECH DEVELOPMENT**

Put two parts  
together, Get a word  
that's new.

Let's put together  
syllables to see what  
we can do.

Milk and shake make milkshake  
what a tasty treat.

Cup and cakes make cupcakes.

They're such fun to eat.

Cakes are baking; milk is  
shaking Cup is filling; milk is  
spilling.

### **CHORUS**

Corn and flakes make cornflakes

Cocoa's in the cup

Pan and cakes make pancakes,

Breakfast coming up.

Pancakes frying, pancakes flipping,

Pancakes flying, syrup dripping.

### **BAA, BAA, BLACK SHEEP**

Baa, baa, black sheep, have you any  
wool? Yes sir, yes sir, three bags full!

One for the master,  
And one for the dame,  
One for the little boy  
Who lives down the  
lane.

Baa, baa, black sheep,  
Have you any wool?  
Yes sir, yes sir,  
Three bags full...

Baa, baa, black sheep, have you any wool?  
Yes sir, yes sir, three bags full!

### **HUMPTY DUMPTY**

Humpty Dumpty sat on the wall,  
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall!  
All the King's horses and all the King's men,  
Couldn't put Humpty together again!

Humpty Dumpty fell on his head,  
They picked him up gently and put him to bed,  
And all the King's horses and all the King's men,  
They put Humpty Dumpty together again!

### **FARMER BILLY**

Farmer Billy has got a cat and Pussy is his name  
Farmer Billy has got a cat and Pussy is his name  
P-U-S-S-Y, P-U-S-S-Y, P-U-S-S-Y, and Pussy is his name.

### **GREETINGS**

Hello everybody, so glad to see you!  
Hello everybody, we're so glad to see you!  
Hello to John, so glad to see you!  
Hello to Lynn, so glad to see you too.  
Hello to Mommy, so glad to see you!  
Hello to Daddy, so glad to see you too!  
Hello to Uncle Jerry, so glad to see you!  
Hello to Grandma Fred, so glad to see you!  
Hello everybody, so glad to see you!  
Hello everybody, we're so glad to see you.

## **5.10 TRIANGULATION OF DATA**

Triangulation of data involves examining the generated data that was done through more than one source to confirm if there were tension between the information generated (Noble, & Heale, 2019). In this study, three data generation approaches were employed. These include semi-structure interview, participants observation and document analysis. One on one interview was done with the participants, followed by analysis of the documents used in the centres by the educators after through checking through and compare the information from interview and the document and found that there is no discrepancy, I proceeded for observation exercises. All that the participant said tally with what I observed during the teaching and learning activities. There were no tensions between the reported practices and implementation.

## **5.11 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has presented the data generated on ECCE educators' use of music to teach language and communication skills to children aged three and four. The data was generated through semi-structured interviews and learning environment observations at the two urban ECCE centres, and through document analysis. The data generated was intended to respond to the four critical questions underpinning this study. The findings were organised into the five main themes, with associated sub-themes, that emerged from the thematic analysis of the data from the semi-structured interviews and from the learning environment observations. The report consisted of the researcher's and the participants' voices. In addition, the participants' voices were quoted verbatim to ensure that there was no distortion of their information. The findings from the data established that the ECCE educators at the two centres in this study understood the use of music as a developmentally appropriate pedagogy for teaching children aged three and four; however, they did not have enough musical training. The following chapter presents a discussion of the findings.

## CHAPTER 6

### DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

#### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented the data generated on the use of music to teach language and communication skills to ECCE children aged three and four. The data was generated from six ECCE educators at two ECCE centres through semi-structured interviews, learning environment observations, and document analysis. This chapter discusses the findings in relation to the four critical research questions that guided the study, in relation to the study's theoretical framework, drawing on Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (SCT), and in relation to the literature reviewed. The research questions were:

- (i) What are the ECCE educators' understandings of using musical rhymes as a strategy for teaching communication (listening and reading) skills to children aged three to four?
- (ii) How do ECCE educators use musical rhymes as a strategy to teach communication (listening and reading) skills to children aged three and four?
- (iii) Why do ECCE educators use musical rhymes as a strategy to teach communication (listening and reading) skills to children aged three and four?
- (iv) What impact does the use of musical rhymes as a strategy to teach communication (listening and reading) skills have on the language development of children aged three and four?

The findings are presented and discussed under four main headings:

- (i) ECCE educators' understanding of using musical rhymes to teach communication • Reasons for using musical rhymes to teach ECCE children
- (ii) Different types of music used in the ECCE learning environment and their impact on children's language development, and
- (iii) Barriers to the use of music as a strategy to teach language and communication skills.

In the following sections, the findings are discussed under these headings.

## **6.2 ECCE EDUCATORS' UNDERSTANDING OF USING MUSICAL RHYMES TO TEACH COMMUNICATION**

This section discusses the findings on the participants' understanding of the use of music to teach communication skills to ECCE children, responding directly to research question one (*What are the ECCE educators' understandings of using musical rhymes as a strategy for teaching communication (listening and reading) skills to children aged three to four?*). The study established that the participants' understanding was associated with the following sub-themes: 1) ECCE educators' musical training; 2) ECCE educators' understanding of children's development; and 3) personal musical development using online audio and video.

The nature and characteristics of children aged three and four demand that their educators employ holistic teaching methods that are appropriate to their developmental stage to support them to learn desirable skills. Urban et al. (2012) raised similar points, declaring that the quality of ECCE depends on the educators' and caregivers' proficiency and understanding of multiple teaching styles. Similarly, Yusuf and Enesi (2012) asserted that all ECCE educators, parents and caregivers, require a good understanding of the nature and principles guiding child development, and should adopt the best approaches to impart skills to them in both informal and formal settings. Music is found to be a relevant and effective teaching strategy that can be employed in the ECCE learning environment. Findings from this study established that the participants understood the use music as an implementation strategy in the ECCE learning environment and have been using it. This is congruent with the NCF, which demands the promotion of the communication skills of ECCE children, and instructs ECCE educators to employ music to teach “different sounds and words”, “sound games”, and “rhythm and pitch”, to make learning appealing to children (DBE, 2015, pp. 42–43).

### **6.2.1 ECCE teachers' musical training**

The findings from this study revealed that the ECCE educators understood the use of musical rhymes to teach their children communication skills, due to the training in

music as a pedagogical approach received during their pre-service teacher training. However, the training received varied from one participant to the other. Some had received training in the theory of music and in instrumental music, and had been taught how to construct some musical compositions and play a musical instrument. Two out of the six participants had received sound music training at university, while three, who were products of UNISA, claimed that they had received partial musical training as part of the ECD programme. One of the participants stated that she had received her music training when in high school. Those with sound musical training faced fewer challenges in using music as a pedagogical tool in the learning environment. One of them added that music courses are compulsory at the teacher-training institutions in the country where she had received her teacher training, and that teaching practice in music was a mandatory exercise for preservice teachers. This finding was congruent with Barrett and Bond (2015), De Vries (2013), who found that educators who receive training in music have self-efficacy in using music as a pedagogical medium to teach their children. The research shows that nearly all South African universities offers creative arts as a subject in the pre-service teacher education programmes; however, the subject is usually taught within a single semester. Nevertheless, the pre-service teachers have a basic knowledge of the use of music in the learning environment (cf. 5.3.1; Van Vuuren & Eurika, 2018). In the context of ECCE, the finding is also congruent with Vygotsky's (1986) SCT, which emphasised that the educator as the MKO must have a deeper understanding than the children.

However, the findings of this study showed that while all the participants had some training in music as pedagogy, the majority did not have enough training to prepare them to teach the ECCE children using music. This finding was confirmed by Eurika (2018), who found that the training in music pedagogy received in teacher training is not enough to ensure the educators' effective use of music in the learning environment. Almutairi and Shukri (2016) and Beukes (2016) also reported that most ECCE educators have limited skills in using music as pedagogy due to inadequate training, as 80% of them confessed to having difficulty in composing and using appropriate songs and rhymes for all the recommended ECCE content. This finding was not congruent with Vygotsky's (1986) idea of the educator as the MKO, as the educator participants

did not feel sufficiently competent to confidently support the children in acquiring knowledge and skills through using music.

### **6.2.2 ECCE educators' understanding of children's development**

The findings of this study established that the participants aided their understanding and proficiency in the use of music to teach ECCE children in two primary ways. Firstly, through their teacher training in ECD, the participants studied various child development theories that expanded their knowledge on the best teaching strategies for children. Thus, their knowledge of children's developmental milestones and stages prompted their choice of music to assist the ECCE children to learn language and communication skills effectively. Those participants with formal musical training stated that they learned child development theories during their teacher training, especially Piaget's cognitive theory, and improved their knowledge of children, their characteristics, and the best strategies to adopt in teaching them. The participants further recognised that ECCE children learn through structured and unstructured play, and that incorporating songs and play into all the activities in ECCE centres are the developmentally appropriate method and practice for children aged three and four. This finding is congruent with the findings of Lin, Li, & Yang, (2019) who declared that children, unlike adults, learn better through a variety of structured and unstructured playful activities using physical movement and vocalisations.

Secondly, most of the participants are parents, thus they claimed that they understood the nature and characteristics of children aged three and four, and that they learned better and faster with the use of music. One of the participants stated that she does not have formal musical training but had knowledge of how children develop from her motherhood experiences and from the church as a children's educator. Thus, she declared that the best teaching method for children aged three and four is music. The ideas of these participants are congruent with Džanić and Pejić's (2016) finding that music is a strong tool that aids children's vocabulary development and retention, and their suggestion that music be incorporated into all of Gardner's teaching intelligences.

The participants of this study were therefore conversant with the developmental stages and nature of young children. One of the participants specifically mentioned that the

best way of assisting children to learn is to understand their developmental stages and to also have knowledge of various child development theories. This finding concurs with earlier research conducted by Knight and Rabon (2017), which found that studying young children through a developmental lens helps educators to understand their needs and how they might best help them learn effectively, since children in the ECCE phase lack the ability to communicate eloquently. Furthermore, the Knight and Rabon (2017) established that children who learn from educators who have an understanding of how children learn and develop, are likely to attain their potential in achieving the required skills, including communication skills. Taole's (2013) work was also congruent with this finding, as it affirmed that the ability of the educator to adopt developmentally appropriate teaching strategies is a determining factor in children' acquisition of expected skills, including communication skills. Additionally, the finding is in congruent with Sociocultural theory's advocates for people with higher levels of skills and knowledge to effectively interact with children for effective acquisition of relevant skills (Gealy, Tinney, Macdonald, & Waters, 2020).

### 6.2.3 Personal musical development using online audio and video

The participants in this study further established their understanding of using musical pedagogies in the ECCE learning environment by devoting their time to upgrading their skills though exploring the different children's music available online. Most of the participants confessed to the fact that the musical training they had received was not enough to equip them with sufficient knowledge and skill to use music as a pedagogical strategy in the learning environment. Thus, they educated themselves by listening to and watching different videos on children's music to enhance their effectiveness in teaching the children using music. This finding correlated with Ruismäki and Juvonen (2009) and Wajszczyk (2014), who stated that the Internet broadens the field of music education and of language and communication skills. The finding further revealed that the pre-service teacher training in creative arts does not fully equip the educators in this vital and important subject. The participants had a good understanding of how best the children aged three and four should be taught, but they do not have the adequate skill to do so in relation to musical pedagogies. This was congruent with Van Vuuren and Eurika's (2018) finding that compressing of all the creative arts subjects into one

semester of pre-service teacher training at most South African universities does not enough to equip the pre-service teacher to effectively use music in the learning environment. Thus, the participants resorted to self-education by downloading children's songs from the Internet to support their teaching.

Additionally, the participants confessed that they devoted time to developing their musical performance skills at home, by singing in the car and singing with colleagues during their music classes. However, these participants lacked the ability to develop a comfortable teaching flow using the downloaded music during teaching and learning activities. The participants' independent efforts to develop their musical pedagogies was in line with Blimpo and Pugatch (2019) empirical study that emphasised the importance of educators' personal development and skills to enhance their competency and to enable them to give of their best. The finding is also congruent with Ryan (2020), whose study asserted that the ECCE educators employed musical activities in their learning environments, which include singing along to CDs or following musical cues.

Additionally, Burke's (2013) study affirmed that the ECCE educators could upgrade their skills by downloading music such as nursery rhymes, meditation sounds, lullabies, instrumental music, folk music, and dramatic music to support the ECCE children to acquire skills.

Thus, the findings from this study were not in line with previous studies that claimed that the majority of ECCE educators lacked the understanding and knowledge of how musical pedagogies could support ECCE children to learn (Bolduc & Evrard, 2017; Cloete & Delpont, 2015; Ganyata, 2015). The findings of this study established that the participants did have some awareness and some musical training.

### **6.3 REASONS FOR USING MUSICAL RHYMES TO TEACH ECCE CHILDREN**

There is always a rationale behind the choice of any implementation strategy for teaching and learning activities. The findings of this research revealed various reasons why the ECCE educators felt that music was an appropriate tool for teaching the ECCE children the required skills, including communication skills. This section therefore

responds directly to research question three (*Why do ECCE educators use musical rhymes as a strategy to teach communication (listening and reading) skills to children aged three and four?*). The study established that the participants' reasons were associated with the following sub-themes: 1) the nature and characteristics of children in the ECCE phase; 2) music is found in every facet of life; and 3) music has developmental and therapeutic purposes.

### **6.3.1 The nature and characteristics of children in the ECCE phase**

The participants focused on the specific characteristics of children in the ECCE phase, and emphasised that ECCE educators should not try to stick to traditional methods of school teaching in the ECCE learning environment. Children aged three and four have short attention spans and are very physically active, thus the method of engaging with them in the learning environment should try to appeal to their need for movement, participation, and stimulation. The finding is congruent with a study conducted by Wegner et al. (2013), who found that young children's nature, characteristics, and way of learning differs drastically from that of other youth and adults, hence the importance of using a variety of pedagogical strategies to impart the essential knowledge and skills to them. The participants in this study stated that ECCE children aged three and four are hyperactive, restless, playful, and enthusiastic. They cannot be expected to conform to traditional methods of teaching, as this will hinder their achievement of teaching and learning outcomes and objectives. This finding is supported by Izumi-Taylor et al., (2012), who affirmed that young children are active and enjoy physical activities that include jumping and moving around, hence inculcating musical play into their daily activities will enhance their healthy development and learning of any skills (cf. 5.4.1). Another observation from this study was that children aged three and four are at the stage of speech development where they enjoy mimicking adults. This is congruent with the NCF statement that children communicate and express their feelings through signs, body language, chuckling, babbling, gurgling, and speaking (DBE, 2015; cf. 5.4.1). The study established that the repetitive nature of songs suits ECCE children's characteristics and nature, thus aiding their acquisition of communication skills. This finding concurs with Khaghaninejad et al. (2016), who reported that music plays a key role in early language acquisition and can help boost communication learning.

The findings of this study established that the participants had an in-depth understanding of the developmental milestones and characteristics of children aged three and four, and were aware of the most suitable pedagogies for supporting their learning and acquisition of skills. Thus, they all agreed that the best and appropriate method for teaching them is through music. This finding is further supported by Winter (2015) and Jerome et al. (2009), who claimed that young children have a tendency toward social inhibition and neurotic behaviour, and that the best teaching method for calming them and supporting them to learn is by using music. Thus, this study has confirmed that the ECCE participants not only understood the use of musical rhymes in the learning environment but were able to provide reasons for their use. The nature and characteristics of the children aged three and four was one of the reasons for why they deemed it appropriate to employ musical pedagogies to support the ECCE children to learn the desirable skills. The finding correlate with Socio- Cultural Theory's claims that effective learning lies in the social interaction between the children and more skilful and knowledgeable person (Yasnitsky,2018).

### **6.3.2 Music is found in every facet of life and culture**

Musical pedagogies are said to be the best teaching strategies to support ECCE children's development of language and communication skills, because of the universality of music. The participants stated that music is present in every religion and culture; hence, it is believed to be a universal language. They observed that every person is born with music, and lives with it from the cradle to the grave. This is supported by (Chorna, Filippa, De Almeida, Lordier, Monaci, Hüppi, & Guzzetta, 2019) who reported that the human foetus starts to have a perception of sound at about 25 weeks while in the womb. Other studies have found that music is an important part of everyday life across the globe, and that employing it in the learning environment makes language acquisition easy for children (Hogenes et al., 2014; Khaghaninejad et al., 2016). The participants further stated that music is one of the major mechanisms for cultural identification. This finding corresponds with Conesa and Rubio's (2015) study, which found that nursery rhymes are present in every culture and in all

languages, hence their usefulness in an inclusive learning environment to strengthen ECCE children's language and communication skills. These points are aligned with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which emphasised the acquisition of skills through effective interaction and socialisation within the children's cultural context (Gealy, Tinney, Macdonald, & Waters, 2020)

This universal familiarity with and enjoyment of music made the ECCE educators aware of the usefulness of musical pedagogies in the ECCE learning environment. The participants in this study declared that music is included in every life activity and event, and in nearly every organisation. Because children are familiar with music and enjoy it, it is one of the best strategies for teaching children.

### **6.3.3 Music for developmental and therapeutic purposes**

The therapeutic efficacy of music was stated as another reason for using it as teaching strategy in the ECCE learning environment. The participants mentioned that as young as the ECCE children are, some suffer from depression and stress, emotional instability, and hyperactivity, and that music is found to have the therapeutic effect of helping to calm children, and thereby helping them to be more receptive to learning the expected skills. They added that music is known for its ability to reduce stress, nervousness, and emotional and physical discomfort, thereby enhancing relaxation during teaching and learning activities. The findings are supported by Werner et al. (2017) and Clark and Harding (2012), who state that music has the potential to alleviate symptoms of depression, hence the prevalence of music in hospitals and psychiatric facilities.

The participants observed music's efficacy in the aiding cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development of children. They mentioned, for example, the use of numeracy songs to aid cognitive development, and how encouraging the children to sing together or take turns in singing in the learning environment helped to inculcate social skills. This finding aligns with Young (2016), Cloete and Delpont (2015), and Hallam (2010), who found that introducing a musical vocabulary to children in their early years enhances speech development and facilitates the early acquisition of emotional, cognitive, and social skills. The finding also aligns Christiner and Reiterer (2013), who established that employing songs as teaching strategies helped to activate

children cognitively, emotionally, and physically, thus leading to easy comprehension of the learning materials. Trimble and Hesdorffer (2017) and Hawkins (2016) found that musical activities enhanced the development of aural sensitivity, syntactic retention, and metacognitive knowledge, which are needed for the acquisition of language and communication skills. Dukić (2018) also found that introducing music to children at a young age could positively influence the acquisition of reading, listening, and mental skills.

#### **6.4 DIFFERENT TYPES OF MUSIC USED IN THE ECCE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AND THEIR IMPACT ON CHILDREN'S LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT**

The findings reported the different types of music employed in the ECCE learning environment and the impact of the songs on the children's language development. This responds directly to research question two (*How do ECCE educators use musical rhymes as a strategy to teach communication (listening and reading) skills to children aged three and four?*) and research question four (*What impact does the use of musical rhymes as a strategy to teach communication (listening and reading) skills have on the language development of children aged three and four?*). The participants' responses are discussed under the following sub-themes: 1) different types of music used in the ECCE learning environment; and 2) the impact of this music on the children's language development.

##### **6.4.1 Different types of music used in the ECCE learning environment**

Different types of music with different purposes were employed by ECCE educators. The participants stated that they used music for nearly all of the activities with their ECCE children; however, the choice of the music used was determined by the theme of the week. These used call-and-response songs, the repetitive nature of which aids children's speech development; elementary instrumental music, to teach stress and pitch when teaching them English sounds; dramatic play with musical accompaniment, to support the children's learning of social skills; informative songs for teaching different types of content related to general knowledge, vocabulary, and numeracy;

songs for teaching emotional skills, such as self-confidence and relaxation; and songs for celebrating different occasions, such as Mother's Day, Father's Day, and so on. The participants stated that they also employed songs downloaded from the Internet specifically to teach communication skills related to listening and reading, for example songs that taught the alphabet, two-letter words, phonics, sounds in language, and songs with repetition to help them develop their speech ability. The participants also mentioned movement and matching songs to teach the children hand-eye coordination and to also support physical development.

The finding on the participants' use of different types of music aligns with Burke's (2013) identification of nursery rhymes, meditation sounds, lullabies, instrumental music, folk music, and dramatic play with musical accompaniment, as useful tools for teaching various developmental skills, and language and communication skills to ECCE children. One of the participants employed isiZulu songs in her teaching, stating that the majority of her children spoke isiZulu and enjoyed being taught with those songs; hence, she uses different isiZulu songs to teach her children to aid their speech development. This finding correlates with Wafula's (2019) finding that employing indigenous music helps to preserve the culture of a people. Similarly, Vygotsky's SCT emphasises the holistic development of a child through his or her interaction with the cultural setting (Vygotsky, 1986). The finding is also congruent with Robinson's (2012) finding that educators are agents of change who have the capability to interact with children in the sociocultural setting of their school community, with the aim of imparting the skills that aid children's growth and, development. Similarly, the study is in line with Mashiya's (2011) observation that the Language in Education Policy (LiEP) of 1997 stipulates that educators and caregivers give instruction to children in their mother tongue, as this will assist the children to appreciate their identity.

However, this study found that the ECCE curriculum used in these centres (a combination of the NCF curriculum and the Dolphin curriculum) does not have much formal content that supports children to learn communication skills; hence, the songs are employed to assist the children to learn these general skills. This finding is contrary to the recommendations of early childhood educators, who state that employing appropriate communication to teach ECCE children is confirmed to aid the total development of a child (Radic-Hozo, 2014). Likewise, Benbenishty and Hannink

(2015) declare that adults must speak, sing, read to, and listen to young children to support them as they learn to communicate and listen, and later to read and write.

Although, the educators at the second ECCE centre did use songs to support their children's acquisition and development of speech and language, they declared that children aged three and four are too young to learn communication skills, and that these are taught as general skills. This is refuted by the NCF, which stipulates that ECCE children should be given the opportunity to creatively communicate through dramatization, singing, musical play, dance, and exploration of music movement (DBE, 2015). The NCF curriculum further stated that musical activities help babies, toddlers, and young children to develop their physical skills and creativity; stimulate their memory; and promote their socialisation and collaborative spirit, self-discipline, and self-confidence. Correspondingly, empirical studies have attested to the use of music to improve communication skills and vocabulary recall in the Foundation Phase and ECCE phase (Muthivhi, & Kriger, 2019; Oesch, 2019; Hugo & Horn, 2013), hence the viewpoint of the participants from that ECCE centre does not align with these studies.

#### **6.4.2 The impact of the use of music on the children's language development**

The responses of the participants revealed that music has a tremendously positive impact on young children's holistic development. They stated that it teaches tolerance, socialisation skills, helps children to relate in a polite manner, and teaches them to form simple sentences and express themselves by responding to questions. This finding aligns with Torppa and Huotilainen, (2019) as well as Vist and Os (2019) who affirm that the use of musical activities helps babies, toddlers, and young children to reach their full potential. Findings from this study further revealed that restless and the hyperactive children could be soothed and controlled with the appropriate music, thereby enabling them to learn with the other children. This finding corresponds with Ehrlin and Gustavsson (2015), whose study established that musical rhymes stimulate children's thoughts and imagination, while relaxing their minds, souls, and spirits.

The participants added that the use of call-and-response songs, where the children were made to repeat the songs, helped the children to acquire communication and language skills, and musical rhymes with clapping rhythms helped the children to learn listening

skills. This finding was congruent with Çevikbas et al. (2018), whose study found that songs are not only for entertainment but are a great resource for helping children to retain the meaning and pronunciation of words in their long-term memory. The findings revealed that music has a strong effect on the cognitive development of a child and supports their learning of any skills with ease, including communication skills. The responses of the participants revealed that music has a significant impact on the total development of the child. They mentioned that the repetitive nature of rhyming songs supported children's development of speech and listening skills. The songs used incorporated various skills for the children to learn, and were chosen purposely to teach the children specific skills. Even though the educators unanimously stated that there was no specific language and communication skills curriculum content for children aged three and four because of their age, they all agreed that songs are a useful tool for helping children to develop language and communication skills.

The above findings in this study were supported by previous research on the different impacts of music on children's holistic development. Plato (in Winter, 2015, p. 80) declared: "I would teach children music, physics, and philosophy: but most importantly music, for the patterns in music and all the arts are the keys to learning other skills". Similarly, Muthivhi and Kriger (2019) affirms that allowing young children to participate in musical activities helps them to develop the skills for socialisation, self-confidence, socialising, a sense of accomplishment, teamwork, mutual support, and tolerance, which promote healthy and harmonious living in the society. It has been confirmed that children taught using music have good verbal intelligence, language skills, and reading ability (Miendlarzewska & Trost, 2014; Patston & Tippett, 2011). This finding is further reinforced by SCT assertion that imparting skills to children could be accelerated through mediation by tools and signs such as creative art (Gealy, Tinney, Macdonald, & Waters, 2020).

This study established that the use of musical rhymes in the ECCE learning environment has a tremendous impact on the total development of children aged three and four. Additionally, using music as an implementation strategy to teach communication skills was confirmed to have a positive effect on the language development of the children. The repetitive nature of musical rhymes aids the children's development of their language ability.

## **6.5 BARRIERS TO THE USE OF MUSIC AS A STRATEGY TO TEACH LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS**

The findings revealed the challenges encountered by the ECCE educators in their use of musical pedagogies to teach their children. As crucial as music is to the holistic development of children, the study established that there were barriers to its use by the ECCE educators in their learning environments, such as insufficient musical training, inadequate of musical resources, the non-inclusion of music in the NCF for children ages 0-4, and the indifferent attitude of the government in supporting the ECCE centres with musical instruments. These barriers are discussed according to the following sub-themes: 1) educator's insufficient musical training 2) and inadequate support from government in the provision of musical instruments 3) and the non-inclusion of music in the NCF document.

### **6.5.1 Educators' insufficient musical training**

The findings of this study revealed that out of the six participants interviewed and observed, only two had sound musical training and could confidently employ music as a teaching strategy in the learning environment. The competence of these two was witnessed in the researcher's learning environment observations. While the remaining four participants struggled with the right choice of music to use in the learning environment, the musically trained educators efficiently selected the appropriate music with the right content, and ensured the children's smooth engagement during the activity. The majority of the participants depended solely on informal music education from the church and the Internet. Some of them did not have knowledge of simple musical instruments for children, such as percussion instruments (the triangle, cylinder, tambourine, bell and others).

These findings were supported by Welch and Henley (2014) and Henley (2017), who stated that ECCE educators need to have an in-depth knowledge of music before they can adopt it as teaching strategy; however, many of them are not skilled when it comes to musical pedagogies. Almutairi and Shukri's (2016) research on educators' understanding of the use of songs to teach verbal skills to pre-schoolers reported that

80% of the participants confessed to having difficulty in composing appropriate songs and rhymes for all the recommended content. The findings also correspond with Adams-Ojugbele and Moletsane (2019), who found that educators' qualifications and their level of proficiency in their specialisation determines their productivity and effectiveness in interacting with and imparting skills to their children. Vygotsky (1997) established that the determining factor in the effective teaching of skills to children is that the educators assume the role of the more knowledgeable other (MKO) in employing diverse teaching strategies to scaffold the children in their zone of proximal development (ZPD). This is also supported by the findings of Castellà i Fosch (2017).

### **6.5.2 Inadequate support from government in the provision of musical instruments**

The programme designed for ECCE is not adequately resourced. The findings indicated a need for musical resources, such as elementary musical instruments, to support musical pedagogies. Instruments such as xylophones, drums, and rattles are needed in the ECCE learning environment. These support the teaching of language sounds and pitch, and the development of fine and gross motor skills, and hand-eye coordination. The provision of these musical instruments, as with other resources, is left in the hands of parents and school management, and hence the available resources are insufficient for what is needed. For example, one of the participants claimed that she only used improvised musical resources that were not as authentic and accurate as the real instruments. The lack of sufficient resources prevents the educators from effectively using musical pedagogies in the learning environment. This finding was congruent with Crooke and McFerran's (2015) finding that the government's provision of musical resources was inadequate and that ECCE centres were required to provide their own resources unassisted. The finding was also congruent with Nkambule and Amsterdam's (2018) finding that the curriculum designers and school managers needed to support schools by providing them with sufficient resources.

This study established that the ECCE educators understand the importance of using musical pedagogies in the learning environment, and the essence of what these

pedagogies involve. However, the educators' partial formal musical training, the inadequate musical resources and instruments, the non-inclusion of music as independent early learning and development areas (ELDA) in the NCF curriculum, and the lack of adequate government support for the ECCE centres in terms of musical resources were barriers to the ECCE educators being able to effectively teach standardised musical activities and programmes in the ECCE learning environment.

### **6.5.3 Non-inclusion of music in the NCF document**

#### **The non-inclusion of music as independent early learning and development areas ELDA in NCF document**

The findings from the study revealed that the NCF document for Ages 0-4 does not accommodate using music to teach communication skills to ECCE children, as music is not included as an independent subject and is only allocated a small amount of curriculum space alongside visual arts. The participants complained that music is not accorded enough space in the NCF curriculum, and that there is a lack of support from educational authorities for the use of music as independent early learning area. Van Vuuren and Van Niekerk (2015) confirmed this in the other grades that Life Skills curriculum where music is included is overloaded; hence, insufficient space and attention is provided for music to be used effectively to educate ECCE children.

## **6.6 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has discussed the research findings in relation to the four critical research questions that guided the study, in relation to the study's theoretical framework (drawing on Vygotsky's SCT), and in relation to the literature review. The critical ideas that emerged from the case study on how six ECCE educators employed musical pedagogies to support ECCE children's acquisition of communication skills, were presented and discussed. The chapter examined both the successes and the challenges experienced by the educators in using music to teach communication skills to children aged three and four. It was established that the ECCE educators had a good understanding of musical pedagogies in the ECCE learning environment, including in relation to teaching communication skills. Different types of music for teaching different concepts were also mentioned by the participants. However, it was discovered

that neither communication skills nor music are adequately accommodated in the ECCE curriculum. They are both taught as general skills. Music is not treated as an independent subject, and is allocated a small amount of time as part of the creativity section of the NCF curriculum. In addition, more than half of the participants of this study did not have enough formal musical training to effectively implement musical pedagogies in the ECCE learning environment. The following chapter is the final chapter. It provides a summary of the study and presents recommendations, informed by the study, for the effective use of music to teach communication skills in the ECCE learning environment.

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **7.1 INTRODUCTION**

My engagement in both informal and formal musical activities with children during Sunday school services, when teaching at Foundation Phase level, as a creative arts educator in high school, and as a contract lecturer in the discipline of ECD inspired my interest in this study. I grew up in a family who had a strong love for music. First thing each morning my parents would gather us children to teach us the word of God through songs. Music was also used to teach us desirable norms, values, and behaviours during bedtime stories. Those songs served as a guide and a warning to me while growing up. In primary school, my teachers would use songs to teach much of the content, from numeracy to learning simple vocabulary, and those songs have stayed with me. Music is highly valued in African culture, as it is part of every major life event: it is used to herald the birth of a child, and in all the other ceremonies connected to one's life events — naming ceremonies, birthdays, marriages, and burial ceremonies. It is also used for worshipping God. Thus, music is found in every facet of life.

As an educator who has taught at all levels of education, from Foundation Phase to university level, I have witnessed the challenges and difficulties encountered by

students in acquiring communication skills across all the levels of education. Children who did not acquire these foundational skills at an early age, especially children from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds, experience ongoing challenges and problems with communication and literacy, even at tertiary level. When these children lack the tools to communicate and express themselves, they sometimes resort to violence, the use of vulgar language, and the vandalism of property. Thus, there is a significant connection between the efficient acquisition of communication skills at an early stage and the total development of a child. However, communication is clearly becoming difficult for children, from the ECCE phase to university level.

This study established that music is able to aid and support children aged three and four to learn any skills, but that it can be specifically employed to positively influence ECCE children's acquisition of literacy and communication skills at a foundational stage of their lives.

Furthermore, as a postgraduate student at a South African University, I am aware of the challenges faced by South African children, who scored so poorly on language skills, even in their mother tongue, in a range of international assessments (DBE, 2011a). Maddock and Maroun (2018) found that the poor performance of these children is yet to be addressed. However, two South African universities (the University of Cape Town and the University of the Witwatersrand) rank among the top two hundred universities worldwide. These academic breakthroughs at tertiary level need be extended to secondary schools, primary schools, pre-primary schools, and all the way to the pre-reception year, which is the focus of this study. Thus, the argument throughout this study was that music has been found to be an effective tool for supporting children's acquisition of communication skills during the critical formative phases of their education. The early acquisition of communication skills is believed to be the foundation for the further development of the child in every other area of life (Radic-Hozo, 2014). Several developed countries and some developing countries have incorporated music into the educational curriculum, with positive results (Burnard et al., 2008; Ehrlin & Gustavsson, 2015).

## 7.2 REFLECTIONS ON RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This qualitative case study aimed to examine the use of music to teach communication skills to ECCE children. The study was guided by the social-constructivist paradigm, according to which an individual acquires knowledge and understanding through his or her interactions within society McChesney and Aldridge (2019), and constructs meaningful experiences and knowledge by interacting with other people within the social context (Churcher, Downs, and Tewksbury, (2014), Dressler, (2019) and Bertram and Christiansen (2014) explained social constructivism as an attempt to comprehend social behaviour, and how people make meaning of their experiences in the challenging contexts in which they function. The social-constructivist perspective led me to gather the life experiences of the participants, who were six ECCE educators from two ECCE centres in an urban setting.

To understand the participants' experiences of using music to teach communication, I employed a qualitative case study design to generate data through multiple sources: semi structured interviews, learning environment observations, and document analysis. Using multiple sources of data helped to strengthen the rigour and trustworthiness of the study. The data was analysed using deductive and inductive methods of analysis. Thematic analysis enabled me to identify various themes that emerged from the interviews, which assisted in addressing the four research questions:

- (i) What are the ECCE educators' understandings of using musical rhymes as a strategy for teaching communication (listening and reading) skills to children aged three to four?
- (ii) How do ECCE educators use musical rhymes as a strategy to teach communication (listening and reading) skills to children aged three and four?
- (iii) Why do ECCE educators use musical rhymes as a strategy to teach communication (listening and reading) skills to children aged three and four?
- (iv) What impact does the use of musical rhymes as a strategy to teach communication (listening and reading) skills have on the language development of children aged three and four?

In reflecting on the research design and methodology adopted to understand the use of music to teach communication skills in the ECCE learning environment, the following three limitations were identified.

Firstly, I felt that not enough time had been spent engaging with the educators during the interviews. This was because of the tight schedules of some of the educators, which required us to rush over the questions and the answers. Also, some participants were reluctant to provide details about their experiences in using music in the learning environment, partly because they did not have enough musical training and were not comfortable in relating their experiences. This showed that I may have missed some vital information concerning this subject.

Secondly, not enough time was allocated for the learning environment observations. I was given only one 30-minute period to observe each participant. It would have been revealing to spend more time observing their teaching and learning activities using music, and observing the children's responses. These first two limitations prevented me from thoroughly probing the impact of the participants' use of musical pedagogies on the children's acquisition of communication skills and their readiness for Grade R.

Thirdly, I did not interact with or have informal discussion with the children who were the recipients of the musical pedagogies, in order to understand how the use of music in the learning environment aided their acquisition of communication skills. This would have assisted me to obtain a deeper understanding of how they felt about being taught using music and songs, and the influence it has on their language development.

However, despite these limitations, some salient points on the use of musical pedagogies to develop the communication skills of ECCE children emerged from the findings of the study.

### **7.3 IMPLICATIONS FROM THE STUDY**

The findings from this study may have implications for ECCE policy planners, curriculum designers and implementers, children's music software developers, and

higher education institutions that train pre-service ECD/ECCE educators in South Africa.

### **7.3.1 Implications for ECCE policy makers**

This study established that employing music to teach ECCE children communication skills facilitates and enhances their acquisition of these skills, and promotes more sustainable learning than traditional ways of teaching. Based on this fact, policy makers should put in place a well-structured plan that accommodate content that is relevant and beneficial to the children's needs, and in particular should promote the use of music to teach communication skills. Furthermore, it is not enough to design appropriate educational programmes. The ECCE policy makers should also indicate exactly how the programmes should be implemented to meet children's educational needs. The children's needs should be prioritised when designing educational policies. Monitoring and evaluation are also imperative. Thorough follow-ups and supervision must ensure that the centres are following the NCF policy document accordingly. The policy and programmes must also be evaluated intermittently to ensure that the goals and the objectives are achieved. The policy must also address ECCE educators' qualifications and ensure that they are qualified academically for teaching in this phase, are capable of employing multiple teaching strategies, and above all, are equipped to use music in the learning environment. The policy makers must see to it that the centres are well equipped with developmentally appropriate educational resources, such as different musical instruments and play materials that promote the learning of communication skills.

### **7.3.2 Implications for designers of pre-service teachers' curricula**

The findings of this study established particular implications for the developers of preservice teachers' programmes, especially those for ECCE educators. The study showed that the major reason why some of the ECCE educators could not effectively employ music to teach their children was the insufficient training received during their teacher training programmes (cf. 5.7.1). This study highlighted the widely recognised fact that ECCE children are at a foundational stage in their lives, and what influences

them will affect them for the rest of their lives (Mbarathi, Mthembu, & Diga, 2016). Hence, this study argued that the ECCE educators must be equipped with the relevant skills and knowledge to meet the needs of their children. Pre-service teachers' programmes must teach ECCE educators multiple pedagogies for inclusive learning environments, and pedagogies that suit the children's developmental stage and nature. Notably, the programmes must emphasise the use of different types of music for teaching in the ECCE learning environment.

### **7.3.3 Implications for teacher-training institutions**

Producing incompetent educators has grievous consequences for ECCE children who are the ultimate victims of poor teacher training. Many ECCE educators still stick to a traditional style of teaching that may not benefit ECCE children. Thus, it is imperative for the teacher-training institutions to be aware of the ECCE children's educational needs so that they can in turn provide the appropriate high-quality training to the pre-service teachers. However, the study found that there was no interaction or association between the activities of the ECCE centres and the various universities tasked with producing educators. There is therefore a need for collaboration and interaction between the ECCE centres and the teacher-training institutions. It was indicated in this study that the three months allocated for all the creative art subjects, of which music is one, at most South African universities is not enough time to equip the pre-service ECCE teachers to provide quality teaching using music. This study therefore suggests that the teacher-training institutions need to review and enhance the current teacher training curriculum to extend the periods for music training. Additionally, professional development programmes may be organised in music for the in-service teachers who were initially undertrained, as has been indicated in this study. The teacher-training institutions should also encourage the acquisition of practical musical skills, and avoid providing only theoretical musical knowledge.

### **7.3.4 Implications for subsequent research**

The focus of this thesis was the experiences of six ECCE educators from two urban centres in an urban setting in relation to how they supported their children aged three

and four to learn communication skills with the use of different musical rhymes. The study further examined the educators' understanding of the use of music, how they used musical pedagogies, why they used musical pedagogies, and the impact of doing so on the ECCE children's language development. The findings therefore contribute to knowledge on the use of music to teach communication skills to ECCE children.

However, this study only engaged a small sample of ECCE educators from two centres in an urban area. There is need for more elaborate and in-depth research on more centres and more populations of ECCE educators, especially educators from rural settings who deal with vulnerable children. In the South African context, the NCF guides the smooth running of ECCE programmes for all people working with children, including the educators, who are expected to abide by the rules. Further research on how educators follow the NCF document in supporting the children to acquire communication skills through music is necessary. Additionally, the voices of the ECCE children who were the recipients of this teaching were not heard in this study. Although research involving young children has serious restrictions and limitations, researchers could devise appropriate and ethical means to extract information from the children on how musical pedagogies impact their language development. Thus, more studies need to be carried out that incorporate the ECCE children's perspectives on how musical pedagogies aid their learning of communication skills. These studies could also be extended to reception year children.

This study was carried out in centres with a culturally, racially, and linguistically diverse mix of children who learned from the same educators. However, the study did not examine the effect of the children's cultural backgrounds on their acquisition of communication skills through music. Some of the children were from high-income English-speaking families while others were from middle-income families who spoke an indigenous language. The educators at these centres used primarily English as the LoLT. Thus, there is a need for a study that examines the influence of an ECCE children's family and cultural background on their acquisition of communications skills when using musical pedagogies.

## **7.4 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings, this section proposes some effective strategies for using music to teach communication skills to ECCE children.

### **7.4.1 Inclusion of music as independent subject in the National Curriculum Framework (NCF)**

NCF is a single, comprehensive summary of the teaching and learning guidelines for children ages 0-4. Music is infuse into creativity which is one of the early learning and development areas. The document admonishes the educator to support children to communicate through, dramatize, singing, making music and dancing to enhance their creativity skills and explore movement. Within the creativity are visual arts and performing arts; thus, the time allotted to music is not sufficient for the educators to be able to use it effectively. The participants in this study argued that because music is so important in ECCE learning environment, it should be included in the curriculum as an independent subject (cf. 5.7.3). The study also established that employing music to teach any skills to ECCE children is the most appropriate pedagogical method, and that this should be emphasised in the curriculum.

### **7.4.2 Music as a compulsory module for ECCE pre-service teachers**

It was indicated in this study that some of the participants had attended a university that offered training in music for only one semester during the teacher training programme. Learning about music for just one semester during pre-service teacher training is not enough to equip the educators to effectively use music in the learning environment. The training they receive does not equip them with enough musical pedagogies to enable them to teach effectively using music in the learning environment. Some of the educators did not take music seriously, partly because it was not made an independent subject in the curriculum. The teacher educator curriculum planners need to review the curriculum to ensure that music is included as an independent and compulsory subject for all ECCE pre-service teachers. The importance of music in the ECCE learning environment demands that every pre-service educator receive sound musical training;

hence, the study recommends that sound knowledge of musical pedagogies be considered as one of the qualifications for ECCE educators. Some of the ECCE educators had not even received any training in early childhood programmes (cf. 5.7.1).

#### **7.4.3 Requiring educators to use music to teach communication skills as specified by National Curriculum Framework**

Communication is one of the six learning areas designed for ECCE by the NCF, which states that effective communication promotes a healthy lifestyle, a strong sense of uniqueness and socialisation, the development of strong mathematical concepts, the acquisition of creative skills, and knowledge of exploration of the world (DBE, 2015). Furthermore, various ways of communicating through music in the ECCE phase are clearly specified, and include “dance, music, art, pictures, singing, body movement, and creative play” (DBE, 2015, p. 41). ECCE educators and caregivers should be required to speak, sing, read to, and listen to young children, in order to support them as they learn communication skills (speaking and listening), and later reading and writing. Unless South African ECCE children’s communication skills are addressed, the current inability to communicate demonstrated by most South African children will continue to linger. The study proposes that the teaching of communication skills using different types of music should be made a requirement in ECCE centres. Thus, ECCE policy makers and the designers of the teacher-education curriculum need to follow this up. Requiring ECCE educators to teach communication skills using musical pedagogies will support the children to learn the fundamentals of communication skills, on which the children will eventually be able to build their future learning. Furthermore, the study proposes that songs that support the children to acquire communication skills, and that support the content to be taught, be incorporated into the teaching and learning. Additionally, the researcher wants to emphasise that isiZulu songs should be employed alongside other indigenous songs from the various cultures and languages of the children in the process of teaching and learning. It was shown in the study that only one out of the six participants of this study adopted isiZulu songs to teach the children the desirable skills (cf. 5.5).

#### **7.4.4 Government support for the ECCE centres with the supply of musical resources**

Various intervention programmes have been designed since 1994 in order to provide an all-encompassing philosophy for educating children aged 0–9. These children are subdivided into three groups: Grades 1–3, Grade R, and ECCE. Although policies and a curriculum document have been designed for ECCE children, not much has been done in terms of supporting the centres with adequate teaching and learning resources. Some of the centres do not have sufficient necessary resources to support the children to learn skills, especially musical resources, as indicated in this study (cf. 5.7.2). The care and help a child receive, particularly from birth to four years, is critical and has a lasting influence and effect on the social, intellectual, emotional, physical, and language development of the child. Hence, the study proposes that attention and adequate support from the government, parents, NGOs, and other parastatals be directed towards ECCE sectors. The centres should be supported with developmentally appropriate musical resources, such as elementary musical instruments (drums, keyboards, triangles, clappers, xylophones, and so on), as these instruments are needed to support the children’s learning of communication skills. The centres in this study have some musical resources but not sufficient.

#### **7.4.5 Music as the more knowledgeable other**

Vygotsky (1997), and others such as McLeod (2018) and Eun, (2019), describes the MKO as a person who has a better understanding or experience than the children in relation to a task, process, or concept. Putman (2014) added that smart boards, electronic games, and hand-held electronic devices that aid the acquisition of knowledge can also be MKOs.

This study established that music can serve as the MKO to both educators and children. There are various types of music that support the teaching and learning of communication skills; thus educators can engage with these to improve their teaching. Similarly, relevant recorded children’s music that promotes the acquisition of communication skills can represent the MKO to the children. Thus, this study proposes music as the MKO.

## **7.5 GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE THESIS**

This study explored ECCE educators' understanding of the use of musical rhymes to teach communication skills. It explored what types of musical rhymes they used, how they were employed, and the impact on their children's language development.

Chapter One introduced and described the background to the study, and outlined its aims and objectives. The significance of the study, and the rationale for the study, based on gaps in the research and my own personal experiences, were discussed. Chapter One specifically established that the acquisition of effective and proper communication and language skills in the early years is the foundation for the further development of a child in every other area of life (Radic-Hozo, 2014). In spite of this, communication skills are very poor among all South Africa children, as shown by their performance in national and international assessments. It was argued that the use of musical pedagogies is appropriate for supporting ECCE children to acquire communication skills, particularly in terms of listening and the reading. However, in ECCE, very little structure has been put in place to guide the use of musical pedagogies to teach communication. Hence, the researcher was motivated to conduct this study, as she sought to contribute to existing knowledge on the use of music to support ECCE children to acquire communication skills.

Chapter Two presented Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (SCT), the theoretical framework that underpinned the study. The origin and concepts of SCT were explained, its main themes presented, and certain critiques of the theory discussed. SCT emphasises the central role of the social interaction of children with the MKO (such as educators and caregivers) in supporting the children to acquire skills. It was emphasised that due to the age and vulnerability of ECCE children, they need a skilful MKO who will employ diverse teaching pedagogies to aid their learning of communication skills. After a brief discussion of how other researchers have applied SCT in similar research, the application and the relevance of the theory to this research on using music to teach communication skills in an ECCE context was explained. Finally, the relationship between SCT, the data generation, and the data analysis was clarified.

Chapter Three examined relevant existing literature from both the South African context and the international context on the effectiveness of using musical pedagogies to support ECCE children's acquisition of communication skills. The chapter reviewed existing literature on the following themes: an overview of ECCE globally, the inception of ECCE in South Africa, communication in the NCF, communication in ECCE, and various types of music and communication in ECCE.

Chapter Four presented in detail the research design and methodology employed for this qualitative case study situated within the social-constructivist paradigm, and the rationale for selecting them. The chapter described the diverse research setting and the purposive sampling strategy, and then described the three data generation methods (semi-structured interviews, learning environment observations, and document analysis). The process of thematic analysis used to analyse the data was then explained. The measures taken to ensure trustworthiness, and the appropriate ethical considerations taken into account during the implementation of this study were described, and finally, the limitations of the study were presented.

Chapter Five presented the data generated from the six ECCE educators about their experiences using music to teach communication to ECCE children. The five main themes derived from the generated data were presented in relation to Vygotsky's SCT. The data from the learning environment observations was also presented and analysed, as well as the results of the document analysis. The five main themes were as follows: 1) ECCE educators' understanding of using musical rhymes; 2) ECCE educators' reasons for using musical rhymes; 3) different musical rhymes used; 4) the impact of the use of musical rhymes; and 5) barriers to ECCE educators' use of musical rhymes.

Chapter Six discussed and analysed the findings presented in Chapter Five in relation to the research questions. The chapter focused on the ECCE educators' understanding of using musical rhymes to teach communication skills, their reasons for using musical rhymes, the different types of music used in the ECCE learning environment and their impact on the children's language development, and various barriers to the use of musical rhymes. The major findings from the study revealed that ECCE educators understood the use of musical pedagogies; however, factors such as insufficient music training, lack of support from the government, inadequate of musical resources, and

the non-inclusion of music in the NCF document were barriers to using music effectively as an ECCE pedagogy. However, the participants resorted to self-education by researching and sourcing children's music online.

Lastly, this final chapter has reflected on the research design and methodology, and presented the implications of the findings for the various relevant role players: educators, policy makers, teacher training institutions, developers of software and media related to children's music, and ECCE curriculum designers. Various revised stratagems have been proposed for employing music to teach communication skills in ECCE learning environments. A general overview and summary of the study has been presented, which has included recommendations for further research.

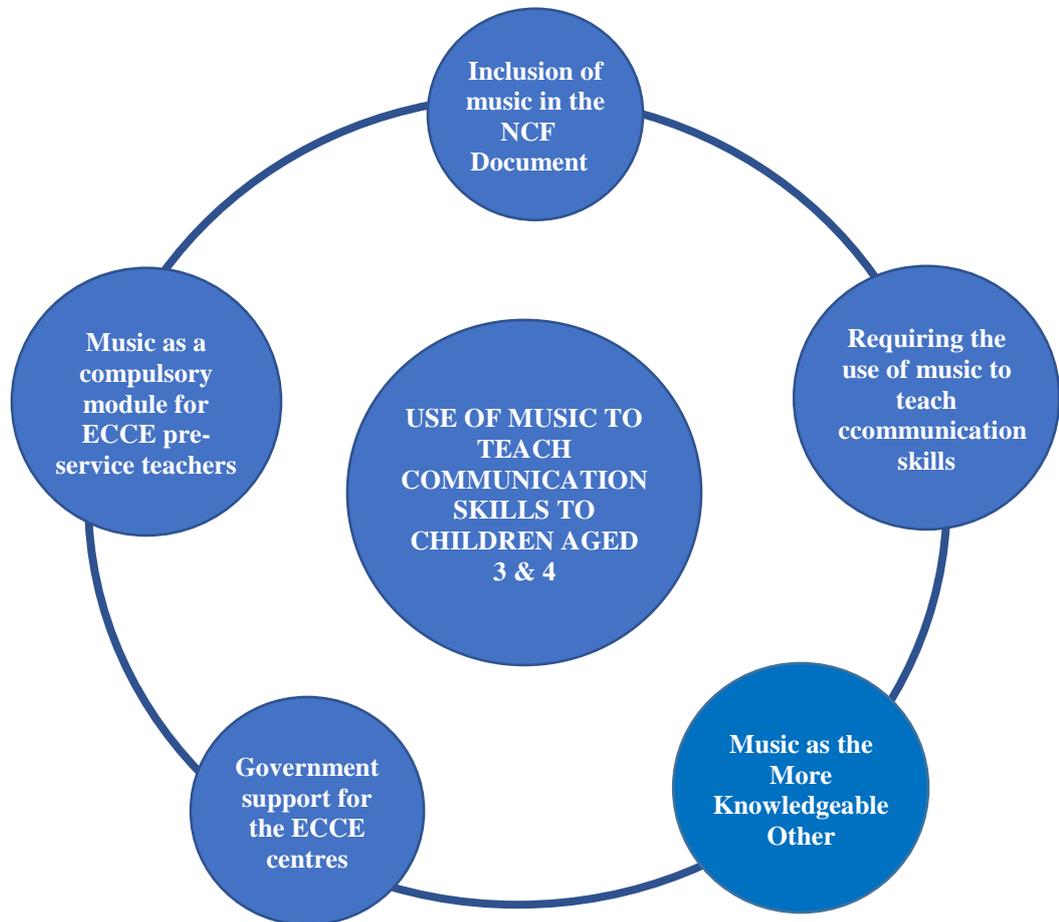
## **7.6 SUMMARY AND CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The purpose of this case study was to explore the understanding of six ECCE educators from two urban centres on how they employed music to teach communication skills to ECCE children, including their reasons for doing so, the types of music they used, how they used music, and the impact it had on their children's acquisition of communication skills (listening and reading) and their readiness for Grade R.

The study established that the ECCE children's acquisition of communication skills can be improved by ECCE educators using musical pedagogical strategies. The findings revealed that these are the most appropriate teaching and learning strategies for ECCE children. The study revealed that one of the requirements for using musical pedagogies effectively is the provision of relevant teacher training for ECCE educators. This is in accordance with the sociocultural theory that underpinned the study, which states that only interaction between children and a more knowledgeable other that can yield desirable result. The ECCE educators need adequate, relevant training to be this more knowledgeable other, in order to scaffold the children's knowledge and skills using musical rhymes to improve their communication skills.

### 7.6.1 Summary of recommendations

The recommendations for the effective use of music to teach communication skills in the ECCE learning environment are summarised in Figure 7.1 below.



**Figure 7.1 Proposed factors for the effective use of music to teach communication skills in ECCE learning environment**

These overall recommendations are offered for all educational sectors:

- (i) The pre-service teachers' curriculum needs to be reviewed and revised to extend their learning of music pedagogy beyond just one semester.
- (ii) Teacher-training institutions need to organise professional development programmes for in-service teachers, such as post-diploma music programmes for their upgrades.
- (iii) Children's music software developers need to compose children's music that will promote their learning of communication skills, not just for their social and emotional development.

- (iv) The ECCE centre owners need to adopt the NCF document for children from birth to four years and teach them communication skills using various musical pedagogies as recommended in the document.

### **7.6.2 Recommendations for further research**

The study recommended the following for future research:

- (i) This study was a qualitative case study of six ECCE educators from two urban centres; thus, more elaborate and in-depth research could be conducted on more centres and larger or different populations, especially educators from rural settings who deal with vulnerable children.
- (ii) There is a need for research on the perspective of ECCE children in relation to how musical pedagogies aid their learning of communication skills. This could be further extended to reception year (Grade R) children.
- (iii) There is a need for further research on how ECCE educators are following the NCF document by using musical pedagogies to support ECCE children to acquire communication skills, as recommended in the documents

In South Africa, it has become imperative to implement a speedy intervention to improve children' communication skills. This study established that musical pedagogies have a positive effect on ECCE children's acquisition of these skills. Thus, the findings emphasise that using musical pedagogies at this foundational level of education is important for ECCE children's effective acquisition of communication skills, and that all barriers to effective implementation should be removed.

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# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A: UKZN ETHICAL CLEARANCE



28 November 2018

Mrs Deborah Arasomwan (216074145)  
School of Education  
Edgewood Campus

Dear Mrs Arasomwan,

**Protocol reference number: HSS/1940/018D**

**Project title:** Using music to teach communication to children aged three to four. A case of two urban ECD Centers

### Approval Notification – Expedited Application

In response to your application received on 18 October 2018, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has 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



.....  
Professor Shenuka Singh (Chair)

/ms

Cc Supervisor: Professor Nontokoza J Mashiya  
cc Academic Leader Research: Dr SB Khoza  
cc School Administrator: Ms Sheryl Jeenarain

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Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee  
Professor Shenuka Singh (Chair) / Dr Shamila Naidoo (Deputy Chair)  
Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000

Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 3587/8350/4557 Facsimile: +27 (0) 31 260 4609 Email: [simbap@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:simbap@ukzn.ac.za) / [snvmanm@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:snvmanm@ukzn.ac.za) / [mohunp@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:mohunp@ukzn.ac.za)

Website: [www.ukzn.ac.za](http://www.ukzn.ac.za)



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## APPENDIX B: GATEKEEPER PERMISSION: RESEARCH

### LOCATION A



96 MARIANHILL ROAD  
ASHLEY3605  
TEL: 031 7002173  
FAX: 086 4163605  
REG NO.2015/025747/07

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11<sup>th</sup> October 2018

Mrs Arasomwan Avosuahi Deborah (SN 216074145)  
School of Education  
College of Humanities  
Edgewood Campus  
UKZN

Dear Mrs Deborah

**RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

Permission is hereby granted for you to conduct research at Honeybee Pre-School, towards your postgraduate studies, provided Ethical clearance has been obtained and we note the title of research title is ;

**Using music to teach communication to children aged three to four.**

Please ensure that you have the following :

Ethical clearance number  
Research title and details  
Consent form is attached  
Attendance Register

You are not authorized to take photographs of the children's faces and research notes will need to be signed off by myself.

Thank you

[Redacted Signature]  
Mrs Debbie Snyman  
Principal / Owner



**HONEYBEEZ PRE-SCHOOL  
AND AFTER-CARE**

Reg: 2015/025747/07  
96 Marianhill Road, Ashley 3605  
Tel: 031 - 700 2173

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Directors : DK Snyman & KM Snyman

## APPENDIX C: GATE KEEPER PERMISSION: RESEARCH

### LOCATION B



17/19 Aisla Avenue,  
Glenwood,  
Durban, 4001  
Contact: 031 827 6474  
Email: [accounts@kingdomkidsacademy.co.za](mailto:accounts@kingdomkidsacademy.co.za)  
[www.kingdomkidsacademy.co.za](http://www.kingdomkidsacademy.co.za)

4 October 2018

Mrs Arasomwan Avosuahi Deborah

School of Education

College of Humanity

Edgewood Campus

UKZN

Emails: [216074145@stu.ukzn.ac.za](mailto:216074145@stu.ukzn.ac.za) ; [mashiyaj@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:mashiyaj@ukzn.ac.za)

Dear Deborah,

#### RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Gatekeeper's permission is hereby granted for you to conduct a research at Kingdom Kids Preschool, towards your studies, provided Ethical clearance has been obtained. We note the title of your research project is:

**"Using music to teach communication to children aged three to four. A case of two Urban ECD Centres."**

It is noted that you will be constituting your sample by conducting interviews with teachers at the ECD Centre.

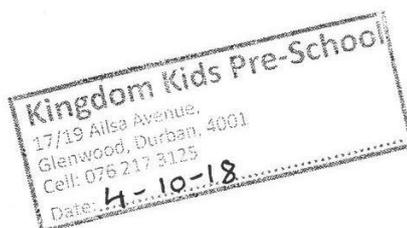
Please ensure that the following appears on your notice/questionnaire:

- Ethical clearance number
- Research title and details of the research, the researcher and the supervisor;
- Consent form is attached to the notice/questionnaire and to be signed by user before he/she fills in the questionnaire;
- Gatekeeper's approval by the Registrar.

Data collected must be treated with due confidentiality and anonymity.

Yours sincerely

  
MS. R. ADAMS  
SCHOOL PRINCIPAL



## APPENDIX D: INFORMED CONSENT LETTER



School of Education,  
College of Humanities,  
University of KwaZulu-Natal,  
Edgewood Campus,

### INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

**Dear Ms., Doctor, Mr., Mrs.,**

My name is Mrs Arasomwan DA, a PhD student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood campus, South Africa. The research study currently undertaking is for the fulfilment PhD degree in Curriculum studies. I am interested in your experiences on

*Using music to teach communication to children aged three to four: A case of two urban ECD centres*

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 and using a pseudonym.
- The focus group interview may last for about 45 minutes to 1 hour.
- I will also request that you permit me to observe your class activities and to also do analysis of some of your documents.
- 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.
- 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 you are willing to allow the interview to be recorded by the following equipment:

<b>Equipment</b>	<b>Willing</b>	<b>Not willing</b>
Audio equipment		
Photographic equipment		

I can be contacted at:

Email: 216074145@stu.ukzn.ac.za

Cell: 0612376431

My supervisor is Prof. Mashiya Nontokoza who is located at the School of Education, Edgewood campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Contact details: email: mashiyaj@ukzn.ac.za Phone number: 07312604276

## **APPENDIX E: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE**

### **OPEN ENDED SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW**

#### **TOPIC: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS ON THE USE OF MUSIC TO TEACH COMMUNICATION TO ECCE CHILDREN**

Dear participant

You are requested to freely express your views and experiences on the different forms of music you employ to teach the ECCE children communication skills (listening and speaking)

#### **Template to guide**

##### **SECTION A: BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- Introduction of participants
- Purpose of the interview
- Purpose of the study
- Explanation of ethical issues and the rights of participants
- Age and sex
- Marital status
- Educational background and status
- Years of experience
- Teacher training received

##### **SECTION B: TEACHING EXPERIENCES AND KNOWLEDGE OF MUSIC**

1. What is your rationale for the choice of Foundation Phase?
2. What can you say about working in ECCE centre?
3. For how long you have been in the centre.
4. Which curriculum are you using for your class?
5. Did you receive any musical training to teach these children? How sufficient or equipped are you with the relevant knowledge of music?

**SECTION C: THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF MUSIC FOR TEACHING COMMUNICATION TO CHILDREN AGE 3&4 AND THE MODE OF PRACTICE**

6. What are the different types of music used to teach communication?
7. How are these types of music employed as implementation strategies?
8. Are there musical instruments to accompany the music during teaching and learning activities?
9. From your observation and experiences, state the differences between the use of music as implementation strategies and the traditional rote learning.

**SECTION D: THE MODE OF PRACTICE WITH EXAMPLES AND THE EFFECT ON THEIR LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT**

10. Kindly give some practical examples on how you practice music in the class.
11. What is the noticeable effect of using music to teach communication on the children's language development?
12. What are your challenges in the use of music to teach the ECCE children?

**SECTION E: ANY OTHER POINTS OF YOUR CONCERNS**

13. Aspect that needs improvement in the ECCE Curriculum
14. Is there anything else you will like to add?

## **APPENDIX F: OBSERVATION INSTRUMENT**

### **OBSERVATION INSTRUMENT**

1. Observe the proficiency of the teachers in using music to teach.
2. Observe the different forms of music and the mode of usage.
3. Observe the children' participation and interest.
4. Observe how learning takes place in a class with diverse children.
5. Observe the activities involving poems and rhymes.
6. Observe activities involving music, songs, and news.
7. Observe the use of music in storytelling and dramatisation.
8. Observe the use of music to teach perceptual activities involving the five sense organs to build cognitive and physical skills in learning.
9. Observe listening and picture reading activities.
10. Observe using music to learn and chant the English alphabet.
11. Observe the use of music to teach role play.
12. Observe the use of music to form two-letter alphabet sounds.
13. Observe the use of songs and music in play, such as jumping, swinging, climbing, drawing, painting, and sliding.
14. Observe the influence of the use of music to teach communication on the children' language development.

## **APPENDIX G: GUIDE FOR DOCUMENT ANALYSIS**

### **DOCUMENTS**

1. Teachers' lesson notes
2. Scheme of work for daily activities/weekly activities
3. Policy guide for ECCE, the National Curriculum Framework
4. Children' working notes
5. Assessment register
6. Dolphin school curriculum

## APPENDIX H: LANGUAGE EDITING CERTIFICATE



P.O. Box 100715

Scottsville

3209

6 June 2020

To whom it may concern,

I have edited the following thesis for language errors, and in the process have checked the referencing and layout:

**Title:** *The use of music to teach communication skills to ECCE children*

**Author:** Deborah Avosuahi Arasomwan

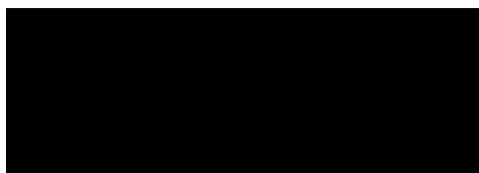
**Degree:** PhD (Education Psychology)

**Institution:** University of KwaZulu-Natal

**Supervisor:** Professor Nontokozo Mashiya

Please feel free to contact me should you have any queries.

Kind regards,



Debbie Turrell

totalnightowl@gmail.co

m 063 891 3870

## APPENDIX I: TURNITIN REPORT

### Using music to teach the communication

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