

**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL**

**EXPLORING LEADERSHIP IN EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT  
CENTRES: NARRATIVES OF THREE PRINCIPALS IN TWO TOWNSHIPS**

**By**

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**A dissertation submitted in fulfilment for the Masters of Education Degree in the  
discipline of Educational Leadership, Management and Policy, School of Education,  
University of KwaZulu-Natal**

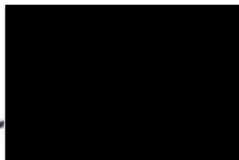
**Supervisor: Dr S.B. Blose**

**OCTOBER 2020**

## DECLARATION

I, **Evelyn Muteweri**, declare:

- (i) The research reported in this dissertation, except where otherwise indicated is my original work.
- (ii) This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
- (iii) This dissertation does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
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**27 October 2020**

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**Researcher:** Evelyn Muteweri



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Date

## **SUPERVISOR'S STATEMENT**

This dissertation is submitted with my approval

**Signature:**

  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr S.B. Blose

**Date:**

**27 October 2020**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

What a rollercoaster ride! It was an exhausting journey - but it was also a humbling and maturing experience. This one year four months journey would not have been possible without the following persons. Therefore, I would like to express my appreciation for their vital roles they have played towards the completion of this study:

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- 2) To my **participants** - Thank you for your consent to participate in this study. Regarding research, you taught me a lot through your personal and professional narratives you shared with me. I was humbled with your selfless commitment of serving and caring for children.
- 3) To my beloved husband, **Edren Muteweri** - thank you so much for supporting me during the course of my study. Your positive influence has been and always will be a blessing in my life. I love you.
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- 5) To my mentor, sister in Christ and academic friend **Dr Annah Bengesai (Mai Ruvimbo)** – thank you for your words of encouragement at every step of my study journey.
- 6) *I thank the **Lord my Saviour** - “You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power. For you created all things and because of your will they existed and were created” (Revelation 4:11).*

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to the **Lord Jesus Christ my Saviour** - thank you for your watchful care over me.

*“The LORD bless me, and keep me,  
The LORD make his face to shine upon me and be gracious unto me,  
The LORD lift up his countenance upon me and give me peace”  
Numbers 6v24-26*

*AMEN.*

## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of the study was to explore the lived experiences of principals in three Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres in two townships. The study explored the identities, practices of these principals and also the influence of these principals' practices on the operation of their centres in townships. Four research puzzles were used as instruments to generate field texts. These puzzles include; Who are the principals leading ECD centres in townships? What are the leadership experiences of ECD centre principals? What are the leadership practices of principals leading ECD centres in townships? and How do the leadership practices of principals influence the operations of the ECD centres in a township? Social Identity theory and Servant Leadership theory constituted the theoretical framework which was used to understand the experiences of ECD centre principals in townships. This study was conducted within Narrative Inquiry, which is a methodology that studies the experiences of individuals through generating narrative field texts. Field texts were generated through life story interviews, collage inquiry and photo voice inquiry. The field texts were then analysed at two levels; namely, narrative analysis (first level) and analysis of narratives (second level). Upon the examination of these ECD centre principals re-storied narratives, two key identities were identified, namely, community servants and passion driven leaders. In addition, the study found two key experiences of principals leading ECD centres in townships, namely, leading with minimal resources and lack of support from authorities. Again, the study revealed two broad leadership practices enacted by principals in ECD centres, namely, designing and leading learning programmes and harnessing funds. Lastly, the study revealed the importance of the principals' leadership practices on the operations of ECD centres, the motivation of employees at the centres and the consequent provision of customer satisfaction.

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

DoE	Department of Education
DSD	Department of Social Development
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECE&C	Early Childhood Education and Care
NCF	South African National Curriculum Framework
NDP	National Development Plan
NIECDP	National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy
NPO	Non-Profit Organisation
SDA	Seventh-Day Adventist Church
SIT	Social Identity Theory
SLT	Servant Leadership Theory
TREE	Training and Resource in Early Education
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

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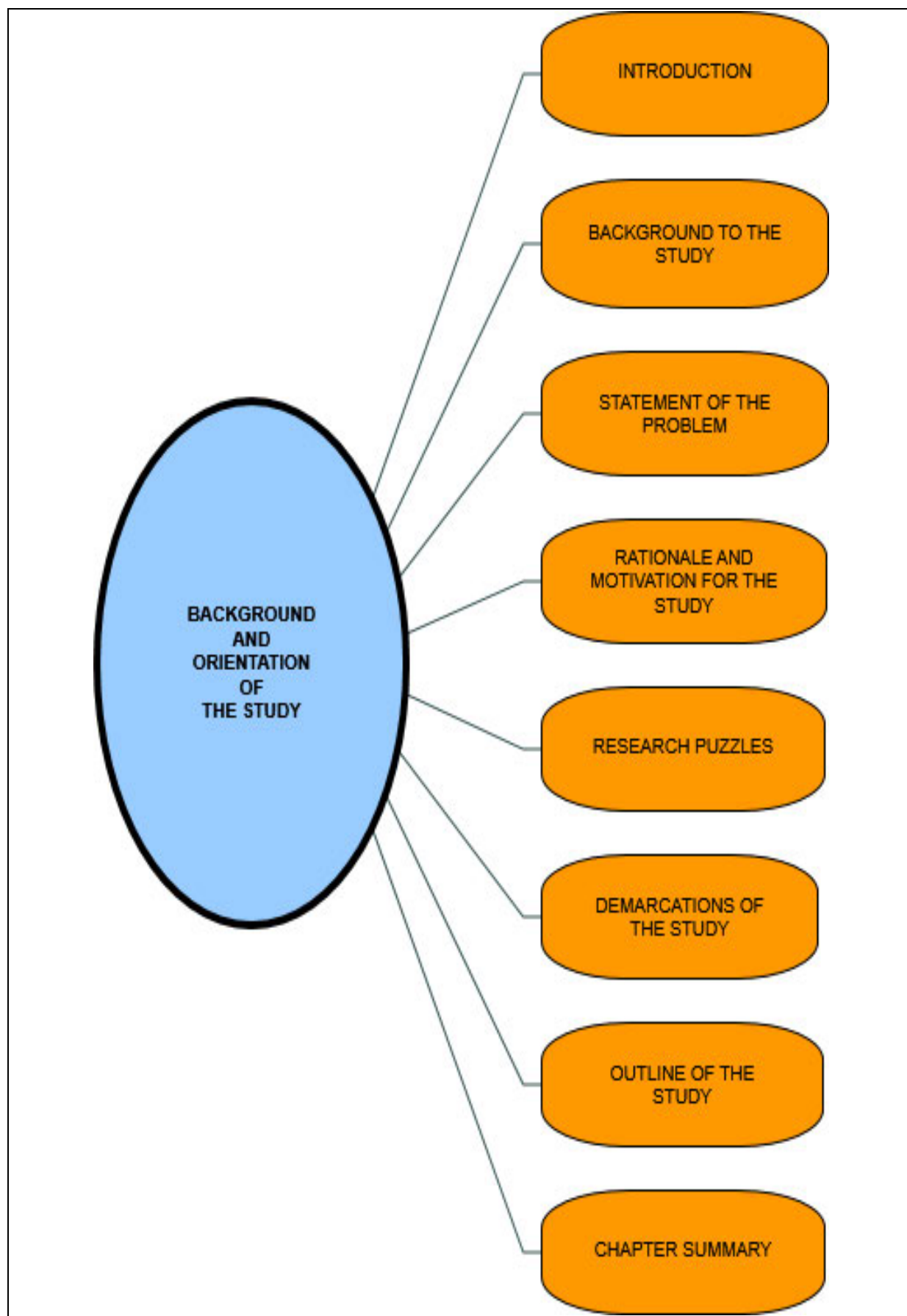
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**Map 1: Chapter One**

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **BACKGROUND AND ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY**

#### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres, also known as pre-schools or early care and education programmes in other contexts, play a critical and daunting role of tending and safeguarding the most valuable commodity of a nation, young children (Kagan & Hallmark 2001). ECD centres are defined as a child-care facility that offers an early childhood programme predominantly focusing on an early learning and development of children from birth until the year before they enter Grade R/formal school (UNESCO, 2015). The provision of ECD services can be viewed as a public good, based on the understanding that these services not only contribute to the development and outcomes of the young child, but also to the growth and development of present and future society as a whole (Department of Education, 2001). South Africa has an assortment of ECD centres ranging from fully registered and well-resourced centres in affluent areas to less regulated and poorly resourced community-based centres in townships and informal settlements. In these ECD centres, there are individuals performing a critical role of leading and managing institutions. The recent literature has shown that there is a link between poverty decline and ECD centres with regards to provision of early development and educational needs (Atmore, 2013; Fourie, 2018). Adding to this view, Mbarathi, Mthembu and Dinga (2016) and Moodley (2012) argue that ECD programmes and infrastructure facilities are not the same across the countries and regions. In South Africa, the lack of resources is a common plight and one of the greatest challenges in most of South African ECD centres located in poor settlements. This chapter introduces a study which explored lived experiences of principals leading ECD centres in two townships. To this end, I begin by presenting the background to the study, which is followed by a problem statement. I then discuss the rationale and motivation for the study and the research puzzles. Finally, I present the demarcation of the study.

#### **1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

Early childhood development (ECD) centres are assumed to be the underpinning for child development and are perceived as the first juncture where education is laid (Samuelsson & Kaga, 2008). The children enrolled in ECD centres are professed to be at their delicate ages of existence, therefore service providers should pay particular attention to their physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, social and moral progression (Phillips & Shonkoff, 2000). This is further

expatiated by Grenier, Bruce, Meggit and Kamen (2011) as well as Biersteker (2012) who argue that young children's future contribution to the world solely rest on the quality of care during their early years. This is in line with Fourie, (2018) and Sims, Forrest, Semann, and Slattery (2015) in their assertions that leadership plays an important role in the transformation of early childhood education and in driving the quality service delivery in ECD sector. From the premise of understanding that today's children are tomorrow's leaders, there is therefore no doubt that lack of leadership in ECD centres could impede the improvement and growth of societies in the future. Concerning South Africa's ECD centres in socioeconomic areas, careful consideration is needed with regard to the effectiveness of its leadership, without which their present-day poverty levels will continue to increase, and the bright future of township children will be lost, comprising their contribution to society (Atmore, 2013; Chan & Hansen, 2017; Fourie, 2018; Phillips, 2017; Sims et al., 2015). While all public schools in South Africa are monitored and funded by the government, through the Department of Basic Education (Modisaotsile, 2012; NIECDP, 2015), ECD centres are regulated and financially supported through the DSD. However, this Department only provides financial support (subsidy) to ECD centres upon the satisfaction of stringent registration requirements. Many centres in deprived contexts like townships struggle to satisfactorily fulfill the requirements and are hence not financially supported. Currently, there is an entanglement between Department of Social Development (DSD) and Department of Education (DoE) with regards to ECD centres. The National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy (NIECDP) (2015) stipulates that while the DSD is a custodian, the DoE also oversees ECD. Each of these departments is accountable to ECD in terms of compliance with social, health and curriculum matters as well as governance issues. The misalignment and lack of synergy among these three government sectors is a great challenge which further exacerbates ECD principals' leadership daunting experience.

The term township continues to be used even in post-apartheid South Africa to refer to low-cost non-white neighbourhoods (Jürgens, Donaldson, Rule & Bähr 2012) located on city peripheries; these houses were designed for black labourers during the apartheid era to keep them closer to their places of employment in cities and towns (Jürgens et al. 2012, Mampane & Bouwer 2011). Although townships are characterised by high rates of unemployment, poverty, crime and violence, among other things (Mampane & Bouwer 2011), some individuals realise that a child's early exposure to education has a positive bearing on the physical, mental, spiritual, emotional, social and moral development of their children (Samuelsson & Kaga



2008). Thus, these individuals initiate and lead ECD centres in township communities. In this study we focus on these individuals whom we refer to as ECD principal with an aim of exploring their lived experiences of leading centres in township communities.

### 1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The South African education system comprises three categories of education namely, pre-school education, school education and post-school education. Table no.1 below clearly shows these levels of education:

LEVEL OF EDUCATION		FOCUS	CLASSIFICATION
Pre- school		Early Childhood Development (ECD)	0 to 4 years
School education	Primary	Foundation Phase (ECD)	Grade 0 to Grade 3
		Intermediate Phase	Grade 4 to Grade 6
	Secondary	Senior Phase	Grade 7 to Grade 9
		Further Education and Training Phase	Grade 10, 11 & 12
Post-school		Tertiary Education	Colleges and Universities

**Table 1: Education levels**

Leadership is a key factor in the institutions that offer these levels of education and of course it has been researched widely at all the levels of education except for ECD centres which have received very limited research attention (Atmore, 2013; Fourie, 2018). The ECD centres are community based and are less regulated. These centres are led by principals like schools and the principals in centres perform both managerial and leadership tasks (Davis, 2014; McCrea, 2015; Kivunja, 2015; Douglass, 2018). On the one hand, ECD principals manage their centres in terms of goal setting, decision making and problem solving among others (Bush, 2013; Moodley, 2012). On the other hand, ECD principals lead their centres through positively influencing staff to effectively and efficiently achieve ECD centre goals (Christie, 2010; Ang, 2012). In the South African context, the ECD principals in most cases invent the centres,

especially in township areas. The service provision by the DoE, DSD and Department of health in these townships' ECD centres in terms of early learning programme /or curriculum, food and nutritional support, parental support and basic safe equipped infrastructure is assumed scanty. As a result the ECD centre leadership experience is seriously curtailed by a combination of factors, among others: lack of support from these three government sectors. It therefore goes without say that leading ECD centres has its own dynamics which are worth exploring. Principals leading these centres hold very interesting but unknown experiences that need to be unveiled. In the light of the above discussion, this narrative inquiry aims to solicit from the selected principals what it means to lead ECD centres in a township.

#### **1.4 RATIONALE AND MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY**

As a narrative researcher, I cannot divorce myself from the study, therefore the justification for conducting this inquiry stems from my personal and professional narratives apart from the social justification. Below, I present my justification for the study at three levels:

##### **Personal justification**

I am the last born in a family of ten siblings from same father and mother. Although people believe that last born children are spoiled, this was not the case with me since my mother had acquired enough experience of raising children. She applied all skills that she generated from raising and nurturing my multiple siblings in raising me. I remember that in 1970, my mother decided to quit her job and she became a fulltime housewife in order to take care of my elder brother and myself. In this way she established and restored a mother-child relationship. My memories of mother-child bonding times include eating, playing, cooking and reading together. I remember this one day when sitting under a mango tree, she would run down a number of flashcards while I compete with my elder brother to read as fast as I could. She was my first teacher. My mother made home a safe, enjoyable learning environment.

In 1981 when I was eight years old, I started Grade one. By that time I already knew how to write my name and I could read few action words such as; come, sit, run, walk and jump. This prompted my teacher to love me and we had a good relationship. Such caring relationship enhanced confidence in my learning. My teacher had similar traits like my mother and she created a sense of belonging in learners through respect, kindness and being patient with us (learners). As I grew, both school and home became my favourite places of play, work and learning. I remember during playtime, whenever we played with my friends, I always would

add a lot of dolls in my stroller. I imagined myself taking an active role of a mother character; this included bathing, dressing, feeding and putting the dolls to sleep. Thus my childhood was naturally and socially constructed by the surroundings.

In 1998, I met my husband with whom I wedded in the millennium year 2000. We were blessed with two children, a handsome boy in 2001 and a beautiful girl in 2005. Due to economic hardships in my country Zimbabwe, my husband and I took a resolution to relocate to South Africa. This was not an easy decision; it meant that I would resign from my executive secretariat job of 15 years at Anglo American Corporation. Again, I had to bid farewell to my friends and immediate family members especially my mother. In 2006, we (my husband, children and myself) migrated to South Africa. As soon as we settled in the new foreign land, I decided that I would not search for work, instead I would be a fulltime housewife to ensure that I cultivate a strong relationship with my children. In developing this bond I began a program of home-schooling. After spending three years in this program, my children then went to join the mainstream school.

When my children joined the mainstream school, I began to feel a void at home and I decided to avail my services to the church. To this end, in the year 2009, while serving in the church as the Children Ministries Director, I started an ECD centre, Little Disciples. I pioneered this centre from its inception when it emerged as a Durban Central Seventh-Day Adventist (SDA) Church project to feed learners of neighbouring SDA Keitsleigh Primary School. When my term of four years as Children's Ministries Director came to an end, I moved to another portfolio. In the year 2015, I decided to establish my own ECD centre, Kingdom Kids. Presently, I am serving as a Principal of Kingdom Kids ECD centre and as a principal I draw from the knowledge I acquired from my upbringing and the skills I developed from raising my children in leading my centre. Through this inquiry, I would like to know, what knowledge, skills and experiences inform leadership practices of other ECD centre principals. This is pertinent because we do not know much about these leaders, yet their role is of paramount importance.

### **Practical justification**

I am currently owning an Early Childhood Development centre and also serving as a Principal in the centre. In my practice I have found joy to live my dream. It is interesting to note that when you do what you enjoy it ceases to be work and becomes a lifestyle.

I metaphorically equate both my professional journey and leadership practice to a farmer, who by faith plants a seed believing that one day it shall germinate and grow. The role of a farmer involves tilling the soil, watering, pruning, and nurturing the seedlings as they grow to be big plants. As a leader, in the shoes of a farmer, I care for and value my learners, staff and parents by being responsive and attending to their needs. My nurturing skills help me build confidence in learners and in this way they grasp the value of education at an early age.



<https://images.app.goo.gl/XbMt3zyBaGXGhfk79>

Learners enrolled and practitioners employed in my ECD centre look up to me as a model. They intently observe my walk and contrast it to my talk. Therefore, my personality and professional conduct is significant for my success as a leader. As a principal of an ECD centre, my job involves among other things, supervision of teaching and learning, human resources management, support relationships, effective communication and liaising with parents. In terms of supervising teaching and learning, just like a farmer observes the plants daily, I also check and monitor on a day to day basis to see if teachers come to school on time, daily routine is followed timeously as planned, registers are marked daily, messages in communication books are read and responded to, medication is administered in time as instructed, meals are served in time, learners are dropped and picked up on/or in time and making sure that theme related resources are adequate and displayed to enhance learning activities at all times. To achieve all this, I am the first to arrive at 06h30 and the last to leave at 17h00, to ensure that the property is safe, securely locked and alarmed.

With regards to human resources management, I need to see to it that our teacher-child ratio creates a favourable environment of age-appropriate learning groups. Resultantly, teachers' knowledge, skills and abilities are highly emphasised when I place each of them in a particular age-group for optimum class facilitation. Like a farmer anticipating a good harvest, he invests time in tender care over his plants. Likewise, in my practice I cultivate my relationships with teachers in order to reap quality products. Since we are a small centre, I treat my centre as my family and I foster a supportive relationship between myself and practitioners, as well as between the practitioners and learners in our care. In order for me to accomplish the above, I use the art of communication as a language of my leadership; my communication abilities have

created a favourable climate for me to clearly and passionately explain to teachers why and how I would want to transform learners' lives in our ECD centre. Hence the participation of teachers and their delivery is of better-quality. In my communication with teachers, I encourage and support them to professionally advance their career. This kind of support enhances a sense of belonging in my teachers. Therefore, in conducting this study I desire to know other principals' experiences of leading ECD centres as well as what it means for them to lead an ECD centre particularly in townships.

### **Social justification**

ECD centres are complex institutions whose main function do not solely rest on teaching and learning but also involves the wellbeing and development of babies, infants and toddlers. Therefore, complicated structural and cultural dynamics are more advanced than just any other institution. For this reason, leaders of ECD centres are inevitably often seen wearing different hats, including the hat of a mother, doctor, advocate and police in order to meet the people's needs and also to curb the institutional demands (Douglass, 2018; Kivunja, 2015; McCrea, 2015; Muijs, Aubrey, Harris & Briggs, 2004).

Though the objective of the South African Department of Social Development (DSD) is to ensure adequate and effective leadership so that monitoring progress and on-going quality improves in ECD centres (DSD, 2015), no learning programme is given by the government to cater for children under the age of five (5) years in the ECD centres (Moodley, 2012; Shezi, 2013). The monitoring of progress by leadership can only be successful if a proper tool (learning programme) is made available. As I survey literature on ECD centres, successive research studies have been commissioned by United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in different countries globally focusing on children's rights, alleviation of poverty, provision of good health, nutrition and safety (Adamson, 2008; Black, Walker, Fernald, Andersen, DiGirolamo, Lu, McCoy, Fink, Shawar, Shiffman, Devercelli, Wodon & Vargas-Barón, 2017; Woodhead, 2005). Very little has been written about ECD leadership, particularly principals' lived experiences (Fourie, 2018). Therefore, this inquiry seeks to close the gap by contributing to the body of literature with regards to leadership experiences of principals in ECD centres.

## **1.5 RESEARCH PUZZLES (QUESTIONS)**

What are the lived experiences of principals leading township ECD centres?

- 1) Who are the principals leading ECD centres in a township?
- 2) What are the leadership experiences of ECD centre principals?
- 3) What are the leadership practices of principals leading ECD centres in a township?
- 4) How do the leadership practices of principals influence the operations of the ECD centres in a township?

## **1.6 THE STUDY DEMARCATIONS**

This study was conducted in two townships, namely, kwaMashu and Umlazi in Durban KwaZulu-Natal. I selected three participants from three different ECD centres within the mentioned townships. Due to the small scale of the study, the findings could not be generalized to represent all ECD centres in South Africa. However, this study opened a window for exploring context sensitive matters with regards to ECD leadership.

## **1.7 THE STUDY OUTLINE**

This narrative inquiry is presented in six chapters of which I give a snippet for each chapter here-below.

### **Chapter one**

This chapter offers the reader an orientation and background to the study. In addition, this chapter presents rationale in three levels; personal, practical and social for this study. Finally, the research puzzles informing the study are presented.

### **Chapter two**

This chapter focuses on a review of both local and international literature relating to the study focus. The chapter begins by clarifying the key concepts, namely, leadership, early childhood development and practitioner. Thereafter, the review of literature is presented thematically. Apart from this, the chapter presents the theoretical framework of the study which is composed of two theories, namely social identity and servant leadership as well as assemblage of both theories.

### **Chapter three**

This chapter presents the research design and methodology utilised in this study. In this chapter special attention is given to narrative inquiry methodology as the backbone of the study. Further, I outline methods of generating field texts, methods of analysing field texts, selection of participants, profile of participants, trustworthiness and ethical considerations utilised in this study.

### **Chapter four**

This chapter presents the first level of analysis referred to as narrative analysis. These narratives include both personal and professional experiences of Principals in township ECD centres. I presented each participant's story separately to capture a clear account of each participant's lived experience.

### **Chapter five**

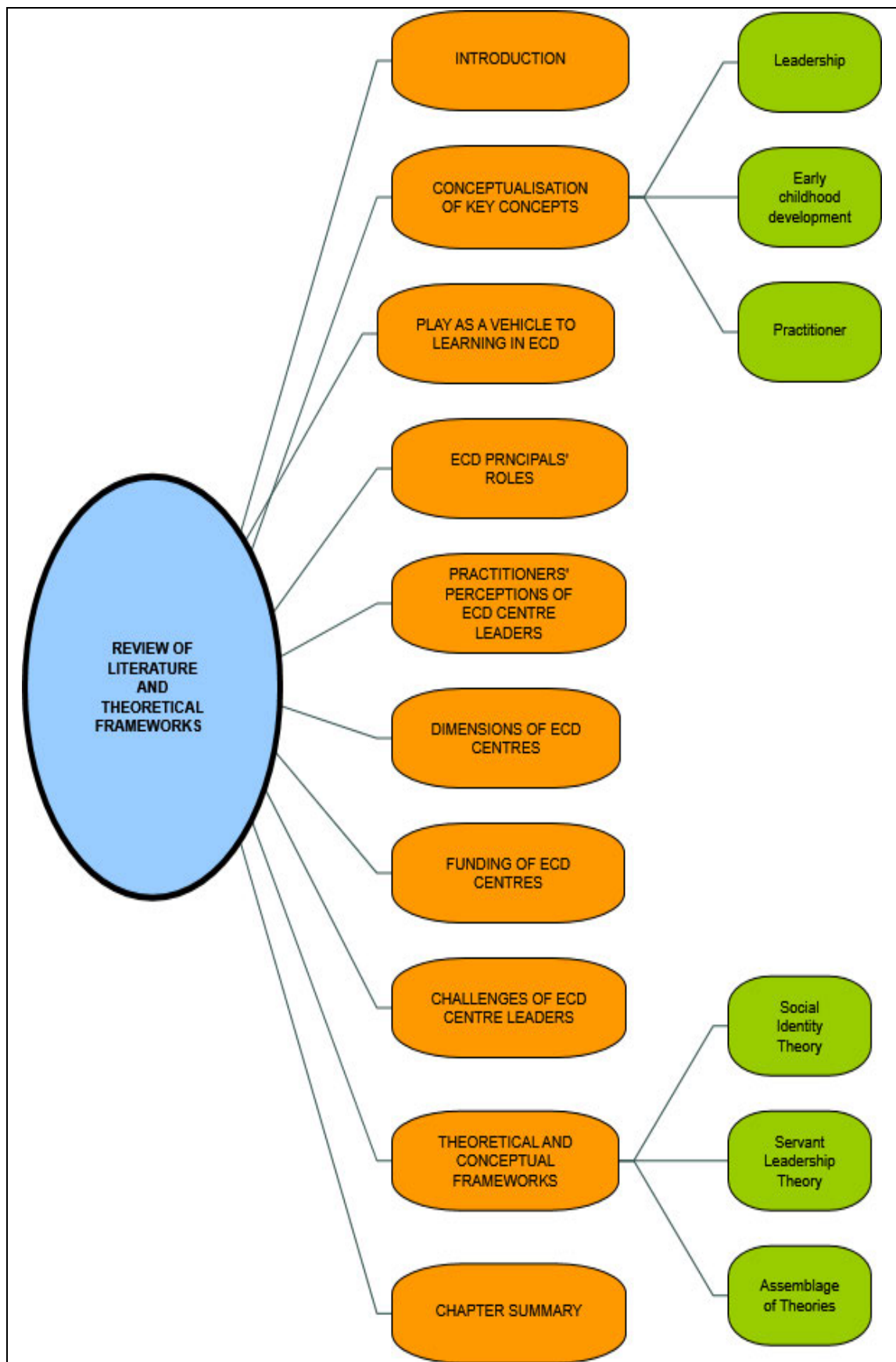
This chapter presents the second level of analysis referred to as analysis of narratives. The utilisation of narrative analysis enabled me to deconstruct the narratives of ECD Principals, and was able to identify themes which emerged across the narratives. These themes are presented concerning research puzzles they provide answers to in this study.

### **Chapter six**

This is a closing chapter which bring the study to an end. Therefore, it summarises the whole study, draws conclusions based on the findings, makes recommendations and gives implications for further research.

## **1.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This first chapter aimed to present the overview and background to the study. To this end, it presented the problem statement, rationale, research puzzles, and the outline of all the chapters to show the development of the thesis. The next chapter will present the review of literature and the theoretical framework adopted in the study.



Map 2: Chapter Two



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The preceding chapter presented the background and the orientation to the study. This chapter focuses on a review of both local and international literature relating to leadership in early childhood development which is the study focus of this particular study. In presenting the chapter, I commence by discussing key concepts, namely, leadership, early childhood development and practitioner. Thereafter, the literature debates are presented thematically. Finally, I present the theoretical framework of the study which is constituted by two theories, namely social identity and servant leadership.

#### **2.2 CONCEPTUALISATION OF KEY CONCEPTS**

To ensure a consistent view of terminology in this study, I provide the clarification of key terms which are, leadership, Early Childhood Development (ECD) and practitioner.

##### **2.2.1 Leadership**

Leadership concept has various meanings as conveyed by different authors; therefore there is not one agreed definition for this concept (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999). A study by Blose and Naicker (2018) explains that there are crucial words in the literature which are common in most definitions of leadership, these include values, influence and goals. Two of these key words stand out in Bush's (2013) definition where he views leadership as a premeditated progression of influence designed at reaching institutional goals. In addition, Christie (2010) shares a similar view and argues that leadership is directed towards positive persuasion through which people at work are encouraged to achieve common goals. Furthermore, Northouse (2010) claims that leadership is an ethical relationship between leaders and followers, from which leadership is reciprocally shared. As a result, leadership is available to everyone in the school regardless of their position. Nevertheless, Daresh (1998) affirms that the commonly acknowledged impact of leadership is coupled with school efficiency and school upgrading, hence there is need to have informed school leaders whose performance is optimal. Drawing from all these scholars, in this study leadership refers to the ability of a leader to influence and create a mutual relationship with the aim of effectively and efficiently achieve institutional goals.

### **2.2.2 Early Childhood Development (ECD)**

From the South African perspective, the Education White Paper 5 outlines the term ECD as pivotal in relation to developmental processes of learners starting from the day of birth to the age of 9 years (DoE, 2001). The emphasis of the white paper is on preparing and furnishing pupils with crucial abilities, understandings and ethics, thus setting groundwork to receive more knowledge (DoE, 2001). In accordance with global principles, ECD caters for kids within the range of (0 to 9 years old) babies, infants, toddlers, pre-scholars and foundation phase learners (UNESCO, 2015). In the South African context learners who are of age 5 to 9 years are normally enrolled in a formal school to attend grade R to 3 respectively, which is ascribed to as Foundation Phase. This study focuses on children from 0 to 4 years old in ECD centres.

### **2.2.3 Practitioner**

Practitioner is the word which is frequently used in ECD centres as an umbrella term which encompasses various roles and responsibilities of an educator. This includes roles such as leading change, caregiver, facilitating improvements and aftercare supervision (Hadebe, 2015). Davis (2014) refers to people who facilitate, lead and manage ECD centres as practitioners. Furthermore, Wall (2006) agrees with the ‘practitioner’ terminology and has used it in her book titled “Special needs and early years: a practitioner’s guide”. Hence ECD personnel such as caregivers, teachers and principals are classified as practitioners. This is similar to mainstream setting where all the personnel are referred to as teachers including the Principal. Therefore, taking into account the above views, this study will refer to ECD personnel as practitioners with the exception of Principals due to their raised status and also to make their role clearly visible.

## **2.3 LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY CONTEXT OF ECD IN SOUTH AFRICA**

National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy (2015) highlights that while the DSD is a custodian, the DoE also oversees ECD. Each of these departments is accountable to ECD in terms of compliance with social, health and curriculum matters as well as governance issues. To mention a few, the misalignment and lack of synergy among these three government sectors is a great challenge which further exacerbates ECD principals’ leadership daunting experience. Having said this, on a positive note the government is currently working tirelessly to resolve this matter amicably; this is confirmed the National Development Plan 2030 (NDP 2030). The government has a contingent plan in place, as stipulated in NDP 2030 with which it seeks to

explicitly address ECD in terms of coordination and collaboration among the departments responsible. The Commission will work with the respective departments to find a solution to the perennial coordination challenge in the delivery of ECD services (NDP 2030, p. 301). Further the state envisions implementing a policy and programme shift to ensure that the DoE takes the core responsibility for the provision and monitoring ECD (NDP 2030).

## **2.4 PLAY AS A VEHICLE TO LEARNING IN ECD CENTRES**

Early childhood is assumed to be the underpinning for development and it is perceived as the first juncture where education is laid (Samuelsson & Kaga, 2008). The children enrolled in ECD centres are perceived to be at their delicate ages of existence, therefore service providers should pay particular attention to their physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, social and moral progression (Phillips & Shonkoff, 2000). This is further expatiated by Grenier, Bruce, Meggit and Kamen (2011) as well as Biersteker (2012) who argue that young children's future contribution to the world solely rest on the quality of care during their early years. In view of quality care, Drew, Christie, Johnson, Meckley and Nell, (2011) assert that learning through play is an essential approach in early education, for it is through play that children learn to make sense of the world around them. A child's thinking skills are developed as well as their self-confidence is enhanced while engaging in educational play.

This study refers to early childhood development as a canopy within which both early childhood (EC) and development coexist harmoniously. Therefore, ECD centre incorporates activities such as teaching, learning, nurturing and care for learners from 0 to 4 years old. ECD centres link play to a window in a child's life, through which learners learn how to live. In addition to this viewpoint, insights on how learners are socialised to become independent, cooperative and creative are evident (Taylor, Rogers, Dodd, Kaneda, Nagasaki, Watanabe & Goshiki, 2004). Consequently, learners adapt to the model of living by practicing acts of kindness, love and sharing during interacting with others. During play learners are at liberty to exercise their imagination, construct their individual thoughts and reason on their own as they develop into adulthood (Taylor et al., 2004).

## **2.5 ECD PRINCIPALS' ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The literature on ECD leaders or principals seems to be dominated by the research conducted in developed countries, such as the United States of America, Japan, Finland, Turkey and Singapore (Davis, 2014; Takahashi, 2006; Hujala, 2013; Kalburan, 2014; Retas & Kwan, 2000). A longitudinal research conducted in Japan, Finland and Singapore regarding leadership tasks in early childhood education, concluded that ECD leadership responsibilities are akin although implementation may vary due to ethnic settings (Takahashi, 2006; Hujala, 2013; Retas & Kwan, 2000). Ethnic setting may include multi-cultural learners in the same school and this influences the approach to teaching. Hujala, Taskinen and Rissanen (2015) in their study highlighted two most important leadership roles, namely pedagogical leadership and human resources management.

Firstly, pedagogical leadership involves refining and evolving of education, teaching and learning practices in educational institutions (Kyllonen, 2011). Further, from educational viewpoint, pedagogical leadership entails developing educational practices, taking care of human relations, and administrative management. Hujala (2013) agrees with this viewpoint and argues that in ECD centres, pedagogical leadership is taking the lead in fundamental responsibilities such as backing up the educational objectives, achieving syllabus and decision making progression. Sharing the same sentiments is Heikka and Waniganayake (2011) who acknowledge that a pedagogical leader is in control of safeguarding the learner's education and care. In addition, Kagan and Hallmark (2001) add that pedagogical leadership also involves reflecting and distributing researched information to members of staff (Kagan & Hallmark, 2001). This suggests that excellent ECD centres are closely linked to pedagogical leadership. To attain first-class pedagogy, ECD Principals must emulate and inspire pedagogical ethos as often as possible while instructing practitioners in their centres (Fonsen, 2014). Secondly, the human resource management involves managing and leading people (Fullan, 2007). This means the Principal's engagement in supervising teachers, inspecting the processes and introducing new approaches to teaching. While supervising human resources, the Principal aims to adequately supply new personnel needed to fill gaps as well as planning how new personnel will fit into the new environment and align themselves in order to achieve ECD centre's goals (Fullan, 2007).

The study by Eeva, Mervi, Soili, Christine, Chika, Mariko and Masahiro (2016) proposed a different set of ECD leadership roles and responsibilities. These scholars put forward the

management of change, networking, cooperation and collaboration skills, performance and maintenance functions as well as security and safety measures as the important responsibilities of ECD Principals. Firstly, **management of change**, change is inevitable and it has become a pivotal constant in the ever-changing world (Douglass, 2018). For example, ECD leaders must be willing to embrace digital and technology phenomenon to avoid embarrassment because young learners are super oriented in it. This might mean leaders embarking on revising teaching approach in order to embrace technology. Therefore, leadership skills in managing change are critical, such as exercising care and being sensitive to teachers' well-being while effecting change (Douglass, 2018). Teachers' feelings of insecurity, unnecessary pressure and resistance to change might seriously affect ECD centres' effectiveness (Garrity, Longstreth, Linder & Potter, 2019).

Secondly, network management in association with **cooperation and collaboration** are crucial skills. ECD principals are seen as lawyers when they are advocating for learners, teachers and families in countless ECD problems. Networking requires ECD leaders to indulge in deliberations at highly influential local level of decision-making with different kinds of stakeholders, and this will demand ECD leaders to have more diverse skills than they have now to manage these networks (Rodd, 2013). ECD leader's ability to encourage cooperation among teachers is of highest significance. Besides, beyond cooperation within the centre, there is high demand of social collaboration responsibility with parents/families and all stakeholders (Takahashi, 2006).

Lastly, **performance and maintenance functions** are important. Performance leadership function is aimed at achieving school goals or solving problems amicably, whereas maintenance leadership function is aimed at conserving societal solidity as a school. An understanding of both of these functions requires the principal as a leader to practically be exemplary to teachers, by providing on-job-training and creating an appropriate environment for regular business dialogues among workers. The conversations will nurture learning community and team culture among the ECD staff (Rodd, 2013; Ueda, 2013). ECD principals may plan their daily routine tasks but emergencies are inevitable. The principal's daily routine aims at maintaining a smooth running day wherein everything will be under control. However, these tasks may be time consuming, such as managing monetary and employees matters, collaborating with immediate stakeholders, planning, pedagogics, providing services to

parents, allocating needed theme materials, and observing daily activities (Ho, 2011; Kagan & Hallmark, 2001).

## **2.6 PRACTITIONERS' PERCEPTIONS OF ECD CENTRE LEADERS**

The current literature suggests that ECD leaders are perceived by practitioners as hardworking leaders due to various roles they play (Kivunja, 2015; McCrea, 2015; Rouse & Spradbury, 2015). From the Australian and England context most ECD practitioners have shown appreciation to the fact that ECD leaders are critical thinkers and innovative which fosters teaching and learning practices (Kivunja, 2015). According to Rodd (2013) and Takahashi (2006), ECD leadership practice involves decision-making and collaboration within which positive progress operation of the ECD centre business is attained. Collaboration among ECD leaders and practitioners enhances working together hence, enabling smooth transition in managing change (Douglass, 2018). Therefore, Ueda (2013) argues that performance and maintenance functions are made easier.

The study by Eeva, Mervi, Soili, Christine, Chika, Mariko and Masahiro (2016) outlines the ECD leadership roles and responsibilities. These scholars articulated the link between leadership roles and the practitioners work. This link impacts the togetherness in their work in support of learner's care and education development. Again, the work of Kivunja (2015) revealed that ECD practitioners are of the view that ECD leaders possess interpersonal skills. As a result, positive working atmosphere is created within which working relationships are enhanced among staff in an ECD centre context (McCrea, 2015; Rouse & Spradbury, 2015). Although the Western literature indicates that ECD practitioners have good perceptions of their ECD centre leaders however, a few of South African studies suggest that there are hindrances in the interaction between ECD centre leaders and the practitioners they lead (Atmore, 2013; Fourie, 2018; Marais, 2019). These scholars identified elements that hinder progress in ECD centres especially those located in poor settlements. These elements included leaders' absenteeism from work, no staff motivation and no attention is given to parents by centre leaders (Atmore, 2013; Fourie, 2018; Marais, 2019).

Firstly, practitioners feel burdened with the heavy workload they carry on their own because of leadership absenteeism from the centre. Subsequently the continuous leader's absence from work creates a communication barrier which has drastic implications on other activities in the centre (Fourie, 2018). Secondly, Fourie (2018) additionally states that lack of staff motivation

gives birth to dissatisfaction on practitioner's part and hence affects their performance. As a result, these challenges will have a negative ripple effect on learners and parents.

## **2.7 DIMENSIONS OF ECD CENTRES**

The study by Atmore et al. (2011) outlines the South African ECD centres' progress since the end of apartheid. These scholars explain various dimensions of ECD centres in South Africa according to province, city and settlement from which the centre is based. These dimensions are categorised as follows; school-based, community-based and home-based ECD facilities (Atmore et al., 2011; Berry, Biersteker, Dawes, Lake, & Smith, 2013; Ilifa Labantwana, 2017).

Firstly, school-based ECD facilities are catered for by the government including the grade R educators' salaries are paid by the government. Secondly, community-based ECD facilities are catered for by DSD and practitioners have limited opportunities to professionally develop while receiving a low income. Thirdly, home-based ECD facilities are registered under NPO programmes and are run by volunteers from individual families (Department of Education, 2001; Ilifa Labantwana, 2017).

Infrastructure being the main challenge facing the ECD sector, church facilities have since become a solution to community-based ECD centres, where during the week the church facility provisionally operate as an ECD centre. Private owned ECD centres on the other hand operates from privately owned properties so their fees are expensive. Ultimately DSD is the highest body under which ECD centres are controlled and then reports to government through DoE (Atmore et al., 2011; Fourie, 2018).

## **2.8 FUNDING OF ECD CENTRES**

Essentially parents' fees are the main contributor to ECD centre funding in South Africa. DSD and DoE are the channels through which the government funding is received and distributed to ECD centres in different provinces in South Africa. The funding is then disbursed to ECD centres and to non-centre programmes, primarily through subsidy and NPO respectively (Atmore et al., 2011). Scholars such as Berry et al. (2013) explain that subsidy is only given to registered ECD centres who qualify for the subsidy. This entails mainly poor settlements centres whose families fall under specific required criteria.

Although NPO funding mainly focus on non-centre based entities such as, family outreach, toy libraries, informal playgroups and home visits programmes, it is of concern that the non-centre based funding is usually once-off payment, only to cater for smooth transition of these pilot projects (Atmore et al., 2011). Subsequently these projects do not last long.

From the above discussion, it is observed that funding is not easily accessible by all ECD centres. Seemingly, the stringent procedures put in place to ascertain the suitability of an ECD centre have hindered many from becoming recipients of funding. Consequently, lack of resources looms as an ugly monster in South Africa ECD sector.

## **2.9 CHALLENGES OF ECD CENTRE LEADERS**

Literature across the globe highlights that ECD centre leaders are confronted with various challenges in carrying out their duties on a day-to-day basis. Most common challenges that ECD leaders face includes, among others, excessive workload, lack of resources, lack of recognition and support from authorities and lack of training in curriculum development (Atmore, 2013; Fourie, 2018; Kivunja, 2015; Marais, 2019; McCrea, 2015; Rouse & Spradbury, 2015).

Firstly, **excessive workload** is one of the challenges ECD leaders are faced with in carrying out their duties. Office administration and financial management roles demands keep ECD leaders away from focusing more on their core responsibility of managing teaching and learning (Eeva et al., 2016; Fourie, 2018; Heikka et al., 2011; Hujala, 2013; Kivunja 2015; Marais, 2019; Muijs et al., 2004; Rodd, 2013). Additionally, Davis (2014), Douglass (2018) and Hujala (2013) reiterate that many ECD leaders have not received formal training on office administration and financial management portfolios. This additional workload is often experienced naturally due to the steady growth of the business. Furthermore, Muijs et al. (2004) and Rodd (2013) argue that in spite of overwhelming additional roles, nonetheless ECD centre leaders have to succumb to the task at hand. It appears therefore that these demands create a heavy workload challenge on ECD leaders whose attention on managing teaching and learning is compromised.

There is evidence that Australia is advanced in ECD quality leadership. This is in line with (Rouse et al., 2015) in their assertions that apart from ECD centre principal, there is regulation reform of an additional portfolio of an Educational Leader whose focus is centred on



developing pedagogical framework. Australian early childhood education and care (ECE&C) made this obligation as a measure to mitigate workload on ECD leaders. Therefore, ECD leaders have now ample time to manage teaching and learning, engage with their practitioners and parents at an optimum level (Rouse et al., 2015).

Secondly, **lack of resources** is yet another challenge ECD leaders experience in their centres. The recent literature has shown that there is a link between poverty decline and ECD centres with regards to provision of early development and educational needs in South Africa (Atmore, 2013; Fourie, 2018; Marais, 2019). The lack of resources is the plight and greatest challenge in most of South African ECD centres located in poor settlements (Mbarathi et al., 2016 & Moodley, 2012). Therefore, it makes the work of ECD principals in leading these centres very difficult (Atmore, 2013), because their goal of alleviating poverty through quality care programs is threatened. As a result, their progress in the move towards equity and democracy in South Africa's early childhood education sector comes to a halt (Atmore, 2013; Fourie, 2018; Marais, 2019).

Thirdly, **lack of recognition and support from authorities** is also another challenge that ECD leaders battle with while working with communities. Despite ECD leaders' exceptional commitment to invest in the education and development of the children within their communities, on a sad note the cold-shoulder response from authorities is concerning (Atmore, 2013, Marais, 2019). The unprecedented reaction of DSD and DoE towards ECD centres in poor settlements has created a gap in many areas. Such areas include, core components such as provision of training, support and mentoring to ECD system which needs government attention, if transformation is to be effective especially in South African ECD townships (Biersteker, 2012).

Lastly, **lack of training in curriculum development and pedagogic strategies** seem to be a common challenge among ECD leaders in townships. Hence curriculum has become a buzz word in South African ECD sector. It is evident that the DoE has made provision for foundation phase; however the CAPS curriculum does not include 0 – 4 years old learners in ECD (Mbarathi et al., 2016 & Moodley, 2012). Recently DoE (2015) made available a National Curriculum Framework (NCF) for children from birth to four years from which ECD centre principals can develop a learning programme to suite their context. ECD centre principals in townships and their practitioners seem to have a challenge in interpreting the NCF; as a result

developing learning programmes and pedagogic strategies become an unnerving exercise (Atmore, 2013).

## **2.10 THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS**

This inquiry is underpinned by a two-pronged theoretical framework which comprises the social identity theory (SIT) and servant leadership theory (SLT). These two theories are explained in detail here-below:

### **2.10.1 Social Identity Theory**

Social identity theory was developed by Tajfel and Turner in 1979. This theory understands and identifies people through group-processes; the assumption within this theory is that there exist socially constructed groups (social groups) to which people affiliate (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). These social groups thus influence the behaviour of people as each social group promotes a particular type of behaviour (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The social groups have been categorised into two broad types, namely, in-group and out-group (Tajfel, 1981). On the one hand, in-group is where one belongs because of the group distinctness and prestige. The in-group members sense and distinguish themselves as fitting to this group by showing signs of favouritism to each other (Tajfel, 1981). On the other hand, out-group refers to groups one does not belong and such groups are disliked. The out-group members are shown signs of discrimination and disinterested attitudes (Tajfel, 1981). In addition, Tajfel (1981) affirms that an individual within a social group develops a self-concept; this includes the values that engenders a sense of social group belonging. Therefore, it happens naturally that people abide by in-group and tell apart the out-group.

There are four fundamental elements of the social identity theory, namely, social categorisation, social comparison, social identity and self-esteem (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Firstly, the social categorisation “creates and defines individuals’ place in society” (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, p. 40). For example, people categorise themselves into different groups such as, members of an institute, fans of soccer team, religious association, age or gender (Tajfel & Turner, 1981). Secondly, the social comparison is given birth from social categorisation and aims at assessing the social groups to which people belong. The result of social comparison by large defines our social identity and social esteem (Tajfel & Turner, 1981). Thirdly, the social identity is that part of an individual’s self-concept which originates from his understanding of his membership in a social group; this includes the beliefs and passionate connotations devoted

to that membership (Tajfel & Turner, 1981). Finally, the self-esteem is an individual's fundamental motivation developed from belonging to a social group, which leads to self enhancement. Hence the social groups in which they affiliate influence their behaviour as well (Tajfel & Turner, 1981). Drawing from the above discussion, the social identity theory will assist me to holistically understand who the ECD Principals are in terms of their identities.

### **2.10.2 Servant Leadership Theory**

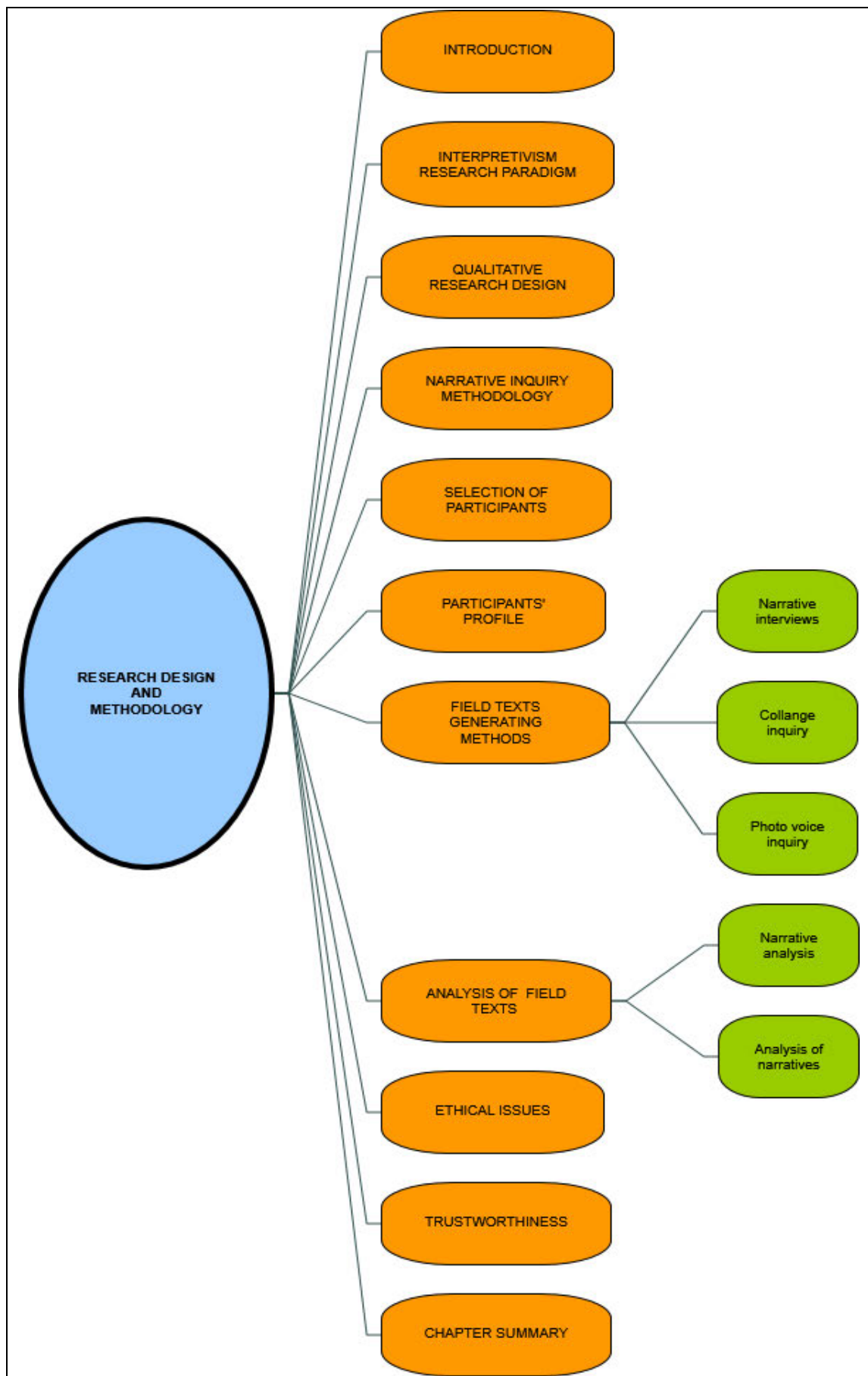
The concept of servant leadership increased traction following the seminal work of Robert Greenleaf in the 1970s. As time passed, the servant leadership notion attracted the attention of several scholars and has subsequently developed. The servant leadership theory has a twofold resolution, namely the individual development of staff and the quality of care enhancement in institutions (Duren, 2017). Sharing similar view are; Van der Westhuizen, Van der Vyver and Meyer (2014) who also claim that this twofold mandate may be accomplished through cooperation and collaboration with staff and community in making decisions and in the manner in which the staff care. Bolman and Deal (2002) identified three characteristics of a servant leader; these include passion, courage and integrity. These characteristics manifest in the manner in which servant leaders serve in their organisations. This is observable in a person who undertakes a place of being a servant when interacting with his/her followers (McCrimmon, 2010). In addition, Bolman et al. (2002) argue that in spite of servant leaders' many complex tasks and workload they endure; again the passion seems to be their only major drive that keeps them going. In support of this view, De Pree (2003) claims that a person who perceives him/herself as a servant leader, ought to serve, with the aim to sustain his/her followers by carefully giving them professional attention. Therefore, the spirit of caring, when appropriately exhibited by a servant leader to his/her fellow workers, does not only address their needs but also distinguishes this servant leader from other leaders (McCrimmon, 2010). The servant leader focuses on serving staff first before leading, ensuring there exist mutual understanding among staff and leaders (Crippen, 2005). Furthermore, the spirit in which servant leaders serve appears to be their only source of strength which compels them to continue leading regardless of lack of recognition by authorities in the sector (Westhuizen, Van der Vyver & Meyer, 2014). Drawing from the above discussion, the servant leadership theory was adapted to help me to understand how the Principals in ECD centres serve both practitioners (their staff members) and children in terms of their practices.

### **2.10.3 Assemblage of theories**

This study intends to understand the leadership of ECD centres through the lived experiences of principals. In order to arrive at this understanding, I will firstly explore the identities of these leaders so that I can understand their practices. Thereafter, their leadership practices will be explored. The first theory (social identity) assisted me in understanding who the ECD principals are, this entails identities and various social groups in which they belong (Tajfel & Turner, 1981). The second theory (servant leadership) was adopted to understand the leadership practices of these leaders since these leaders are normally not appointed formally to this position, but they establish the centres with an intention of serving their communities. Since these incumbents lead ECD centres, which are institutions that deal with young children, the servant leadership qualities such as caring, nurturing and loving among others were expected from their practices (Westhuizen, Van der Vyver & Meyer, 2014).

## **2.11 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter focused on a review of both local and international literature relating to the study focus. Key concepts, leadership, early childhood development and practitioner were clarified. Additionally, chapter two presented the theoretical framework of the study which comprised of two theories, namely social identity and servant leadership. These theories were assembled to construct the framework. The next chapter presents the research methodology adopted in the study.



**Map 3: Chapter Three**

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The preceding chapter presented both the literature review and the theoretical framework of this study. The current chapter presents the methodological processes of the study. Firstly, the chapter discusses interpretivism, which is a research positioning adopted in this study. Secondly, the chapter discusses the qualitative research design which was adopted to engage with the experiences of ECD Principals in this study. Thirdly, the narrative inquiry methodology which guided my engagement with the lived experiences of participants is presented. Fourthly, research methods including sampling method, methods of generating field texts and also the methods of analysing field texts are discussed. Finally, the chapter presents issues of trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

#### **3.2 INTERPRETIVISM RESEARCH PARADIGM**

This study is located within the interpretivism paradigm. The interpretivism paradigm aims at understanding human behaviour and how people make meaning of their experiences (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). The dominant assumption of interpretivism paradigm is that meaning is socially constructed because it arises from interactions within a human community (Creswell, 2014). As a researcher, I positioned myself within interpretivism, as this paradigm enabled me to capture how each ECD Principal's reality is constructed and also to understand meanings that these principals give to their leadership experiences. As a result, multiple realities emerged from the interpretations of different principals' experiences (Creswell, 2014). Interpretivism assumes that knowledge is created through dialogue and interpretation thereof (Tekin & Kotaman, 2013). This view strengthened my decision for locating myself within this paradigm as I engaged closely with my participants with an intention to attach meaning to their leadership experiences through interpreting field texts accordingly. Considering the above mentioned reasons, interpretivism was therefore the most applicable paradigm within which the ECD centre Principals' experiences could be understood.

#### **3.3 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN**

A research design is defined as a plan of how the researcher will systematically generate and analyse data needed to answer the research questions (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). Likewise, Kumar (2011) maintains that a research design serves to identify and create the

appropriate tools and procedures to successfully answer the research questions. The research design offers a sketch to follow when conducting any set of investigation (Nworgu, 1991). There are three given types of research designs namely, qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods (Betram & Christiansen, 2014).

Since this study seeks to understand the leadership experiences of township ECD centre Principals, I decided to locate the study within a qualitative research design. Qualitative research design aims at understanding human behaviour and how they make meaning of their experiences. The qualitative researchers are field focused; this means field texts will be generated in the natural setting where participants are working (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). As a qualitative researcher, I served as a key instrument in the study as I got an opportunity to closely interact, observe behaviours and actions of my participants within their context (Creswell, 2007; Creswell, 2013). Hence, the qualitative research was used as a form of inquiry to make interpretations of what I saw, heard and understood from Principals leading ECD centres in townships. One of the characteristics of a qualitative research as Creswell and Poth (2018) describe it, is the typical multiple sources of data in words or images. This means that it uses a variety of methods to generate data which would result in voluminous primary data from participants. Likewise, in this study data sources such as interviews, pictures and photographs were used in the process of generating data. I explain this in detail in section 3.7 of this chapter.

### **3.4 EXPLORING ECD PRINCIPALS' LIVED EXPERIENCES THROUGH NARRATIVE INQUIRY METHODOLOGY**

This study adopted the Narrative Inquiry methodology to explore the lived experiences of four Principals in four township ECD centres. Narrative inquiry methodology allows for narratively inquiring into individual experiences over time and in context (Caine, Estenfan & Clandinin, 2013). Interestingly, Creswell (2007) points out that narrative inquiry begins with inquiring into researcher's own stories of experience; by this virtue as a researcher I also got an opportunity to share my own lived story of personal and professional experience in this study's rationale. The lived and told stories of participants involved cultural, social and institutional narratives (Clandinin, 2013). Furthermore, it is believed that narrative inquiry is noticeable by its prominence on relational engagement between researcher and participants (Creswell, 2007). This relational engagement is aimed at understanding and making meaning of experiences

through conversations, dialogue and participation in the on-going lives of participants (Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

Since this study sought to explore the lived experiences of ECD Principals, I found it appropriate to explore their experiences narratively. By so doing, the stories were expressed from the horse's mouth. This means that the ECD Principals made their voices heard as they articulated their stories in their own words. Narrative inquirers need to establish a good rapport with their participants in order to elicit more stories (Caine et al., 2013; Clandinin, 2013). In this study, I managed to develop a mutual professional relationship with my participants through our interactions as a result they were free to tell me their stories of lived experiences (Caine et al., 2013; Clandinin, 2013). In addition, I worked in conjunction with participants by having lengthy periods of time to meet them at frequent intervals at their convenient times; this enabled me develop mutual relationships and to generate more stories.

The view that people live to tell their story happens to be a central element behind narrative inquiry methodology (Clandinin, 2013). This view is further emphasised by Clandinin and Roseik (2007) who claim that typical humans for as long as they live, converse about their stories. As a narrative inquirer, I also believe that stories are a vital way of reflecting on past and present experiences. Thus the narrative inquiry methodology assisted me in drawing rich and in-depth stories of lived experiences from the participating ECD Principals.

### **3.5 SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS**

This study utilised purposive and convenience sampling methods to select participants. On the one hand, purposive sampling is viewed by Betram and Christiansen (2014) as a judgement made by researcher regarding choice of individuals or group of people to participate in the study. Being aware of this, I purposefully chose two ECD Principals from kwaMashu township and one ECD Principal from Umlazi township because my research focused on their lived experiences. This means that I hand-picked participants according to their suitability in the study (Rule & John, 2011).

On the other hand, the convenience sampling is viewed by Cohen et al. (2011) as a tool used to select participants of the targeted population that meet certain criteria, for example easy access, physical nearness, availability and readiness. For the sake of travelling purposes, I therefore chose ECD Principals that were within my proximity. The closer my participants, the



more frequent meetings we had; hence this method enabled me to draw more profound experiences from my participants.

### 3.6 PARTICIPANTS PROFILE

PARTICIPANT AND ECD CENTRE NAMES	GENDER AND AGE	QUALIFICATIONS	YEARS OF EXPERIENCE
Mary Cross ECD Centre	Female 53 years	ECD Higher Certificate	Practitioner: 7 years Principal: 7 years
Janet Magic ECD Centre	Female 50 years	ECD Diploma	Practitioner: 23 years Principal: 9 years
Stella Stars ECD Centre	Female 59 years	ECD Diploma	Practitioner: 18 years Principal: 18 years

**Table 2: Participants Profile**

### 3.7 FIELD TEXTS GENERATING METHODS

This narrative inquiry will employ three methods of generating data, namely, narrative interview, collage inquiry and photo voice. These methods of generating field texts are explained below:

#### 3.7.1 Narrative Interview

Narrative interview was used with the aim of understanding township ECD Principals' lived experience. The narrative interview is viewed by Holt (2010) as a dialogue that permits storytellers to provide stories of their past and present lives. In generating field texts I used the narrative interview which enabled participants to fully express their both personal and professional lived stories. In addition, the narrative interview also afforded me an opportunity to discover a wide-ranging diversity of people, included their upbringing experiences, attitudes, beliefs, and opinions regarding their life stories, meaning of events, and group affiliation or institutions within which they intermingle (Adler & Clark, 2008; Olive, 2014; Polkinghorne, 1995). This method of generating field texts empowered me to generate rich stories from participants' lived lives.

Furthermore, the narrative interview through probing awarded me a platform to elicit additional in-depth information on lived leading experiences of Principals in ECD centres (De Finna, 2009; Olive, 2014). Apart from probing, as a narrative inquirer I was able to plan multiple meetings with participants to enable them to reflect and recount their stories. Therefore, I

scheduled at least two sessions of narrative interviews with each participant to create ample time for each to narrate both personal and professional stories of their experiences of leading ECD centres.

### **3.7.2 Collage Inquiry**

The collage inquiry was used as a secondary method of generating field texts; this method supplemented the narrative interviews. Butler-Kisber (2010) defines collage inquiry as a method which includes use of pictures or images grouped in a portrait to reveal phenomenon. In the same vein, Cohen et al. (2011) explain that the use of pictures in the collage inquiry prompts additional information from the participants' that narrative interviews may have missed. In this study, I made use of the collage inquiry to elicit participants' elapsed stories of experiences (Butler-Kisber, 2010; Butler-Kisber & Podma, 2010).

### **3.7.3 Photo Voice Inquiry**

Apart from the collage inquiry, the photo voice inquiry was used to elicit more stories from participants. The photo voice inquiry is a process where participants engage in taking photographs related to a social problem in study and subsequently narrates stories that each photograph triggers (Wang & Burris, 1997). The use of visuals is a fundamental element in narratives studies as it captures thoughts, meanings and actual data that words alone fail to express (Clandinin, 2013; Cohan et al., 2011). As a narrative inquirer the photo voice method enabled me to generate more stories of experience from the ECD centre Principals.

## **3.8 ANALYSIS OF FIELD TEXTS**

The field texts generated through the three methods were all in a form of stories, for this reason, field texts were analysed together. In analysing the field texts two methods of analysis were employed namely, narrative analysis and analysis of narratives. Below I explain these methods in detail.

### **3.8.1 Narrative Analysis**

Narrative analysis is the first method of analysing field texts in this inquiry. Narrative analysis aims at developing a coherent account of the data elements generated by the researcher; in this method the data is synthesised instead of splitting it into different parts (Polkinghorne, 1995). The narrative analysis is the process of relating events and actions in an intentional manner with an objective of arranging them in chronological order (Polkinghorne, 1995). In this study,

I firstly transcribed all the generated field texts from voice-recorded narratives to text transcripts, thereafter each participant's re-storied narrative was constructed using plots (Polkinghorne, 1995). The plots captured the ECD centre Principals' personal and professional lives. As a result, I ensured that each re-storied narrative is well configured by paying particular attention to time and place it happened (Clandinin, 2013). Furthermore, I ensured that each participant's re-storied narrative is arranged such that past and present events, retrospectively link well to give a sound chronological sequence presentation of narratives (Polkinghorne, 1995).

### **3.8.2 Analysis of narratives**

Analysis of narratives is the second method of analysing field texts in this inquiry. Analysis of narratives aims at identifying and classifying themes stemming from the constructed re-storied narratives through paradigmatic processes. The paradigmatic analysis gives birth to common themes which are located within the constructed re-storied narratives of participants (Polkinghorne, 1995). Therefore, at this level of analysis, I inspected the three participants' re-storied narratives to ascertain common concepts or themes appearing from their narratives (Polkinghorne, 1995). Subsequently, I will select these themes in order to give more detailed discussion of the emerging meanings (Creswell, 2013).

## **3.9 ETHICAL ISSUES**

Ethics has to do with conduct that is considered right or wrong (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). Therefore, ethics are a significant consideration in research from the beginning till the end of the research. Cohen, Manion and Morrison, (2007) suggest that an academic researcher needs to apply for ethical clearance at the university enrolled and as well have a responsibility of seeking permission from gatekeepers before conducting a research. Owing to this expectation, I lodged an ethical clearance application through the University of KwaZulu-Natal's (UKZN) ethical research committee upon the approval of my research proposal. In addition, I sought permission to conduct research from the relevant participating ECD Principals.

Apart from the permission, I solicited consent from the three ECD centre Principals who participated in the study. The participants were issued with letters explaining the nature and the purpose of the study. To ensure autonomy, upon acceptance of participation, the participants were then requested to sign the letter as proof of their voluntary consent of participation. The participants were notified of their right to withdraw participation if they

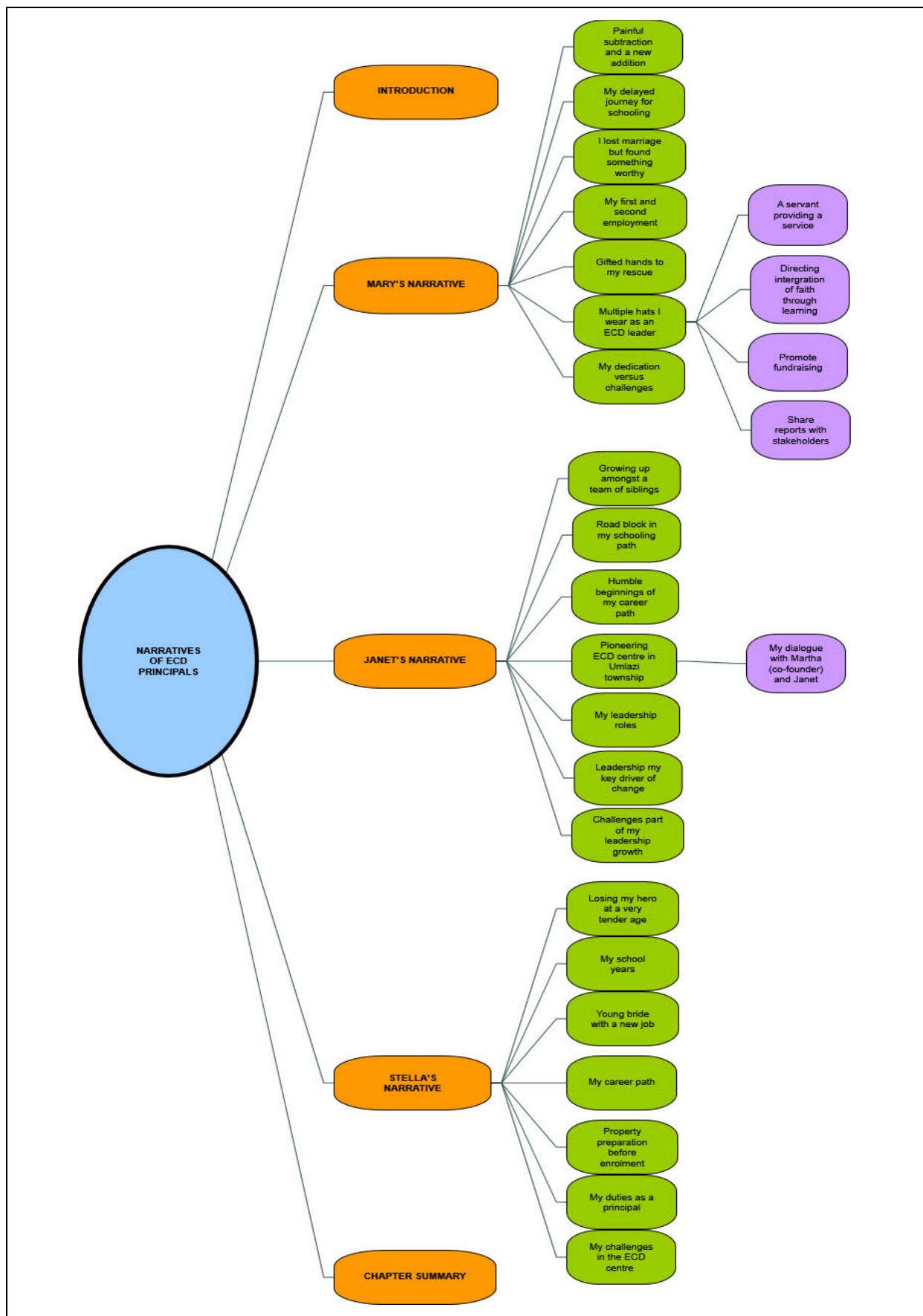
wish to do so without any negative penalties. Again, in order to maintain the non-maleficence principle, I ensured that the study does no harm to participants. They were also assured of confidentiality of the information they supplied including their names, names of centres, photographs and any other information that might reveal their identities. To this end, I make use of pseudonyms in this dissertation to protect identities of both the participants and centres they lead (Allen & Wiles, 2016).

### **3.10 TRUSTWORTHINESS**

In terms of trustworthiness for narrative studies, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) and Loh (2013) stress that it is a must that principles of verisimilitude and utility be observed by narrative inquirers. Firstly, the principle of verisimilitude is viewed as a critical criterion upon which judgement is passed regarding the value of a narrative inquiry. Therefore, for this reason this inquiry engaged participants' validation to ensure its trustworthiness (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Loh, 2013). Secondly, the principle of utility is another element that is critical in ensuring trustworthiness of a narrative inquiry. This implies that the researcher ought to check on the study's use, relevance and utility (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Loh, 2013). For this reason I made available thick accounts on three descriptions namely, comprehension, anticipation and guide which contributed to founding the utility criterion in this study. To this end, I explained clearly the context in which this study was conducted, the information of participants and the processes of this research in ensuring utility in this inquiry.

### **3.11 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter presented the research design and methodological processes that were utilized in the study. The chapter began by providing detailed discussions of research paradigm, qualitative design and narrative inquiry methodology. The chapter went on to discuss the research methods. Finally, the issues of trustworthiness and ethical considerations were discussed. The next chapter presents the narrative analysis which is the first level of analysis.



Map 4: Chapter Four

## CHAPTER FOUR

### NARRATIVES OF ECD PRINCIPALS

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapter presented the research design and methodological processes that were utilized in the study. The current chapter presents the narratives of participants which are the product of narrative analysis. In this chapter I present narrative analysis of ECD centre principals' lived experiences as a first level of analysis. The view that people live to tell their stories happens to be a central element behind narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2013). This view is further emphasised by Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) who claim that typical humans for as long as they live, converse about their stories. As a narrative inquirer, I also believe that stories are a vital way of reflecting on past and present experiences. Thus the narratives presented on this chapter were generated from the horse's mouth through narrative interviews, collage inquiry and photo voice. A chronological order was adopted in re-telling stories of Mary, Janet and Stella. Below the stories of participants are presented independently.

#### 4.2 MARY'S NARRATIVE



**Figure 4.1:** Mary's collage

##### 4.2.1 Painful subtraction and a new addition

My name is Mary, I was born in 1966. I am the fourth child in a family of five siblings; three boys and two girls. In 1967 my dear mother was taken away from us in a painful tragedy. She went to hospital to deliver a fifth born baby and never made it. We were however consoled by the new additional baby boy. This ordeal struck my family when I was only one year old. To make matters worse, our father did not tell us the truth, instead he lied that our mother got a job in Johannesburg hence she relocated. The separation was painful for us, especially because we were still young and unable to comprehend why our mother never visited us. We grew up with a helper in the house. I remember one day she asked me to make a tea for her. This meant that I had to make fire from fire wood, boil water in the kettle and rinse the teapot. Unfortunately, I could not make her tea since I did not know how to make it. The aunty was angry with me and she shouted at me. She sent me to the toilet to check whether I am a girl or a boy. Upon my father's return I reported this incident to my father, and the helper was fired with an immediate effect and we never saw her again. This experience showed me that my father was very protective of us as children, caring and loving.

Many years later we had a visitor in the family from abroad, who happened to be my mother's sister and who apparently was absent at my mother's funeral. This lady expressed her sorrow through crying. We could hear her crying from a distance and we were all worried what could have happened to this strange woman. Our father introduced her to us and that was the day he finally revealed the secret about our mother's death. I was in high school when I knew the truth about my mother's mystery. My childhood and family memories were elicited by my collage as depicted in Figure 4.1 above.

#### **4.2.2 My delayed journey for schooling**

I started primary level very late, I must have been about nine or ten years old. My father could not remember my date of birth and the worse part of it is that I did not have a birth certificate. It took a long time for my father to find my road to health card which was needed at home affairs in order to obtain a birth certificate. I attended first year at a Roman Catholic primary school. My teacher was old and very loving. I remember the school culture was that every Friday we would receive cakes as a class but she would give me extra cakes. In addition, my teacher would always bring me a lunch box and it made me feel very special. Only now in retrospect, do I realise that she knew I did not have a mother. This teacher covered my mother's gap by catering for me. In terms of secondary education, I went to a high school which was in the same proximity I lived. I completed my standard 6, 7 and 8 (now known as grade 8, 9, and

10), thereafter went to another high school in kwaMashu where I completed my matric. The delay for my schooling journey was a blessing in disguise because I was mature enough to pursue with my studies till I finished my matric.

#### **4.2.3 I lost marriage but found something worthy**

At home, while growing up, I do not remember going to church though my father would say we were Roman Catholics. I guess if my mother was alive she could have taken us to church. My best friend whom I had a relationship with never disclosed his religion but would talk about God quite often. One day he lied that he had to go to work that weekend. That same week there was a church conducting worship and prayer in the tent every evening for a week. We were invited and my father granted me and my sister permission to attend the church service. To my surprise I met my boyfriend in the same tent and had a great time together at the prayer meeting. This is the time my family knew about our relationship. Both our parents met as per our tradition to arrange our marriage. Subsequently, we got married, however, our marriage did not last for long as we later separated. Though we have separated, but I thank God that I met him because the Lord I found in the tent is the same God whom I am still worshipping.

#### **4.2.4 My first and second employment**

In 1996, my pastor found me a job at a local government, Ndwendwe court where I worked with chiefs (amakhosi) as a clerk. In the year 2000 the department merged with the local government. This affected all personnel who joined the company in 1996 including myself because I did not have any qualification. I was among those who were retrenched and I became jobless. In 2003 I was nominated as a children's ministries coordinator to serve the church, where I worked with the church while reporting to the church pastor. My role was to ensure each child in the congregation between the ages of 0 to 14 years is on register and catered for by means of creating age appropriate groups. These groups in form of classes would conduct faith-based lessons tailored to enhance children's faith and love for Jesus as guided by the church curriculum. The curriculum covered topics such as; my home, my family, my community just to name a few. At the end of the year I would give a report to the church pastor on all the activities that the children covered and what we had achieved. I love the programme that the church is offering; in fact it opened my eyes to see the gift I had while I mingled with church and community children. For seven years, I was involved in teaching the young children about God. It is from then that I developed my skills to work and love young children. They are close to my heart and I love them.



#### **4.2.5 Gifted hands to my rescue**

In 2010 the church requested me to serve as a caretaker. I accepted and I moved to stay at the church house in the community of kwaMashu. That time I had my little daughter whom I was teaching the word of God and bible stories at home in the evening. During the day while playing she would share bible stories, recite poems and memorise verses with other children in the community. Those children would go home and share the stories that my little daughter told them, with their parents. People in the community begged me to teach their children as I had done with my little girl. They wanted their children to know the word of God and bible stories like my daughter. The community was up in arms supporting that I should pioneer a crèche in the community. This came as an answer to my struggle.

In January 2013, on my return from Zimbabwe where I had taken my daughter to boarding school, I had no money and no food but the community helped me. One day the ladies in the community visited me. Their concern was that I should not struggle while I have such a talent which I could put to use by providing them a service. On the 15<sup>th</sup> of February 2013, the ladies in the community gave me money to buy airtime so that I can call the church pastor. They promised to pay me R120 per child per month. I started with only five kids and at the end of that same month the enrolment increased to thirty-five kids. The programme we were using made the school to grow rapidly in such a short time. Drawing from my own experience with my daughter, I used the skills and knowledge to conduct bible lessons, church songs, recite verses and poems to teach crèche children. At that time we did not have a name for the crèche. I visited Training and Resource in Early Education (TREE) an organisation that specialises in ECD resource and training, where I got resources, such as ECD Theme book and South African National Curriculum Framework (NCF) among other things. Together with practitioners we constructed our learning programme from NCF, theme book and church curriculum.

#### **4.2.6 Multiple hats I wear as an ECD leader**

As an ECD leader I wear multiple hats such as; a servant, faith-based curriculum director, fundraiser, stakeholders' news reporter, and advocate.

#### 4.2.6.1 A servant providing a service

I see myself as a servant in my community. To this end, I have adjusted my school timetable (see Figure 4.2) to suit my clients in the community, therefore school starts at 06h00. I have an advantage that I stay on school premises. When the first child arrives, as a leader I will always be ready to fetch the kids because it is not safe for a child to be left alone outside. Some parents will tell me that the child did not sleep well therefore I will take the child to bed to have a nap. Those children who are wide awake will be served with porridge at 06h30. I sometimes clean the dishes while I wait for teachers to arrive. My teachers start work at 07h00 and they take over from me.



**Figure 4.2: Mary's Daily Program**

Every Monday and Friday I do story telling during the worship time. Our assembly time is at 07h30 where the whole school gathers together for worship. Both groups, beginner and kindergarten come together to sing songs, recite bible memory verses and listen to a bible story. It is very important to start our day with worship, in a way we are training children and above all we put God first. The word of God is key to everything in life. We write in communication books the summary of each forthcoming week including the memory verse, shape of the week, colour of the week, theme of the week and announcements. Communication book is the means of corresponding between teachers and parents about the child and to keep track of what is happening in the school. Class time is when learners go to their age appropriate groups to do their educational activities of the day. My job as an ECD leader is to monitor practitioners to make sure that they are following the learning programme as planned, as well as checking communication books to see if there are any messages from parents. My work also entails responding to messages and liaising with practitioners if action is required. I also check fortnightly practitioners' planned work for teaching and learning and give feedback where necessary.

Toilet routine is always before snack time (see Figure 4.3). For the beginner class potty training and hygiene tips are repeated just before serving snacks. These hygiene tips are in form of a rhyme with words like; ‘This is the way I wash my hands before I eat. I keep my hair neat and I keep my nails short. No talking at the eating table.’ The school provides meals and morning snack for children. Children are only allowed to bring fruits to school for afternoon snack. The school is strict on diet because it contributes to the development of the child.



**Figure 4.3: Mary's Potty Training**

As a leader I know my community values and challenges therefore what I do in the school must be to promote those values and address the challenges. My clientele is mostly young mothers who offer less attention to their children at the expense of fashion and entertainment. Some children are staying with grandparents who are surviving on government grant. On that note, as a leader I decided that the school will provide meals which include; breakfast, morning snack, and lunch with the object in view of balancing and nourishing children's health. Children deserve fresh vegetables, fresh fruits and hot cooked meals every day.

At 11h00 till 12 noon, outdoor play is where most of the time is spent to ensure the gross motor skills and obstacle courses are fully covered. Learners learn through play. As a leader I promote play so that our learners grow holistically (see Figure 4.4). Consequently the school made provision of a jungle gym, water and sand play. Scooters, bikes, tyres, balls and holler-hoops are all children's favourite outdoor play apparatus. You will find that the full hour is not even enough for them,



**Figure 4.4: Mary's Jungle gym**

when time is up they will still want to play some more.

Toilet routine is a frequent routine including washing of hands. Lunch is served soon after outdoor play. I admire the way kids love their food. They eat the same food from same plates cooked from same pot. Even the staff, we eat the same food. I do not allow teachers to bring food to school, the reason being they should also enjoy eating what kids are eating. Nap time is soon after lunch at 13h00. Some young children wet their clothes and the bed sheet while sleeping. I always avail myself as a leader to help with the class while the teacher bath and change the messed children. Teachers wash the messed clothes including the bed sheet before sending it home. This is very common with beginners especially during potty training stage. The beginners may even soil their pants and teachers are expected to wash, bath and change the child. Incidents of this nature are written in the communication book to inform parents because we are in partnership. Potty training programme is shared with parents too to ensure consistency even at home after school and during weekends. This makes our school a home away from home because of the extra care we practice in ensuring best service at all times. Home time for many is 14h00 and a few stay for after care till 17h00.

#### *4.2.6.2 Directing integration of faith through learning*

Coordinating integration of faith through learning is one of my functions as a leader. I practice this through incorporating faith based Christian program with educational themes in setting up whole year teaching programme. The assimilation of both Christian and educational themes makes our product exceptional in view of maintaining quality standards. As it is we are doing both educational themes and Christian themes from January to July and then August to December respectively. The church curriculum enhances a spiritual training with which 3 and 4 years old kids are foregrounded to love and serve Jesus. Apart from loving and serving Jesus, there are practical activities such as, reciting all books of the bible, Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer, among other things.

#### *4.2.6.3 Promote fundraising*

The lack of resources is the greatest challenge I have in my ECD centre. Children's fees are pegged very low to accommodate parents who do not earn much in my township (kwaMashu). Unfortunately it is to our ECD centre's disadvantage because it is not enough to cover all our expenses. Nonetheless I need to ensure that the centre's goals are met. This is the reason why I need to promote fundraising to make ends meet. No matter how small the fundraising project may appear, I need everyone, everywhere to play his/her part. Every Friday each child brings R5.00 to school for baker-baker day. Instead of bread they each buy a muffin donated



by parents. Through the fundraising, the school was able to purchase razor wire above school fence today, including a few items on the outdoor jungle gym. Since we do not have donors I use my NPO registration to solicit donations from other organisations.

I have not received any support from DSD in form of subsidy; apparently DSD demands us to meet their requirements for registration (see Figure 4.5). Though my centre falls under Department of Social Development (DSD), it falls short on some of their registration requirements therefore we do not qualify for government grant. So currently, the registration of the centre is incomplete due to outstanding requirements.



**Figure 4.5: Mary's Improved step and toilet sitting ring**

#### *4.2.6.4 Share reports with stakeholders*

The two big events for the centre include the annual general meeting (AGM) and the graduation ceremony. In the AGM, as a leader I give reports on school progress to stakeholders. After sharing my report with parents in our last year's AGM, I proposed a raise in fees to R550 per month inclusive of food, registration and stationery, so that we will be able to cover our expenses. In light of what I had shared, parents agreed to the proposal of new school fees but still it is a battle to receive fees in full every month. Therefore I do everything within my power to secure the little I can so that the centre continues to run in spite of our lack. It is not easy to ask a parent to buy stationery, for uniformity's sake, I buy the same stationery for every child in the school from parents' stationery fee contributions.

With regards to graduation, we use the graduation day as our platform to show-case who we are to parents and the community at large as children also get a chance to do some performances. Often on such occasions parents pledge and commit themselves to assist the school in various ways.

#### **4.2.7 My dedication versus challenges**

I am committed to be a voice of the community as far as the running of the ECD centre is concerned. On the one hand, according to DSD the school building condition is old and they recommend that I should close the school or alternatively look for another site. On the other hand, Environmental Health Department suggest that we replace big toilets with small size toilet seats suitable for young learners. Due to current school financial constraints unfortunately

renovations plight is beyond our reach. As a leader I made provision of a step and toilet sitting ring to accommodate our children while we map a way forward around these challenges. Our plan as the school is to put a committee in place, which will approach the church and kindly request if they would lease their mission house for school business. Temporarily the school has improvised a step and a toilet ring around the seat for easy access by learners.

The community is not in agreement with both suggestions from DSD and environmental health department. The DSD recommendation of school closure is unfavorable to the community since the school service is indispensable. Furthermore, the suggestion of small toilets by environmental health department conflicts with the purpose of growth in a child. Most homes have big toilets yet have raised children using same technic of potty training without merely replacing the big toilets. As a leader who is committed to serving the community, I unequivocally support the view that the school remains operational while negotiations with the church are underway because our services are crucial.

Since my school is in a township area, another challenge is security of the school. On one occasion the school jungle gym got vandalised. Following a discussion on this matter with school stakeholders, a decision was taken to build a fence around it with a lockable gate. As shown in the picture (Figure 4.6) today the jungle gym is secured.

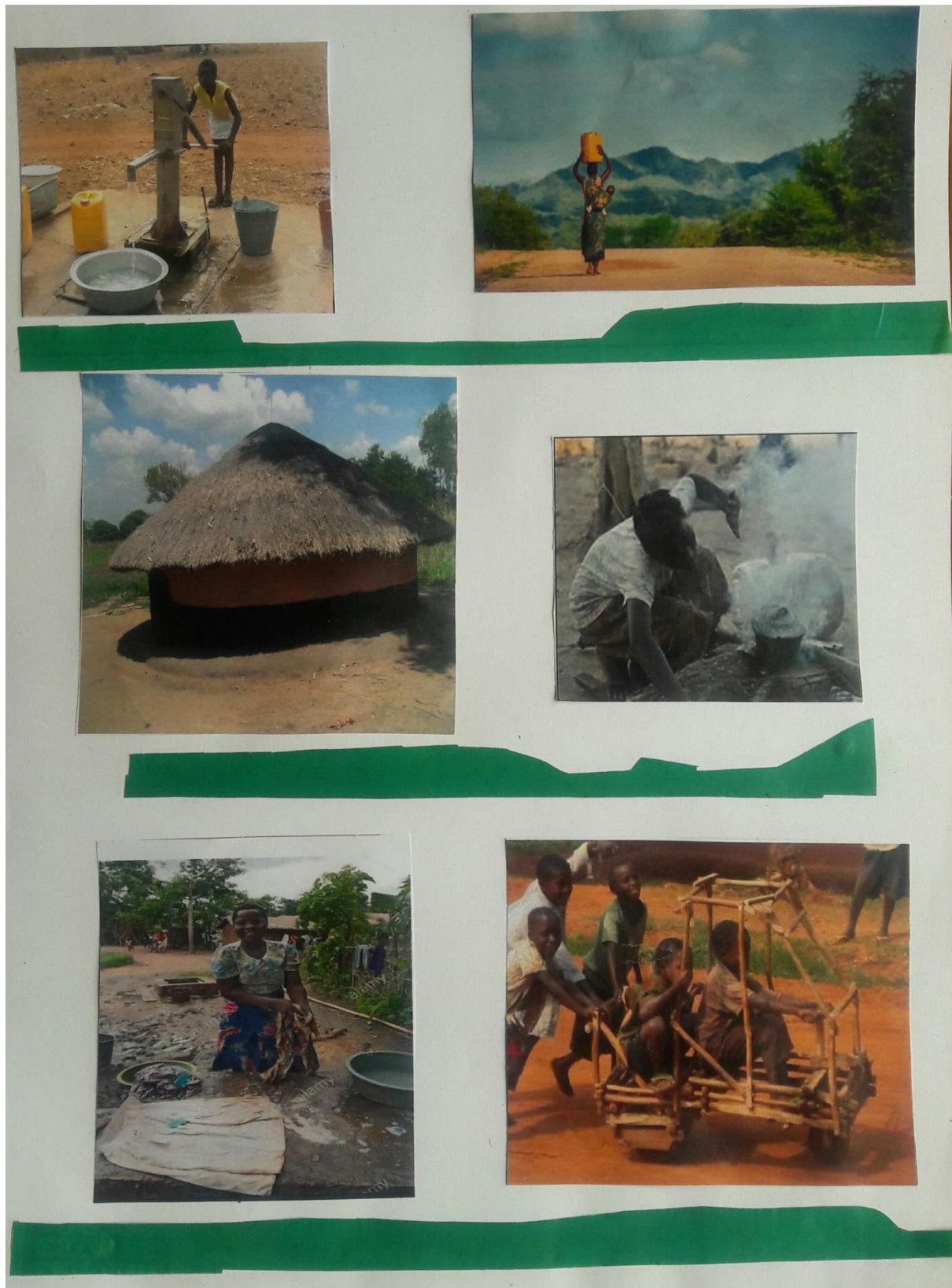
Commitment is one of my attributes as a leader with which I have attained success in many of the ECD Centre's developments.



**Figure 4.6: Mary's Fenced Jungle Gym**



### 4.3 JANET'S NARRATIVE



**Figure 4.7:** Janet's collage

#### **4.3.1 Growing up amongst a team of siblings**

My name is Janet, I was born in 1969. I take pride in being the eldest in a crew of seven siblings and little did I know that being a first born child comes with responsibilities. Growing up in a rural area, as a girl child I was expected to wake up earlier than everyone else in order to do chores before leaving for school. In the morning I would take two trips to and fro the nearby community borehole, fetching enough water for everyone to bath. I also had to cook porridge as our breakfast before leaving for school. I remember the time our last born started school, she would wait for me to bath and dress her up. Sometimes I would carry her on my back to avoid being late at school as we would walk a long distance. The last born was doing grade 1 and I was doing grade 7. That same year each of my siblings were representing my family in every grade starting from grade 1 to 7. That year we broke a record in the whole school. Even though life was tough growing up in a rural context I however, was determined to pursue my education. My childhood and family memories were elicited by my collage as depicted in Figure 4.7 above.

#### **4.3.2 Road block in my schooling path**

Just before I started my matric my mother fell very ill and I made a decision to leave school in order to take care of my mom and my siblings. My life changed in a twinkle of an eye. I became a super mom before my age. Motherly chores became my daily routine ensuring that my siblings' life remains normal under all circumstances. I had to cook food for my siblings, bath and dress them, then take them to school. I would clean the house, wash dishes, wash and iron clothes, prepare lunch and feed my sick mother then go to school to fetch my siblings. When they are back from school, I helped them with homework, cooked supper and again attended to my sick mother till she fell asleep. I had to be strong for my mother and with my father's support I managed. It became a joy for me to serve my family as a first born child. Slowly I watched my mother recovering to her full health. Upon her recovery, we agreed as a family that I should look for a job in Durban because it was the nearest city to my village. I left home for Durban in hunt for a job.

#### **4.3.3 Humble beginnings of my career path**

As soon as I arrived in eThekwin (Durban) in 1993 I got a temporary job to look after children at a pre-school. I had no certificate but only my experience of caring for my siblings. I had to wake up very early in the morning to catch a train from Umlazi to eThekwin. I was always on time for work. Before anyone comes, I would prepare my class, my work and myself. In



few months I was promoted to teach Grade R learners. Passion for learners and hard-working are my two characteristics which made my superiors promote me to teach Grade R.

In 1995 I started with grade R my new class. It was then when I met a granny (Martha) whose grandson was one of my learners in grade R. Towards the year end Martha approached me and asked me to help her open a crèche at D section in Umlazi. I did not think twice because it was closer home, and it was going to save me money and travelling time. I made up my mind to join Martha in pioneering an ECD centre in our own community in Umlazi and I left the pre-school in eThekweni at the end of 1995.

#### **4.3.4 Pioneering ECD centre in Umlazi township**

In founding any project, groundbreaking is not always easy, as it takes two to tango. My business partner Martha who is also a co-founder played a great role in establishing this ECD centre in Umlazi. Firstly, Martha was and still is a member of the church our ECD centre is affiliated to. Secondly, Martha was more experienced than me because she worked in the Department of Education for many years. For this reason, I was only Martha's right hand, and I felt compelled that the interview is not complete without meeting and hearing from the legend Martha my co-founder. I therefore want to introduce legend Martha.

##### *4.3.4.1 My dialogue with Martha (co-founder) and Janet:*

**Evelyn:** I am glad to meet with you Martha. Thank you for receiving me into your space in order to share your story about how you and Janet invented an ECD centre in Umlazi Township. Please take me through on your pioneering journey.

**Martha:** I welcome both of you into my house. Your visit made me feel important. This year in October 2019 I will be turning 90 years old. I was in-service for 20 years at Magic ECD centre. In 1996 we started Magic ECD centre in Umlazi D section. We asked the church for the space and they agreed that we use church property. We made it clear from the beginning that it is not our project but community project. There were only six children when we started. I can remember four families who stood firm to support the development of the ECD centre and for sure it prospered.

**Evelyn:** What prompted you to start an ECD centre in Umlazi Township?

**Martha:** Our worry was that our children who are being taken to the Indian schools do not get the true foundation. I once went to Clairwood, my grandson was there and I found that black children were placed at the back of the class whilst Indian children were placed in front. The teacher would stand in the front and teach Indian children only while those at the back are told to do whatever they like. This incident instigated my early retirement from teaching post at a primary school beginning of 1995. End of that same year I spoke to Janet and she agreed to join me pioneering an ECD centre beginning of 1996.

**Evelyn:** Today the ECD centre has expanded to grade 3. How did that happen?

**Martha:** We agreed that we must start applying for the upper grades. Each year we would go up one grade at a time, starting from Grade 1 up to Grade 3. Unfortunately because of money constraints and space we were not able to go further. That is why today the school has remained at foundation phase for this long.

**Evelyn:** What impact has the ECD centre done to the community?

**Martha:** The work that is being done by teachers is very great. Today we have doctors who once attended school in Magic pre-school. We have others too with so many different qualifications that came from Magic. We have parents who come weeping that we must enroll their children even if the school is full because they know our firm foundation.

**Evelyn:** Janet, is there anything else you want to add to what Martha has said?

**Janet:** My concluding remarks, in addition to what my co-founder (Martha) has mentioned above, indeed we started with six children and today our enrolment is sitting at 150 learners. The church gave us one big room to use for both teaching and cooking. I remember each of us working from one far corner from another, we would take turns to teach and cook ensuring that all activities run concurrently. Our team spirit was amazing and none of us was ever absent because we depended on each other.

#### **4.3.5 My leadership roles**

My understanding of leadership is that, first of all I have to respect myself and then respect everyone around me in order to get respect in return. This is shown in the manner we collaborate and cooperate as staff including kitchen and security staff. I respect my practitioners by listening and taking positive action to their needs at all times. Leading and designing learning programme is one of my crucial duties as an ECD centre principal. Central to learning programme is the view of quality which means that our learning programme should meet the purpose of our existence in our township. Therefore, learning programme design is a team work which involves stakeholders. For this reason it is therefore a stressful process in the sense that the workload is overwhelming; especially when practitioners do not have the skills. To this end, practitioners should be in the position to give a comprehensive feedback on each learner's progress. Subsequently, as the leader I will work closely with practitioners to evaluate and assess whether the Curriculum statement learning outcomes are all covered.

My other duties in the centre as the principal; I have to check that all practitioners, cooks, cleaners and security guard are all on duty on time. ECD teachers are called practitioners but learners address them as teachers and call them by their surnames, for example, Teacher Nkosi. I have the responsibility to help my colleagues when they need help. This could be in form of class activities, ordering additional stationery for class work or when a teacher is absent, I can teach the class. I have an obligation to attend all the meetings conducted at my ECD centre. As well as making sure that the children are safe and their needs are met, I have to make sure that the ECD environment is child friendly too.

My passion for kids is the key which drives me. As an ECD principal I am obliged to serve children, staff and parents in the community. I am their advocate as I live among them "Umuntu, umuntu ngabantu". Meaning that I cannot make an impact when I am alone or stay by myself, I have sense of belonging around my people in my community. That is why I must speak well with them, respect them, and listen to them because I am their voice.

#### **4.3.6 Leadership my key driver of change**

The few changes I have made in the centre among other things include; employing qualified and skilled educators. I have observed that qualified and skilled teachers contribute to quality teaching and learning. Our standards have improved because of quality of teachers we have. All our teachers at Magic have appropriate qualifications. Most of our teachers are now

studying towards obtaining Level 5 (ECD Diploma). Moreover they each attend a teacher development refresher course once per year.

Another change I implemented was to come up with the best solution of providing aftercare services. Parents were happy because the children would be alone at home after school, while parents are still at work. This venture created job opportunities for unemployed parents from the community to help with aftercare services. Teachers teach from morning 07h30 till 13h30, thereafter from 14h00 to 17h00 is time for aftercare. Instead of overworking the teachers, I hired a parent to take care of children during the aftercare hours. Each child in aftercare pay R250 per month from which I render a token of appreciation to the parent helping children in aftercare.

#### **4.3.7 Challenges part of my leadership growth**

DSD support in form of stipend was short lived. DSD pulled out from rewarding us with stipend. Though we fall under DSD, we do not qualify for stipend anymore because they do not have total control over our finances as before. Since the school affiliation is with the church, the church resolved that the ECD books be under them by assigning an auditor to do our financial records. The auditing service is sometimes not done in time due to other commitments because the auditor is employed elsewhere and offers voluntary service to us. As a result, there are a lot of discrepancies. We have lost a great deal of money from DSD which we could have used to develop the school. The lapse of stipend meant that the budget solely depends on fees to cater for all our expenses such as; food, stationery, salaries and sundries.

As the principal of the centre, I therefore need to come up with strategies to bridge the gap. One of the strategies I use is fundraising. As we speak right now, we are preparing for a school function at the end of the month. We will have a sports day where parents will be required to pay R60.00 in order to attend. If parents decide not to attend because they do not have money, it is a loss on our part but at the same time I have to understand. As another way of fundraising, we have declared every Friday a 'civvies' day. Every learner put on their own clothes instead of uniform and are required to pay R10.00. Again it is not all parents who pay and I have to understand my community's struggles.

As depicted in Figure 4.8 our classes are very small compared to our enrolment, yet there is no space for school expansion. We need land to expand our school to Grade 7, right now it ends at grade 3.



**Figure 4.8: Janet's small size class**

We are currently occupying church grounds and unfortunately we cannot build another floor on top of other classes because the foundation does not allow. Although I know that parents would appreciate that their kids continue with us up until Grade 7, it seems impossible for now. The process of transferring their kids to other schools after Grade 3 is a worrying factor for parents and they always complain about that. Last year my four years group teacher and myself, attended a training at Unlimited Child. After attending the training, this organisation visited our school. They saw our need for extra classes and they donated a mobile room which is big enough to accommodate 25 learners. They gave me a choice to choose between a carport and mobile room, and I chose a room. The pictures are shown in Figure 4.9 and Figure 4.10 below:



**Figure 4.9: Janet's donated mobile classroom 1**

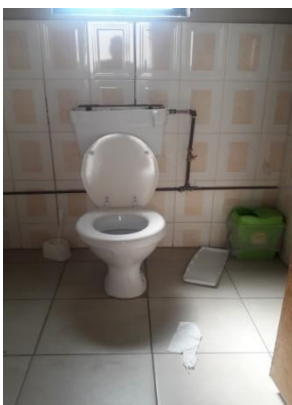


**Figure 4.10: Janet's donated mobile classroom 2**

As practitioners we sense that our service to the community is not appreciated as it should. Some parents send negative feedback about our service in the ECD centre, which means we are not being appreciated. Some parents delay paying fees to the point that last year December, I asked my chairperson to pay teachers first. In spite of financial demands during festival season I got my pay the following year at the end of January. As a manager and a leader I have a better understanding of school challenges than teachers. For that reason, I decided to serve teachers first before myself. The uncertainty of full salary each month got me to wish that if all ECD centres were under department of education, then we would not have unnecessary headaches we experience throughout the year.

The lack of teaching and learning resources is a huge crisis in our context. We need indoor and outdoor toys as well as resources for our learning activities. We use a lot of paper, paint and crayons and children's stationery is not enough to cater for all learning activities. Though we have engaged in recycling of materials such as empty toilet rolls, plastic bottles and bottle tops as well as cereal boxes, our community does not use most of these goods hence what we receive is not enough. These materials help us in children's crafts.

Our teacher – child ratio is not as per required standards. We need assistant teachers in each grade to help with workload. At present we have three teachers, one for the 2 years group and she is responsible for 11 kids; another teacher for the 3 years group, she is responsible for 25 kids; and lastly, one teacher for the 4 years group and she has 27 kids. If resources allow us, we would need to have two teachers per each age group class. Awkwardly, with the rate of our school fees per child we currently struggle to pay the existing staff, so it will be even worse if we recruit assistant teachers.



**Figure 4.11: Janet's big size toilet**

Toilet size is a burning issue with DSD as it is considered a critical requirement for an ECD centre to be operational. I am glad that our school's ablutions are finally completed as shown in Figures 4.11 and 4.12.



**Figure 4.12: Janet's small size toilet**

This does not come easy, as a leader I endured endless meetings determined to reach my goal. Today both staff and learners are enjoying the benefits of their hard work in fund raising to ensure the accomplishment of school toilets project. I can attest that positive team spirit in my school prevailed over many challenging obstacles.



#### 4.4 STELLA'S NARRATIVE



Figure 4.13: Stella's collage

#### **4.4.1 Losing my hero at a very tender age**

My name is Stella, I was born in 1960. I am the fourth child in a family of seven siblings; five girls and two boys. I was raised by both parents who were married and practised Christianity at home. My parents raised us with love and taught us about God. They wanted the best for us. In 1976 my dear father vanished from us in a twinkling of an eye. He went to work in the morning as usual and never came back home that evening. Instead we had strange visitors who came with bad news of my father's sudden death. The medical report confirmed that my father was poisoned. The abrupt death of my father happened when I was sixteen years old. My father was my hero, mentor and best friend. I was his right hand girl especially at church. Since my father was a leader at church, I would help him with preparations for church meetings and church services. One thing I loved most was singing together with my father in the church choir. Essentially we would sing most of the time where ever we were together. I remember on daily basis singing in the car with my dad on our way to school. We would not play the car radio because singing with our own vocal voices was much fun. My experience with my hero was cut short at my very tender age. As a result, I did not pass my matric because I was still battling with the reality of my father's unexpected death.

My mother got a job as a domestic worker. Her employer was a very generous lady. She did everything she could to help my mother to support us through thick and thin. Besides my mother's monthly wages, she would pay our rent and buy us grocery every month. She was an angel. During school holidays I would also work in a chemist cleaning bottles and pouring medicines. Through this job I was able to help my siblings with school fees. I became responsible at a very young age. Life was not easy without my father nevertheless my mother would encourage us to keep the faith in God. Until today whenever I face challenges I exercise my faith in God whom I trust. My childhood and family memories were elicited by my collage as depicted in Figure 4.13 above.

#### **4.4.2 My school years**

In 1966 I started my schooling at Zebra primary school. The school was just across the road from my house. I looked forward going to school because my teacher was very loving, kindhearted and caring. She would wait for us by the class door and hug each one of us as we file in to enter the class. At the same time I knew my mother was watching me from home. One day the weather changed; all of a sudden it became very cold and I had not carried a jersey

with me. My teacher gave me permission to call my mother over the fence, immediately my mother brought me a warm jersey and hot chocolate in a flask. I then felt warm not only because of my jersey and hot chocolate but was also comforted by the fact that my mother could easily reach out to me in times of crisis while at school. In 1974 I transferred to another school which was a little further from home in order to start my secondary school. I started my secondary years well but ended on a bad note because that was the same period I lost my father. In a moment my life changed from a brilliant and bubbling girl in class to a gloomy low-esteem life. Consequently my grades dropped, yet I pursued. Eventually, I finished my secondary in 1979, though I did not pass my matric I never gave up.

#### **4.4.3 Young bride with a new job**

In 1980 I killed two birds with one stone, I got married and a new job came my way. My first job was at Consolidated Textiles where I worked as a Till Operator. Same year I enrolled at Cathedral College in order to re-write my matric, which I successfully passed. My hands were so full nonetheless with a joyful heart I never felt it. My husband loved me. I lived like a queen. I was blessed with two boys born in the years 1981 and 1985 respectively. My mother-in-law took me as her own daughter, including my husband's sisters and brothers. In a nutshell the whole family was just sweet to me and we lived together in harmony. Change is inevitable. In 1990, ten years down the marriage lane, my husband left the church, started drinking, smoking and sleeping out during weekends. He stopped supporting the family. I went to justice court to apply for maintenance. My application was not successful because my husband had resigned from work without my acknowledgement. We eventually divorced and separated ways. I moved back to my mother's house with my two boys.

#### **4.4.4 My career path**

As I have already alluded that my first job was at Consolidated Textiles in 1980 where I worked as a till operator. My second job was with Least Garment in 1993 where I worked as a quality controller; unfortunately the company closed down in 1999. During my jobless stretch, I met someone who had a vision of starting a crèche. This old man was my neighbor while I was married. He reminded me of how I used to show love and nurtured the children in the community. I would cook food and invite them to come and eat from my house. For this reason my neighbor had confidence in me that I would use the same knowledge and skill to run the church pre-school.

In 2001 the church ECD Centre kicked off under my leadership. We were two members of staff with five children. My subordinate had once worked as an assistant teacher thus she took the grade R class. Three months down the line our enrollment shot up to twenty-seven and by the year end it doubled to fifty-four. The church had a big yard and classes were huge. Consequently, within a period of less than two years we had more than one hundred children. In addition, one of my school committee members worked for the department of education as a school inspector, accordingly the church ECD Centre registration process was done effortlessly. The school inspector suggested that we consider applying for higher grades such as Grade 1 to 3 (Foundation Phase). For sure we applied for Foundation Phase classes and our application was successful. Regrettably the following year when we were supposed to enroll for Foundation phase learners, church members went into an uproar demanding teaching positions in the foundation phase. In order to stop the chaos, the Foundation Phase enrollment was cancelled. There were nine of us (staff members) serving enrollment of one hundred and sixty learners. The staff consisted of seven teachers, one cook and I was the principal.

In the interim I had applied for children's grant from DSD of which we were awarded. Disappointingly just when the children's grant was about to be released, there were disagreements within the school committee on how the grant was going to be utilized. The school committee members from the church needed to use this money for church things whilst I insisted that I could not record children's grant expenditure in church books. The reason being the money did not belong to the church but to the ECD Centre. Further, I explained that ECD Centre was a separate entity from church and by right deserved to develop its standards by utilizing the children's grant. Unfortunately the dispute took long to be resolved by the school committee and I reported the matter to the DSD. Subsequently the DSD took action to cancel the children's grant and eventually the school was closed at the end of 2012.

My eleven years at this church ECD Centre were spent studying while working. From Children's Rights I got an attendance certificate on basic knowledge about children's rights. At Embury College I studied NQF level 3 & 4, furthermore at Save the Children I studied small and medium scale ECD Management NQF Level 5. Lastly I completed an ECD Diploma at Wonder Kids College in Montessori teaching. In 2013 the DSD mandated me to do an expanded work in monitoring practitioners (EPWP) who were on learnership in Umlazi ECD Centres. It was during my monitoring errands that I discovered this property on this big land which looked deserted and neglected for a long time. Upon my enquiry from DSD about this

property and several meetings they authorized me access to the property (see Figure 4.14). Eventually DSD offered me a job to spearhead an ECD Centre for the community at the beginning of 2014.



**Figure 4.14: Stella's ECD Centre**

#### **4.4.5 Property preparation before enrolment**

From January to March of the year 2014, before enrolment I had to fix the property inside and outside. The place was vandalized and my first tour of duty was to make the place conducive for teaching and learning. I remember a gentleman from the community who saw me working on the grounds and offered to put a veranda with five pillars. At first I thought he was joking, indeed the following week he brought materials and his manpower. Within a month the job was done for free. Certainly good Samaritans still exist. April 2014 we opened the ECD centre's doors to the community. Today our enrolment is at 37 learners and three members of staff.

#### **4.4.6 My duties as the principal**

I am everywhere at any given time hence I do not have an office as the principal. This means that I can do everything in this ECD centre including what my teachers are doing. I am a servant to my community, my teachers and children. They (parents, teachers and children) look up to me because I am at their service. Therefore at all cost I have to deliver whether it



be service, encouragement, support or security. Therefore, my duties include the following; supervision, decision making, vision setting and problem solving just to name a few.

On a daily basis I oversee my teachers at work. I intentionally visit each class to greet learners while I observe to see that the teacher is following the routine. As well as, monitoring their activities whether they are executing them as planned, I personally collect communication books from teachers to check if there is any message from parents. Sometimes I respond or ask a teacher to do so. As a leader I give direction where necessary and supply the required aids to teachers if available.

We conduct meetings as staff once a week to review our week and plan ahead. Meetings with parents are done once a term. We have one sports day a year and one excursion once per year. In all these meetings and activities communication and planning is key. We make decisions as the school staff regarding sports and excursions then I communicate with parents. Usually parents just agree in principle but practically have challenges in contributing the funds needed for travel, eats and transport.

Our vision as a school is to produce learners who are school ready; holistically trained, taught and flexible to school routine. In order to achieve this I use NCF to design and lead learning programme in my centre. Though it is additional work for me among other things I do however, as a leader I promote teamwork. Practitioners feel motivated to participate as a result they do not see it as a burden. We have a certain approach to our daily activities as directed by Theme Book (see Figure 4.15) and NCF. We use these documents as our guide when planning teaching around the theme. All together there are ten themes which enable us as a school to cover the program for the whole year. The good thing is that each theme has different activities linked to it according to learners' age appropriateness. My teachers approach to teaching around the theme using this guide enhances the development of learners. The adoption of the NCF and the teacher's guide, theme book created our class environments to be children friendly. This is as a result of the fact that each month when we introduce a new theme, teachers change the class walls decorations to suit the new theme. It fascinates kids to see new theme back drops every month. Consequently, their senses are provoked to discovering new things through observing, touching, smelling and tasting.

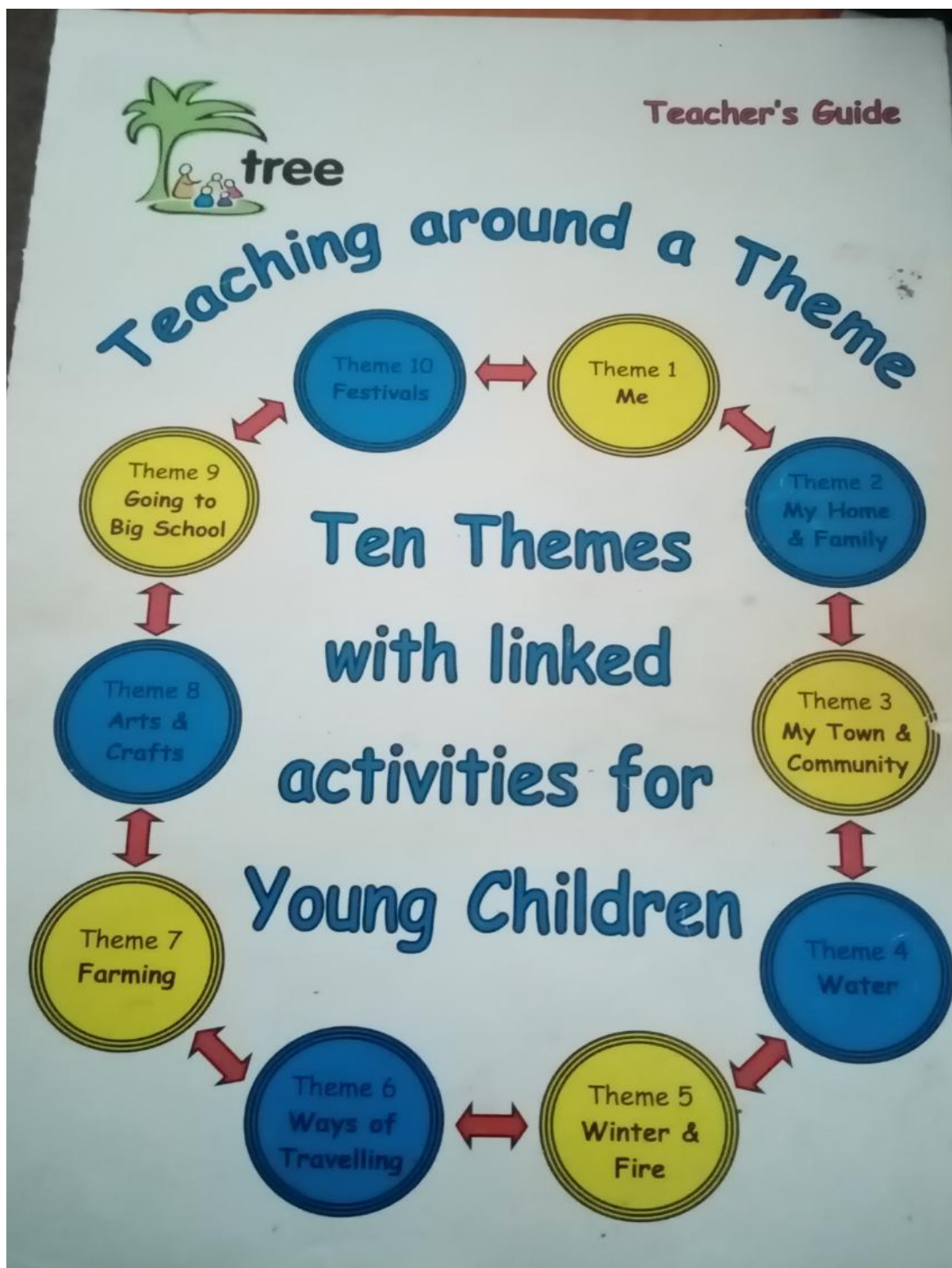


Figure 4.15: Stella's Theme book

#### 4.4.7 My challenges in the ECD centre

We have a crisis and our learners deserve nothing less. There are many challenges we face on a daily basis because our environment is not safe. We are living in Umlazi township of which

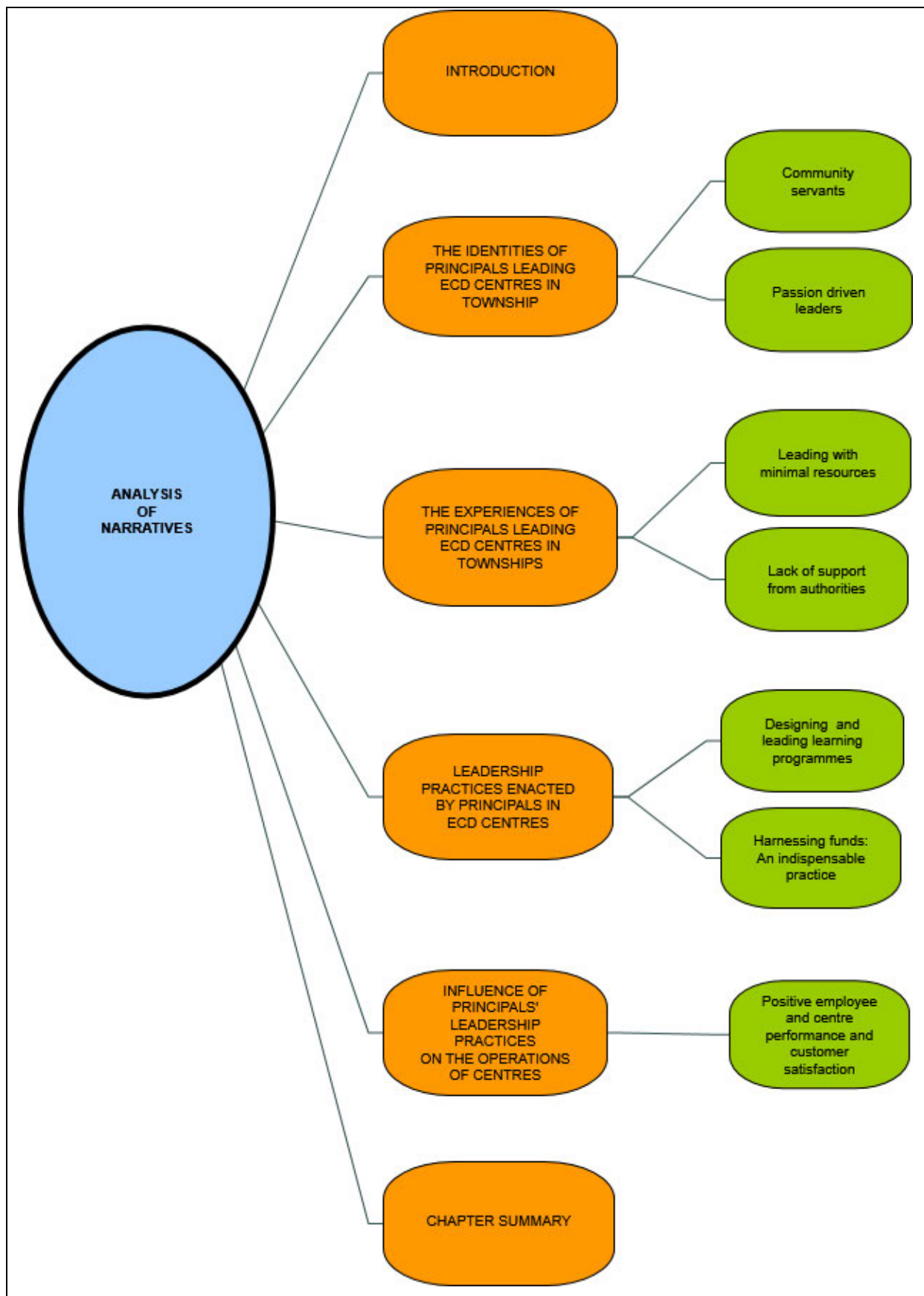
most parents are not working. Again those few parents who are working do not earn much. Therefore, the school fees though it is very little amount but still our clients struggle to pay. Right now we are at the verge of collapsing the food component. Yet I know parents will not afford to pack a lunch box for their children every day. Teachers' salaries are not constant every month because of fees which are not paid in time. Teachers' retention is very difficult due to wages uncertainty. At the same time it makes it difficult for the school to hire qualified practitioners because we cannot afford them. As a leader I have accepted that I live one day at a time. As long as the children are happy I am satisfied.

I do not remember receiving any support from DSD since I opened this facility. They seem not keen to know what is happening in this centre as a result their visits are very rare to this ECD centre. When they do visit once in a year, their concern is not about children but they are more concerned about whether the ECD centre is complying with their requirements. At present my ECD centre does not meet their requirements and I am certain that this centre might never meet their requirements in the future. However, the service I am providing to the community is huge. Therefore, they should consider helping me regardless of whether I meet the requirements or not. Every child has a right to education and it seems they are going against their own constitutional goals. How I desire that the DoE may absorb all the ECD centres so that they address our learners educational needs and teachers' needs too. This experience has taught me to be resourceful by means of engaging my community in fundraising. Although I understand parents in my township are struggling however, so far the little that they have contributed has sustained us and I congratulate our ECD centre parents. Their support is amazing.

#### **4.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

In this chapter I presented the narrative analysis of ECD centre principals' lived experiences as a first level of analysis. Each participant's narrative included individual personal and professional experiences. In developing participants' narratives I used the plot system. In the next chapter I present the second level of analysis referred to as analysis of narratives. The chapter presents the themes that emerged from participants' re-storied narratives.





Map 5: Chapter Five

## CHAPTER FIVE

### ANALYSIS OF NARRATIVES

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapter presented the stories of three ECD centre Principals, Mary, Janet and Stella. The re-storied narratives enabled me to capture each Principal's unique lived experiences of leading ECD centres in townships. This chapter presents the second level of analysis referred to as analysis of narratives. The utilisation of analysis of narratives enabled me to deconstruct the narratives of ECD Principals in order to identify emerging themes. To this end, seven themes were identified and these are presented in relation to the research puzzles they answer.

#### 5.2 THE IDENTITIES OF PRINCIPALS LEADING ECD CENTRES IN A TOWNSHIP

In responding to the first research puzzle, chapter four presented re-storied narratives of Mary, Janet and Stella. These narratives provide a comprehensive explanation of who these leaders are both personally and professionally. At this level of analysis, I only discuss two key identities of these leaders, namely **community servants** and **passion driven leaders**. Below I discuss these identities in detail.

##### 5.2.1 Community servants

ECD centres provide an essential service needed in most environments where people reside. The narratives of Mary, Janet and Stella show them as community servants and this identity is attributable to services they are offering. These services include nurturing, instructing and closely monitoring health and safety of children in the communities of kwaMashu and Umlazi. Mary elucidates that she is a servant to her community and will ensure that her clientele's needs are accommodated. As a result, she makes necessary adjustments to her ECD centre programs in order to promote good foundation for children. Mary expounds:

*"I see myself as a servant in my community. My clientele is mostly young mothers who offer less attention to their children at the expense of fashion and entertainment. Some children are staying with grandparents who are surviving on government grant. On that note, as a leader I decided that the*

*school will provide meals which include; breakfast, morning snack, and lunch with the object in view of balancing and nourishing children's health. Children deserve fresh vegetables, fresh fruits and hot cooked meals every day. To this end, I have adjusted my school timetable to suit my clients in the community, therefore school starts at 06h00" (see chapter 4, p38, 39).*

Again, Janet identifies herself as a community servant in terms of the service her ECD centre is providing for learners. In addition she feels that her service reaches out to the deprived parents through involving them in school projects at a stipend. She explains:

*"As an ECD principal I am obliged to serve children, staff and parents in the community. I make sure that the children are safe and their needs are met, I have to make sure that the ECD environment is child friendly too. One of the changes I implemented was to come up with the best solution of providing aftercare services. Parents were happy because the children would be alone at home after school, while parents are still at work. This venture created job opportunities for unemployed parents from the community. Teachers teach from morning 07h30 till 13h30, thereafter from 14h00 to 17h00 is time for aftercare. Instead of overworking the teachers, I hired a parent to take care of children during the aftercare hours. (see chapter 4, p47, 48).*

Stella shares similar sentiments with Mary and Janet, she eludes that:

*"I am a servant to my community, my teachers and children. I am everywhere at any given time, hence I do not have an office as the principal. This means that I can do everything in this ECD centre including what my teachers are doing. They (parents, teachers and children) look up to me because I am at their service. Therefore, at all cost I have to deliver whether it be service, encouragement, support or security" (see chapter 4, p 58).*

Looking at the extracts, it is evident that being a community servant is one of the ECD centre principals' identity. Mary, Janet and Stella are actually serving the community through essential offerings which benefit the community's dire needs. These offerings include nurturing, instructing and closely monitoring community children's health and safety. In addition, these leaders also create jobs for people in the community where ECD centres are located. Atmore (2013) views ECD centres as community-based facilities and the ECD centre principals' identity of being a community servant resonates with this view. Furthermore, although the participating ECD principals might or might not be trained practitioners, they are

highly trusted and respected individuals by the community to undertake tasks of childcare (Atmore, 2013). Moreover, both Fourie (2018) and Marais (2019) agree and reveal that community-based ECD centres play a fundamental role in improving children's health through nutrition feeding schemes as well as providing teaching and learning services. Additionally, though the conditions may be harsh, nevertheless the ECD Centre principals' continuous professional and social engagements with the community qualify them as community heroes (Fourie, 2018; Marais, 2019). Therefore, based on the findings of this study, ECD centre principals, by nature of their profession and setting need to hold an identity of a community servant.

Mary, Janet and Stella reflect qualities of a servant leader. This notion is portrayed in the manner in which their lives have become one with the lives of people within the township setting where they are offering childcare service. This is emphasised by their decision to sacrifice their choices and choose to settle amongst their clients' community. This oneness shows that their love to serve is a priority. Their love to serve is observable in the manner in which, they exhibit the spirit of caring towards children, practitioners and parents in running these centres. Furthermore, Duren (2017); Van der Westhuizen, Van der Vyver and Meyer (2014) support this view when they claim that a servant leader, serves with the aim to sustain their communities by carefully giving them professional attention. The ECD principals' interaction with the community as McCrimmon (2010) claims actually shapes ECD principals' identity as servants of their community. Therefore, it is evident that the way ECD principals in this study value children's education, health and safety validates both literature and theory on how much their identity as community servants is enshrined.

### **5.2.2 Passion driven leaders**

All the participants appear to be passionate about the work they do. All three leaders began their centres without property. The first step was to get the property where they could teach their learners. Learning from their narratives, it is observable that their passion for children and childhood education development played a significant role in securing the properties. Mary explained her background which paved the way for the ECD centre invention. She navigated through church and community protocols. Mary explains that:

*"I love children and they are close to my heart. In 2010 the church requested me to serve as a caretaker. I accepted and I moved to stay at church house in the community of kwaMashu. That time I had my little*

*daughter whom I was teaching the word of God and bible stories at home in the evening. During the day while playing she would share bible stories, recite poems and memorise verses with other children in the community. Those children would go home and share the stories that my little daughter told them, with their parents. People in the community begged me to teach their children as I had done with my little girl. They wanted their children to know the word of God and bible stories like my daughter. The community was up in arms supporting that I should pioneer a crèche in the community. On the 15<sup>th</sup> of February 2013, the ladies in the community visited me and gave me money to buy airtime so that I can call the church pastor. Their concern was that I should not struggle while I have such a talent which I could put to use by providing them a service. They promised to pay me R120 per child per month. I started with five kids and at the end of that same month the enrolment increased to 35 kids. Drawing from my own experience with my daughter, I used the skills and knowledge to conduct bible lessons, church songs, recite verses and poems to teach crèche children. (see chapter 4, p 37)*

From the above extract, we are learning that Mary as an individual has a passion for children. We draw similarities from Mary's both personal and professional experiences that she loves God from whom she received a talent to work with children. Subsequently she shares God's love personally with her daughter and professionally with children at ECD centre.

Again, Janet is operating from a church property and shares same sentiments with Mary. She articulates:

*"My passion for kids is the key which drives me. Passion for learners and hard-working are my two characteristics upon which made my superiors from my previous job promote me to teach Grade R. In founding any project, groundbreaking is not always easy, it takes two to tango. My business partner Martha who is also a co-founder played a great role in establishing this ECD centre in Umlazi. Firstly, Martha was and still is a member of the church our ECD centre is affiliated to. (see chapter 4, p 45).*

Contrary to what Mary and Janet experience, Stella is operating from a municipality property through which her passion envision it as an ECD centre. She has this to say:

*“In 2013 the DSD mandated me to do an expanded work in monitoring practitioners (EPWP) who were on learnership in Umlazi ECD centres. It was during my monitoring errands that I discovered this property on this big land which looked deserted and neglected for a long time. Upon my enquiry from DSD about this property and several meetings they authorized me access to the property. Eventually DSD offered me a job to spearhead an ECD centre for the community at the beginning of 2014. From January to March of the year 2014, before enrolment I had to fix the property inside and outside. The place was vandalised and my first tour of duty was to make the place conducive for teaching and learning. In April 2014 we opened the ECD Centre’s doors to the community. Today our enrolment is at 37 learners and three members of staff. (see chapter 4, p 57).*

Looking at the extracts, it is evident that being passionate is one of the key characteristic for ECD centre leaders. This is evident in the manner in which Mary, Janet and Stella display passion attributes in carrying out their vision in spite of the possible disapproval of others. These attributes are determination and perseverance through which Mary, Janet and Stella accomplished their goal of spearheading ECD centres in township. They were able to positively motivate, influence and create a mutual relationship with their followers (Blose & Naicker, 2018; Bush, 2013; Christie, 2010). Their passion for children and childhood education development stirred the vision of pioneering ECD centres; and was able to navigate their way through church and community protocols. Though they started without property, ultimately they effectively and efficiently achieved their goal of securing properties that they did not have. Further Bolman and Deal (2002) identify passion as one of the servant leader characteristic which Mary, Janet and Stella possess and through which they are driven. Drawing from theoretical framework, Mary, Janet and Stella’s self-concept is intrinsically motivated by their social affiliation within the community in township (Tajfel & Turner, 1981). Therefore, the finding of this study confirms that ECD Centre principals’ identity is perceived as passion driven leaders.

### **5.3 THE EXPERIENCES OF PRINCIPALS LEADING ECD CENTRES IN A TOWNSHIP**

This segment focuses on the second research puzzle: “what are the leadership experiences of ECD centre Principals?” The participating ECD centre principals have had different experiences with regards to leading ECD centres in a township. These experiences include

**leading with minimal resources and lack of support from authorities.** Below I discuss these experiences in detail.

### **5.3.1 Leading with minimal resources**

Leading with minimal resources emerged as a challenge for ECD centre principals operating in townships. These leaders lament about the lack of resources including educational tools, human resources, staff salaries and children's meals. Mary, Janet and Stella's re-storied narratives indicate that they have experienced a challenge of leading with limited resources. Mary relates her experience in her ECD centre:

*"The lack of resources is the greatest challenge I have in my ECD centre. Children's fees are pegged very low to accommodate parents who do not earn much in my township (kwaMashu). Unfortunately it is to our ECD centre's disadvantage because it is not enough to cover all our expenses. This is the reason why I need to promote fundraising to make ends meet. After sharing my report with parents in our last year's AGM, I proposed a raise in fees to R550 per month inclusive of food, registration and stationery, so that we will be able to cover some of our expenses. In light of what I had shared, parents agreed to the proposal of new school fees but still it is a battle to receive full fees every month. Therefore, I do everything within my power to secure the little I can so that the centre continues to run in spite of our lack. (see chapter 4, p 40, 41).*

Again, Janet expressed her experience in terms of lack of resources, she avers that essentials such as educational tools, human resources and salaries are not enough in her centre:

*"The lack of teaching and learning resources is a huge crisis in our context. We need indoor and outdoor toys as well as resources for our learning activities. We use a lot of paper, paint and crayons and children's stationery is not enough to cater for all learning activities. Though we have engaged in recycling of materials such as empty toilet rolls, plastic bottles and bottle tops as well as cereal boxes. ...If resources allow us, we would need to have two teachers per each age group class. Our teacher – child ratio is not as per required standards. We need assistant teachers in each grade to help with workload. Awkwardly, with the rate of our school fees per child we currently struggle to pay the existing staff (see chapter 4, p 51).*

Stella views the lack of resources as a critical crisis which needs immediate intervention. Below she expresses her frustration about the lack of funds which impact negatively on children's meals and also on human resources:

*“We have a crisis and our learners deserve nothing less. There are many challenges we face on a daily basis because our environment is not safe. We are living in Umlazi township of which most parents are not working. Again those few parents who are working do not earn much. Therefore, the school fees though it is very little amount but still our clients struggle to pay. Right now we are at the verge of collapsing the food component. Yet I know parents will not afford to pack a lunch box for their children every day. Teachers' salaries are not constant every month because of fees which are not paid on time. Teachers' retention is very difficult due to wages uncertainty. At the same time it makes it difficult for the school to hire qualified practitioners because we cannot afford them. As a leader I have accepted that I live one day at a time. As long as the children are happy I am satisfied. (see chapter 4, p 60).*

From above extracts, it is evident that ECD centre principals in townships are faced with a daunting task of lack of resources in leading ECD centres. The dearth of financial resources has caused many negative bearings on other ECD centre activities as alluded to by participants. It is true that without money many ECD centre undertakings come to a standstill. Amazingly ECD centres in this study, have withstood all odds as a result are still operational in spite of lack of financial resources. Existing literature has established that a servant leader possesses characteristics such as passion, courage and integrity (Bolman & Deal, 2002; McCrimmon, 2010; Duren, 2017). This assertion resonates with the characteristics of township ECD centre leaders which are observable in the manner in which they resisted defeat. Attributable to their audacious stance they improvised to ensure progress is achieved in their township ECD centres. In South Africa, the lack of resources is viewed as the plight and greatest challenge in most of South African ECD centres located in poor settlements (Mbarathi, et. al., 2016; Moodley, 2012). Although it is anticipated that ECD centres would bridge the gap in poverty by providing children with a safe environment to play and better conditions for learning to enhance their skills (Atmore, van Niekerk & Ashley-Cooper, 2012), the lack of resources makes the work of ECD principals in leading these centres very difficult (Atmore, 2013), because their goal of alleviating poverty through quality care programs is jeopardized. This assertion is



supported by (Marais, 2019) who elucidates that lack of resources particularly encountered in township ECD centres hinders progress in the move towards equity and democracy in South Africa's early childhood education sector as a whole.

### **5.3.2 Lack of support from authorities**

Another challenge that ECD centre principals experience is lack of support from authorities. Mary, Janet and Stella lament that there is a lack of support from authorities. After having been driven by passion to invent ECD centres and now are serving the community, Mary, Janet and Stella expected their authorities to support them unreservedly. Conversely the DSD, Department of health and donors are not coming forth in full support of ECD centre developments in townships. Bearing in mind their context with unfavorable conditions in terms of infrastructure, nutrition, institutional capacity and ECD programme (Atmore, 2013), indisputably much support is needed from the government. Mary expounds that she has not received any government grant because her ECD centre is not compliant. Therefore she uses NPO certificate to solicit donations from other organisations. Mary comments:

*"I have not received any support from DSD in form of subsidy; apparently DSD demands us to meet their requirements for registration. Though my centre falls under Department of Social Development (DSD), it falls short on some of their registration requirements therefore we do not qualify for government grant. So currently, the registration of the centre is incomplete due to outstanding requirements. Since we do not have donors I use my NPO registration to solicit donations from other organisations... According to DSD the school building condition is old and they recommend that I should close the school or alternatively look for another site. On the other hand, Environmental Health inspectors suggest that we replace big toilets with small size toilet seats suitable for young learners. Due to current school financial constraints unfortunately renovations plight is beyond our reach. As a leader I made provision of a step and toilet ring to accommodate our children while we map a way forward around these challenges. (see chapter 4, p 41, 42).*

Again, Janet points out her sweet bitter experience with DSD. Though she received support from DSD however, for a short period of time, circumstances made DSD to pull out. Janet highlights:

*"DSD support in form of stipend was short lived. DSD pulled out from rewarding us with stipend. Though we fall under DSD, we do not qualify for stipend anymore because they do not have total control over our finances as before. Since the school affiliation is with the church, the church resolved that the ECD books be under them by assigning an auditor to do our financial records. The auditing service is sometimes not done in time due to other commitments because the auditor is employed elsewhere and offers voluntary service to us. As a result, there are a lot of discrepancies. We have lost a great deal of money from DSD which we could have used to develop the school. The lapse of stipend meant that school budget is solely depended on fees to cater for all our expenses such as; food, stationery, salaries and sundries. (see chapter 4, p 48).*

Stella also has not received any support from DSD due to requirements criteria. Stella feels DSD focuses more on requirements rather than children's educational needs. Stella expounds:

*"I do not remember receiving any support from DSD since I opened this facility. They seem not keen to know what is happening in this centre as a result their visits are very rare to this ECD centre. When they do visit once in a year, their concern is not about children but they are more concerned about whether the ECD centre is complying with their requirements. At present my ECD centre does not meet their requirements and I am certain that this centre might never meet their requirements in the future. However, the service I am providing to the community is huge. Therefore, they should consider helping me regardless of whether I meet the requirements or not. Every child has a right to education and it seems they are going against their own constitutional goals. How I desire that the DoE may absorb all the ECD centres so that they address our learners educational needs and teachers' needs too. (see chapter 4, p 60).*

From the above extracts, it appears that ECD centre principals' main frustration is the lack of support from their authorities. In South Africa the recognized government authority over ECD centres is the DSD. The structure assumes that the DSD supports ECD centres in terms of offering a grant in order to sustain ECD centres' finances. However, there are registration requirements that each ECD centre should meet in order to receive required assistance. Some of the registration requirements, just to name a few are building structure, toilet seat size, clean running water and safe environment including jungle gym space for learners to play.

Unfortunately, South African township's infrastructure is in high density suburbs which are not well developed. Therefore, having ECD centres that meet DSD registration criteria in townships is an unfathomable huge task. This means that finances should be adequate to improve the structures before registration. It is a fact that in a township setting, ECD principals are forced to charge low fees, and this is caused by low income bracket of parents. In the same vein, regardless of setting and finance circumstances of parents; the fact remains that the children deserve better education. Therefore the government is expected to support ECD centres in marginalized townships through stipend, grant, food and educational equipment provisions. Hence government should intervene rather than threatening to close ECD centres that are in operational. The above sentiments are in line with Atmore's (2013) findings in his study on ECD progress in South Africa since the end of apartheid; these findings identified major threatening gaps such as infrastructure, resources, nutrition, and ECD activities. The observed lack of support from authorities is concerning because ECD centres in South Africa are perceived as government's priority in fighting poverty and discrimination (Atmore, 2013).

#### **5.4 LEADERSHIP PRACTICES ENACTED BY PRINCIPALS IN ECD CENTRES**

ECD centre principals' leadership experiences shape their practice either positively or negatively. Below I present the leadership practices of ECD centre principals in townships. These include **designing and leading learning programmes** and **harnessing funds**.

##### **5.4.1 Designing and leading learning programmes**

Designing and leading learning programmes seem to be the main practice enacted by ECD centre principals. The re-storied narratives of Mary, Janet and Stella show that their major practice is designing and leading learning programmes. These township ECD centre principals disclose that they are guided by the South African National Curriculum Framework (NCF) for children from birth to four in performing this role. Mary shows her outsourcing skills as she explains where and how she got resources. She seems to be working very closely with practitioners to ensure progress. Mary expounds:

*"I visited TREE an organisation that specializes in ECD resource and training, where I got resources, Theme book and NCF among other things. Together with practitioners we constructed our learning programme from these documents. My job as an ECD leader is to monitor practitioners to make sure that they are following the learning programme as planned (see Chapter 4, p 37, 38).*

Again, Janet also designs and leads learning programme in her ECD centre and also is guided by Curriculum Statement in this regard. Though Janet seems to be facing challenges in the learning programme design process however, she is determined to fulfill the purpose of her ECD centre's existence in her township. Janet elucidates:

*“Leading and designing learning programme is one of my crucial duties as an ECD centre principal. Central to learning programme is the view of quality which means that our learning programme should meet the purpose of our existence in our township. Therefore, learning programme design is a team work which involves stakeholders. For this reason it is therefore a stressful process in the sense that the workload is overwhelming; especially when practitioners do not have the skills. To this end, practitioners should be in the position to give a comprehensive feedback on each learner's progress. Subsequently, as the leader I will work closely with practitioners to evaluate and assess whether the Curriculum statement learning outcomes are all covered (see Chapter 4, p 47).*

Stella's team work approach to designing and leading learning programme lessens the burden and encourages participation. By promoting team work she seems to be in control and is also guided by Curriculum Framework documents. Stella explains:

*“Our vision as a school is to produce learners who are school ready; holistically trained, taught and flexible to school routine. In order to achieve this I use NCF to design and lead learning programme in my centre. Though it is additional work for me among other things I do, however, as a leader I promote teamwork. Practitioners feel motivated to participate as a result they do not see it as a burden. We have a certain approach to our daily activities as directed by Theme Book and NCF. We use these documents as our guide when planning teaching around the theme (see Chapter 4, p 58).*

From the above extracts it is evident that ECD centre principals in township are enacting designing and leading the learning programme by engaging with South African National Curriculum Framework (NCF) for children from birth to four years. Though the objective of the South African Department of Social Development (DSD) is to ensure adequate and effective leadership so that monitoring progress and on-going quality improves in ECD centres (DSD, 2015), no learning programme is given by the government to cater for children under the age of four (4) years in the ECD centres (Moodley, 2012; Shezi, 2013). The monitoring of

progress by leadership can only be successful if a proper tool (learning programme) is made available. As a result, ECD centre principals are unavoidably indebted to design and lead learning programme to cater for their township context.

The findings of this study are additional information to the body of literature regarding leadership practices enacted by ECD centre principals especially in townships. Drawing from these ECD centre principals' extracts regarding their practice of designing and leading learning programme; there seem to be echoes of specific challenges that they are facing. Notably their use of words like; (stressful, additional work and challenging) seems to suggest the view that, though they are doing the work however, they seem not to be confident when executing the task. The challenges facing ECD centre principals in township include unrelenting stress as they adjust their NCF understanding to the real learning programmes. Furthermore, a feeling of overloading work that requires expertise of which many ECD principals in townships might not possess. Additional to these challenges is a distressing feeling of dealing with practitioners who lack skills in giving comprehensive feedback on learning outcomes achieved. These challenges among others, make the work of the ECD centre principals in townships highly stressful. Therefore, there are two suggestions on how this phobia can be addressed. Firstly, training on how to design and lead learning programme is crucial in order to equip all ECD centre staff in townships as well as strengthening the implementation process. Secondly, the South African Department of Social Development (DSD) in collaboration with Department of Education (DoE) should urgently translate the NCF document into language suitable for incumbents in townships.

#### **5.4.2 Harnessing funds: An indispensable practice**

Harnessing funds seem to be an indispensable practice enacted by ECD centre principals in townships. The narratives of Mary, Janet and Stella show that they engage in fundraising to keep their ECD centres liquid. Mary explicates that she needs to ensure that the centre's goals are met. As a result, she makes every effort possible to promote fundraising projects in her centre. Again, she encourages parents, teachers and children to positively respond to fundraising appeal. Mary expounds:

*“Children’s fees are pegged very low to accommodate parents who do not earn much in my township (kwaMashu). Unfortunately it is to our ECD centre’s disadvantage because it is not enough to cover all our expenses.*

*Nonetheless, I need to ensure that the centre's goals are met. This is the reason why I need to promote fundraising to make ends meet. No matter how small the fundraising project may appear, I need everyone, everywhere to play his/her part... Through the fundraising, the school was able to purchase razor wire above school fence, including a few items on the outdoor jungle gym. Since we do not have donors I use my NPO registration to solicit donations from other organisations (see chapter 4, p 40, 41).*

Again, harnessing funds is viewed by Janet as her obligation. She claims that her school's budget exclusively hinges on fees. Janet has this to say:

*"We have lost a great deal of money from DSD which we could have used to develop the school. The lapse of stipend meant that the budget solely depends on fees to cater for all our expenses such as; food, stationery, salaries and sundries... As the principal of the centre, I therefore need to come up with strategies to bridge the gap. One of the strategies I use is fundraising (see chapter 4, p 48).*

In response to her experience of lack of support from DSD, Stella points out that through this experience she was positively motivated to start fundraising projects in her centre. Although she feels parents in townships are struggling financially however she applauds their little contribution towards school fundraising projects because it has made a great difference. Stella comments:

*"I do not remember receiving any support from DSD since I opened this facility... This experience has taught me to be resourceful by means of engaging my community in fundraising. Although I understand parents in my township are struggling however, so far the little that they have contributed has sustained us and I congratulate our ECD centre parents. Their support is amazing (see chapter 4, p 60).*

From the above extracts, there is evidence that fundraising is pivotal for ECD centre principals in townships. The participating ECD centre principals mentioned that their concern is parents' low income bracket and lack of support from DSD which makes teaching and learning difficult including performance in their leadership roles. In addition, ECD centre principals reveal that although they spearhead fundraising campaign however, it is a joint endeavour which requires all stakeholders' full support to reach centre's goals as envisaged. Further, from ECD centre

principal narratives we are learning that there is need of formal training in order to develop efficacy in fundraising. In light of the above discussions, the observed lack of skills on how to find donors and methods of approaching donors is of concern. Although the 21<sup>st</sup> century has centralised technology in all spheres of business however, form-filling should still be made available for those in townships and enable them to submit for funding proposals.

The higher one's position on the hierarchical ladder, the more influence one has in the decision making. Sims et al. (2015) endorse this concept in their statement that those who steer the vessel have far more influence over its endpoint than those who row it. In this context, the narratives reveal that ECD centre principals are determined to influence stakeholders in their persistence to reach their centre goals. This reaction from ECD centre principals discloses servant leadership attributes that they possess. McCrimmon (2010) confirms that determination and perseverance are characteristics found in servant leaders. This is shown in the manner in which they are determined to make every effort possible to promote fundraising. They are harnessing funds in every way possible to try and make ends meet. This expression 'make ends meet' echoes a sense of desperation. It seems to suggest that little is better than nothing hence their urgency in harnessing funds.

## **5.5 INFLUENCE OF PRINCIPALS' LEADERSHIP PRACTICES ON THE OPERATIONS OF CENTRES**

The study established that the influence of principals' leadership practices on the operations of ECD centres in townships is enormous. Below I present influence of principals' leadership practices on the operations of centres. Only one theme captures the ECD centre principals' influence that is **positive performance of the centre and employee and customer satisfaction**.

### **5.5.1 Positive performance of the centre and employee, and customer satisfaction**

This study has found that the ECD centre principals are both goal and process oriented. The principal who is goal oriented aims at creating conducive environment for teaching and learning, whereas the principal who is process oriented does classroom visitations, supervision and giving feedback to teachers (Fourie, 2018). In responding to goal and process orientation, the participants were found influencing performance of the centre and employees positively. As a result most learners and parents are satisfied. Mary expressed that the comfort and safety of her school environment is similar if not more conducive than children's homes. She added

that her residing at school premises promotes her flexibility on time management. To ensure smooth process in teaching and learning, Mary eludes that she monitors teachers' planned work and give feedback; she expounds:

*“Our school is a home away from home because of the extra care we practice in ensuring best service at all times... I have an advantage that I stay on school premises. When the first child arrives, as a leader I will always be ready to fetch the kids because it is not safe for a child to be left alone outside ... My job as an ECD leader is to monitor practitioners to make sure that they are following the learning programme as planned, as well as checking communication books to see if there are any messages from parents. My work also entails responding to messages and liaising with practitioners if action is required. I also check fortnightly practitioners' planned work for teaching and learning and give feedback where necessary (see chapter 4, p 38).*

The similar sentiments were shared by Janet, who also is experiencing positive results owing to her leadership practices on the operation of the centre. Janet gives credit to three elements; respect, collaboration and cooperation through which her school has managed to meet the purpose of its existence in her township. She encourages team work in the design, implementation and evaluation of school learning programme. Janet has this to say:

*“My understanding of leadership is that, first of all I have to respect myself and then respect everyone around me in order to get respect in return. This is shown in the manner we collaborate and cooperate as staff including kitchen and security staff. I respect my practitioners by listening and taking positive action to their needs at all times. Leading and designing learning programme is one of my crucial duties as an ECD centre principal. Central to learning programme is the view of quality which means that our learning programme should meet the purpose of our existence in our township. Therefore, learning programme design is a team work which involves stakeholders. Subsequently, as the leader I will work closely with practitioners to evaluate and assess whether the Curriculum statement learning outcomes are all covered (see chapter 4, p 47).*

A positive leadership practice is also observable from Stella. This ECD centre principal is experiencing positive employee performance owing to her living the school vision. Her art of supervision and problem solving creates conducive environment for both learners and practitioners. Stella's ability to work within the school budget, though strenuous, however little is much when equally shared. Stella expounds:



*“Our vision as a school is to produce learners who are school ready; holistically trained, taught and flexible to school routine. Our school was once vandalized and my first tour of duty was to make the place conducive for teaching and learning. They (parents, teachers and children) look up to me because I am at their service. Therefore, at all cost I have to deliver whether it be service, encouragement, support or security. My duties include the following; supervision, decision making, vision setting and problem solving just to name a few. On a daily basis I oversee my teachers at work. I intentionally visit each class to greet learners while I observe to see that the teacher is following the routine. As well as, monitoring their activities whether they are executing them as planned. As a leader I give direction where necessary and supply the required aids to teachers if available (see chapter 4, p 58).*

The ECD centre principals in townships seem to be influencing positive employee and centre performance and customer satisfaction by their good leadership practices on the operations of centres. From the above extracts we are learning that the ECD centre principals go an extra mile so as to provide the best services for children, practitioners and parents. This is evident in the manner in which they have extended time to ensure parents’ needs are catered for. This act of kindness to a certain extent reveals the attributes found in servant leaders such as love, care and sympathy (McCrimmon, 2010). Hence this practice of leadership engagements with stakeholders influences positive customer satisfaction within their centres in township.

The data shows that these ECD centre principals in township are actively involved due to their presence on site at all times. Their daily continuous visibility on centres is a good practice which enables them to monitor and implement effective teaching and learning strategies. Apart from this, this practice empowers them to build strong professional relationships with practitioners, learners and parents. This view is supported by Day, Kington, Stobart and Sammons (2006) claiming that leaders’ professional identity is shaped by their relationship with followers. Therefore, stakeholders’ confidence in the centre’s vision and its sustainability is positively secured.

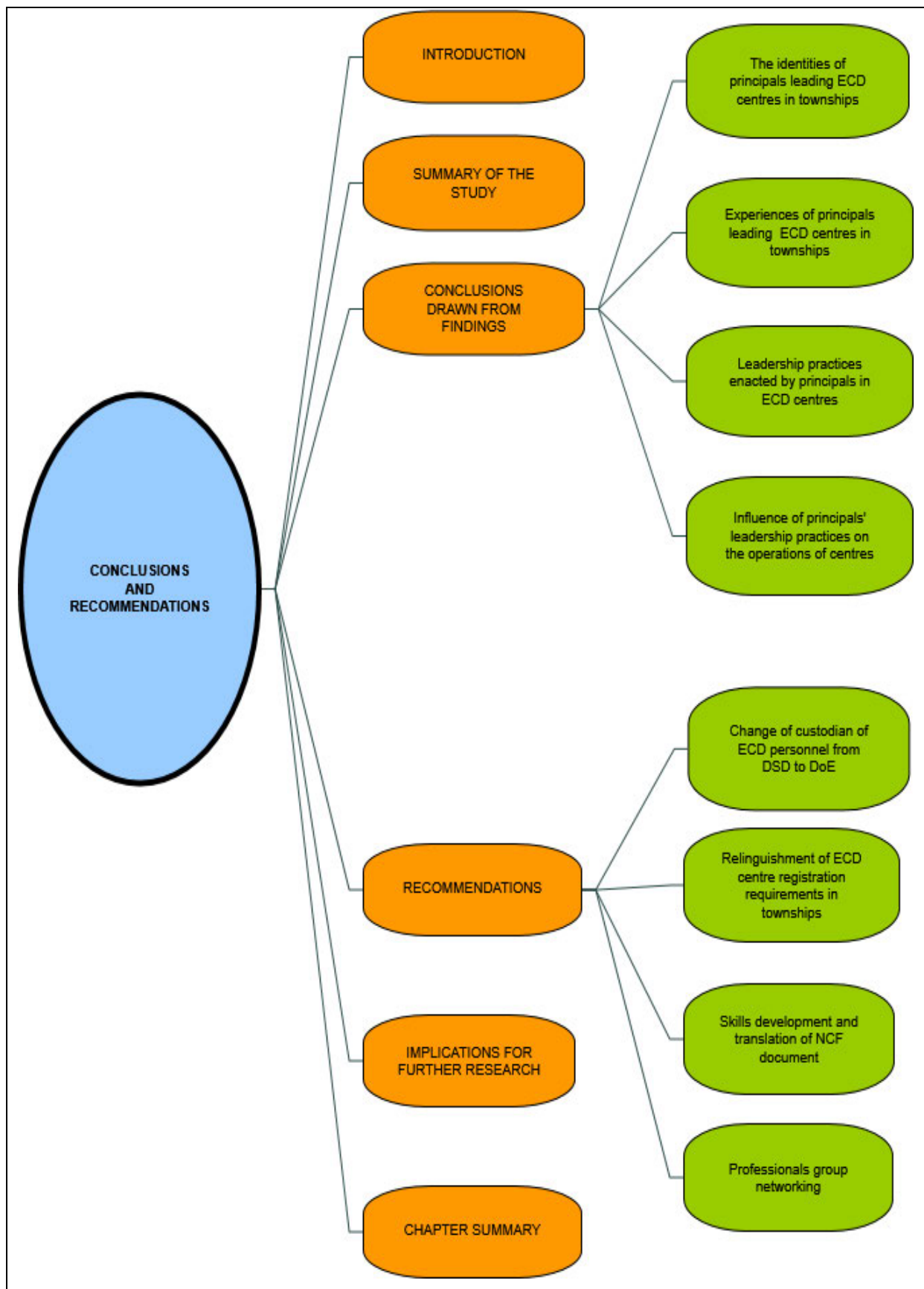
Drawing from the leadership perspective, the understanding is that the leader knows the way, goes the way and shows the way (Bush, 2013; Christine, 2010; Northouse, 2010). This notion is emphasised in the manner in which these principals, as inventors, are committed to time

management. They know the importance of time keeping and as such they practice it. Their arrival and departure times on centres are consistent. Therefore, practitioners are positively influenced, motivated and inspired by the good exemplary standards being set by their ECD centre leadership.

From the above discussion, the influence of principals' leadership practices on the operations of ECD centres in township remains indisputable. In spite of challenges branded on ECD centres in townships, this study has established that positive employee and centre performance and customer satisfaction is currently being experienced in some kwaMashu and Umlazi townships. This is as a result of servant leadership attitudes which participants in this study have clearly shown to have been practising. This is in line with McCrimmon (2010) who supports that servant leaders are characterized as hardworking, focused and passionate. Subsequently, against all odds ECD centres in kwaMashu and Umlazi townships continue to strive to this end.

## **5.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter presented the second level of analysis referred to as analysis of narratives. The research puzzles guided the discussion of findings in this chapter. The next chapter brings the study to an end. Therefore the chapter gives a summary of the study, conclusions as drawn from findings, recommendations stemming from the study and implications of the study are presented.



Map 6: Chapter Six

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

The preceding chapter provided the findings of the study. The findings were presented in relation to the research puzzles they answer back to. This final chapter brings the study to an end. In order to achieve this, I focus on four aspects, namely, the study summary, conclusions drawn from findings, the study recommendations and the study implications.

#### **6.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY**

Chapter one presented an orientation and background to the study. In this chapter, I introduced the issues relating to leadership of ECD centres in townships. Further, the rationale of the study was presented in three levels, namely, personal, practical and social. Lastly, research puzzles and the outline of chapters were presented.

Chapter two provided the review of both local and international literature relating to ECD centre principals in townships. Additionally, this chapter presented the theoretical framework underpinning the study, which included the social identity theory and servant leadership theory.

Chapter three presented the research design and methodology utilised in the study. The special attention in this chapter was given to narrative inquiry methodology which constituted the backbone of the study. Furthermore, I outlined among other things, the methods of generating field texts, methods of analysing field texts, selection of participants, profiles of participants, trustworthiness and ethical considerations in the study.

Chapter four provided the first level of analysis referred to as narrative analysis. In this chapter, I presented the re-storied narratives for each participant in a chronological order. These narratives included both personal and professional experiences of Principals in township ECD centres.

Chapter five presented the second level of analysis referred to as analysis of narratives. The researcher deconstructed the ECD Principals' re-storied narratives through examining and analysing the narratives. As a result, themes were identified as they emerged from the

participants' re-storied narratives. These themes were presented around research puzzles they provided answers to.

### **6.3 CONCLUSIONS DRAWN FROM FINDINGS**

Conclusions drawn from the findings of the study are presented below. These conclusions are drawn around each research puzzle. To remind the reader, the research puzzles are restated below:

What are the lived experiences of principals leading township ECD centres?

- 1) Who are the principals leading ECD centres in a township?
- 2) What are the leadership experiences of ECD centre principals?
- 3) What are the leadership practices of principals leading ECD centres in a township?
- 4) How do the leadership practices of principals influence the operations of the ECD centres in a township?

#### **6.3.1 The identities of principals leading ECD centres in township**

The findings of this study revealed that principals leading ECD centres in townships possess multiple personal and professional identities. In this inquiry, two broad professional identities were established from participants' re-storied narratives; these identities are, community servants and passion driven leaders. Firstly, the principals leading ECD centres in townships were identified as community servants because of childcare, teaching and learning offerings to their communities. These principals' choice to settle amongst the community seem to have enhanced their daily interaction with the community. Thus, their lives became one with the lives of the community. The ECD principals appeared to be selfless in their endeavor to give childcare services within their communities. They went an extra mile in working extended unpaid hours to serve the children, practitioners, parents and community. Based on this finding, I make a claim that the nature of the work of ECD centre principals and the township context require a principal to hold an identity of a community servant.

Secondly, ECD centre principals were identified to be passion driven leaders because of their love for children and childhood education development which stirred the vision of pioneering ECD centres. Their passion manifested in carrying out their vision in spite of the possible

disapproval of others. These leaders' determination and perseverance enabled them to navigate their way through church and community protocols until they realised their goal.

### **6.3.2 Experiences of principals leading ECD centres in township**

The findings of this study revealed that the ECD centre principals have unpleasant experiences with regards to leading ECD centres in townships. This inquiry identified two key experiences, namely, leading with minimal resources and lack of support from authorities. Firstly, the ECD centre principals in townships experienced a daunting task of limited resources in leading ECD centres. This challenge unfortunately has caused many negative bearings on other activities of the centre. Consequently, the ECD centre principals' leadership goal to alleviate poverty in townships is thwarted.

Secondly, in terms of support, the government is expected to support ECD centres in marginalized townships through stipends, grants, nutrition and educational equipment provisions. However, the DSD registration processes and requirements are above the standards of ECD centres in townships. As a result, some of the centres are not registered and are deprived support and in these centres ECD principals are battling to sustain the centres on the little fees revenue. Therefore, the challenging experiences of these leaders show that the registration requirements exclude them, consequently, they receive no support in terms of financial resources.

### **6.3.3 Leadership practices enacted by principals in ECD centres**

This study has established that the leadership practices of ECD centre principals are influenced by their experiences. Since these leaders have unpleasant experiences, I found them exerting practices that respond to their experiences. Their leadership practices involve designing and leading learning programmes and harnessing funds. Firstly, in terms of leadership designing and learning programmes, the findings of this study have shown that the ECD centre principals were guided by government NCF document in performing this role. ECD centre principals were found stressed due to lack of skills and comprehension of the NCF document. This overloading work required expertise of which many ECD principals in townships did not possess since they did not get formal training needed to design and to lead learning programmes.

Secondly, the finding of this study revealed that the ECD centre principals engaged in fundraising to keep their ECD centres liquid. In the face of lack of support from DSD, the ECD centre leaders were determined to influence stakeholders in their persistence to reach centre goals through fundraising. In the light of this, I therefore conclude that the ECD centres in townships survive through principals' vehement drive for harnessing funds.

#### **6.3.4 Influence of principals' leadership practices on the operations of centres**

The findings of this study revealed three important influences of principals' leadership practices on the operations of the centres, namely, positive centre performance, positive employee performance and customer satisfaction. These three influences were experienced as a result of good leadership practices of ECD centre principals in townships. Firstly, in terms of positive centre performance, principals underpinned by community servant and passion driven identities practiced selfless dedication and limitless giving to their communities by creating more caring and loving environments. They went the extra mile in working extended unpaid hours to serve the children, practitioners, parents and community. Therefore, their commitment to centre goals influenced performance of the centre positively.

Secondly, the daily continuous visibility of ECD principals on centres proved to be a good practice which enabled them to monitor and implement effective teaching and learning strategies. This practice empowered ECD leaders to build strong professional relationships with practitioners, learners and parents. Again, ECD centre leaders took it upon themselves as inventors of these centres to move and stay on centre premises to ensure easy access. Therefore, ECD centre leaders were found to be servants themselves whose desire was central to serving others hence in influencing positive employee performance.

Thirdly, ECD centre principals were found to be in the forefront of harnessing funds to ensure good service delivery for customer satisfaction. In the face of lack of support from DSD, it was ascertained that ECD principals' vehement drive for harnessing funds kept centres liquid. Therefore, the strong influence of principals' leadership practices on the operations of ECD centres in townships remains indisputable.

## **6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Informed by the findings and conclusions presented above, I make recommendations to the Department of Education, Department of Social Development and also to ECD centre principals.

### **6.4.1 Change of custodian of ECD personnel from DSD to DoE**

This study revealed key identities of ECD centre principals, which DSD and DoE might not be aware of. Given the findings of this inquiry, to be an ECD centre principal in townships is a demanding role. This relates to the fact that ECD centres are complex institutions whose main function does not solely rest on teaching and learning but also involves the wellbeing and development of babies, infants and toddlers. Therefore, this has a challenging bearing on identities of ECD centre principals; such as working extended unpaid hours and unequal low salaries due to low fees revenue especially in townships. These contingencies hinder township ECD principals from performing their duties optimally. Therefore, I recommend that the DoE absorbs ECD centre personnel into their payroll system indefinitely. Like other professionals serving in government primary schools they deserve a consistent benchmark pay cheque and benefits such as medical aid and pension.

### **6.4.2 Relinquishment of ECD centre registration requirements in townships**

This study also concluded that the registration requirements should exclude ECD centres in townships attributable to requirements which remain pegged above their standards. Consequently, they do not receive support in terms of financial resources. These emerging concerns from respondents are extending the body of literature on identified gaps hindering progress in the move towards equity and democracy in South Africa's early childhood education sector as a whole. The fact that ECD centres in South Africa are considered as government's priority in fighting poverty and discrimination; I therefore recommend for DSD to waiver registration requirements of ECD centres in marginalized townships. In this way they will be susceptible to government support in every form such as funding, grant, nutrition, infrastructure and educational equipment provisions.

### **6.4.3 Skills development and translation of NCF document**

The study further revealed that the ECD centre principals in townships do not get formal training needed to design and lead learning programmes. As a result the participating ECD centre principals were found stressed due to lack of skills and comprehension of the NCF



document. This therefore presents a huge discrepancy in full functionality of ECD centres. On this basis, firstly, I recommend that the DSD should provide formal training on how to design and lead learning programme in order to equip all ECD centre staff in townships. The training should include strategies on how to strengthen the implementation process.

Secondly, I recommend that the DSD in collaboration with DoE urgently translate the NCF document into language suitable for ECD centre personnel in townships. This process will ensure inclusion of all ECD centre personnel irrespective of their ethnic, social and educational background, allowing for full optimum functioning of ECD centres.

#### **6.4.4 Professionals group networking**

Lastly, the study highlighted that the ECD centre principals engaged in fundraising to keep their ECD centres liquid. However, their knowledge and skills in harnessing funds were limited. While knowledge and skills are essentially provided for through training in 21<sup>st</sup> century, social networking platforms have become handy in all professional sectors. I therefore recommend for ECD centre principals to make use of ECD centre professionals group networks and create forums to dialogue on aspects of fundraising in townships. Such engagements will broaden ECD principals' understanding of fundraising, especially in their contexts, on how to find donors and methods of approaching donors.

### **6.5 IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

This was a small scale study which explored the lived experiences of three ECD centre principals in two ECD centres located in kwaMashu and Umlazi townships. Therefore, the findings of this study are far from reflecting the views of South African ECD centres inclusively. Hence the experiences of three ECD centre principals from only three ECD centres in townships cannot be generalised to all ECD centres in South Africa. My intention of using narrative inquiry methodology was to draw an intense understanding of the lived experiences of ECD centre principals in townships. Thus, the sample size was limited to two townships and sample population also limited to three participants from which I had no intention to generalise. Given the different contexts in South Africa, I believe there is a greater need for comparative studies to be done across provinces in exploration of ECD centre Principals' lived experiences. Current local literature reflects that very little has been written about ECD leadership, particularly principals' lived experiences; therefore, these comparative studies will broaden our understanding of ECD centre principals' experiences in South Africa.

## **6.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This study focused on the lived experiences of ECD centre principals in three ECD centres from two townships. Four research puzzles were used as instruments to generate field texts. The Narrative inquiry methodology was adopted in this inquiry to explore the lived experiences of three purposively selected participants. Upon examination of these ECD centre principals' lived experiences, two key identities were identified, namely, community servants and passion driven leaders. Additionally, the study found two key experiences of principals leading ECD centres in townships, namely, leading with minimal resources and lack of support from authorities. Furthermore, the study revealed two broad leadership practices enacted by principals in ECD centres, namely, designing and leading learning programmes and harnessing funds. Finally, the study revealed that the quality of the principals' leadership practices has a significant influence of the centre and its employees in providing customer satisfaction.

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**APPENDIX A:****DATA GENERATION PLAN / TOOL**

The process of my research journey with participants in generating field texts (Data) is shown in the table below. Three methods, namely, narrative interviews, collage inquiry and photo voice will be used. Four data generation sessions over four days will be scheduled with each participant.

<b>SUMMARY OF THE MEETINGS WITH PARTICIPANTS</b> <b>LIFE STORY INTERVIEW (UNSTRUCTURED)</b>			
<b>MEETINGS</b>	<b>TOPIC AND FOCUS</b>	<b>RESEARCH ACTIVITY</b>	<b>PARTICIPANTS ACTIVITY</b>
Day one	Narratives of early life	Explain the purpose of the study, meeting and activities required in this study. Conduct first narrative interview	Participants speak freely narrating stories of their early life/childhood experiences leading up to her pursuing a career in an ECD centre.
Day two	Discussion of Collage	Collage development and discussion.	Participants narrate stories regarding their collages
Day three	Narratives of experience	Conduct a second narrative interview	Participants relate their experiences as ECD Principals
Day four	Photo-voice discussion	Photo-voice activity and discussion	Participants narrate their stories regarding the photo-voice.
Additional	Attend to gaps in the data	Explain the purpose of this additional interview. Conduct fourth narrative interview	Narrate stories that they would have missed in the previous sessions

**ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE**

14 August 2019

Mrs Evelyn Muteweri (218081503)  
School Of Education  
Edgewood Campus

Dear Mrs Evelyn Muteweri,

**Protocol reference number:** HSSREC/00000159/2019

**Project title:** Exploring leadership in early childhood development centres: Narratives of three principals in two townships

### **Full Approval – Expedited Application**

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 06 August 2019 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) 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.

This approval is valid for one year from 14 August 2019.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

Yours sincerely,



Professor Urmilla Bob  
University Dean of Research

/dd

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee  
Dr Rosemary Sibanda (Chair)  
UKZN Research Ethics Office Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building  
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000  
Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics/>

Founding Campuses: ■ Edgewood ■ Howard College ■ Medical School ■ Pietermaritzburg ■ Westville

**INSPIRING GREATNESS**

## APPENDIX C:

### **PERMISSION LETTERS TO GATEKEEPERS (ECD CENTRE PRINCIPALS)**

16 Gossacre Court  
20 Helen Joseph Road  
Glenwood  
DURBAN  
South Africa

11<sup>th</sup> July 2019

The Principal



Dear Sir/Madam

#### **REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT YOUR ECD CENTRE**

I am Evelyn Muteweri and I am conducting research as a requirement of the University of KwaZulu-Natal towards a Degree of Masters in Educational Leadership, Management and Policy. The title of the research study is “Exploring leadership in early childhood development centres: Narratives of three principals in two townships”.

I would like to use your ECD centre as one of the research sites, and this letter intends to request your permission. The focus of the study is on the ECD centre Principals, therefore I would like to request you as the Principal to participate in the study. Should permission be granted, the interviews with the Principal will be scheduled for dates and times that are convenient for him/her. Care will be taken that no disruption is caused during such interviews. Please also note that the participation in this study is voluntary, and the participant has the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequence. In addition, you are assured that details of the ECD centre and the participant will be kept confidential, and your identity will never be disclosed to anyone.

For more information and questions about the study, you may contact the researcher or the research supervisor on the following details:

Name of researcher: Evelyn Muteweri, Cell No.076 217 3125; email: [evemuteweri@gmail.com](mailto:evemuteweri@gmail.com).

Supervisor: Mr S.B. Blose: Tel No.: (031) 260 1870; email: [Bloses@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:Bloses@ukzn.ac.za)

You may also contact the Research Office through:

P. Mohun, HSSREC Research Office, Tel.: 031 260 4557; e-mail: [mohunp@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:mohunp@ukzn.ac.za).

Thanking you in advance.

Yours in Education

A black rectangular box redacting the signature of Mrs. E Muteweri.

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**Mrs. E Muteweri**

**APPENDIX D:**

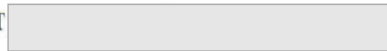
**PERMISSION FROM GATEKEEPERS (ECD CENTRE PRINCIPALS)**

School letterhead

8<sup>th</sup> July 2019

Dear Evelyn Muteweri,

**PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT**

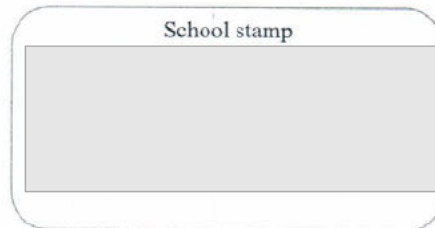


Your letter titled "Request to conduct research at ECD centre" has reference. Please be informed that you are granted a permission to conduct your research at the above mentioned ECD centre.

Yours sincerely



School stamp





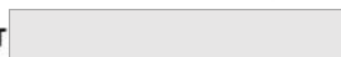
APPENDIX D:

**PERMISSION FROM GATEKEEPERS (ECD CENTRE PRINCIPALS)**



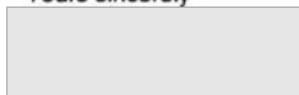
Dear Evelyn Muteweri

**PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT**

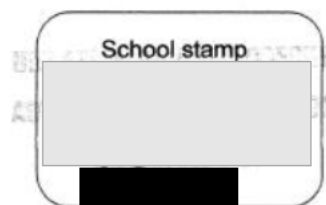


You letter titled "Request to conduct research at ECD centre" has reference. Please be informed that you are granted a permission to conduct your research at the above mentioned ECD centre.


Yours sincerely



**Name of Principal**



**PERMISSION FROM GATEKEEPERS (ECD CENTRE PRINCIPALS)**

<div></div> <div>Care Center</div> <div></div> <div><i>....I John 4:4, "You dear children come from God." ....</i> 1<sup>st</sup> July 2019</div>	
Dear Evelyn Muteweri,	
PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT <div></div>	
Your letter titled "Request to conduct research at ECD centre" has reference. Please be informed that you are granted a permission to conduct your research at the above mentioned ECD centre.	
Yours sincerely	<div>School stamp</div> <div></div>
<div></div> <div>Name of Principal</div>	

**LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS**

16 Gossacre Court  
20 Helen Joseph Road  
Glenwood  
DURBAN  
South Africa

11<sup>th</sup> July 2019

Dear Madam,

**REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE RESEARCH**

I am Evelyn Muteweri and I am conducting a research as a requirement of the University of KwaZulu-Natal towards a Degree of Masters in Educational Leadership, Management and Policy. The title of the research study is “Exploring leadership in early childhood development centres: Narratives of four principals in two townships”. The objectives of the study are:

- To explore leadership in ECD centres through narratives of three Principals
- The practices of Principals in leading ECD centres in a township
- To understand how the leadership practices of Principals influence the operations of the ECD centres in a township.

The study will focus on ECD centre Principals and how they lead these centres. This letter intends to elucidate the purpose of the study and to request your participation in the study.

Please note that:

- Your confidentiality is guaranteed as your inputs will not be attributed to you in person, but reported only as a population member opinion.
- The interview may last for about 1 hour and may be split into two parts depending on your preference.
- Any information given by you cannot be used against you, and the collected data will be used for purposes of this research only.
- Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years.

- You have a choice to participate, not participate or stop participating in the research. You will not be penalized for taking such an action.
- Your involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.
- If you are willing to be interviewed, please indicate (by ticking as applicable) whether or not you are willing to allow the interview to be recorded by the following equipment:

	Willing	Not willing
Audio equipment		
Photographic equipment		
Video equipment		

I can be contacted at:

Email: [evemuteweri@gmail.com](mailto:evemuteweri@gmail.com)

Cell: 076 217 3125

My supervisor is Mr S.B. Blose who is located at the School of Education, at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. He can be contacted at:

Email: [Bloses@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:Bloses@ukzn.ac.za)

Phone: 031 260 1870

I hope this letter will find your positive consideration, thanking you in advance.

Yours Sincerely




---

**Mrs. E Muteweri**

**INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPANTS**

**INFORMED CONSENT FROM PARTICIPANTS**

**DECLARATION**

-----  
**PLEASE COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING SECTION FOR CONSENT OF PARTICIPATION:**  
-----

I \_\_\_\_\_ (Full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the nature and purpose of the study titled: “Exploring leadership in early childhood development centres: Narratives of four principals in two townships”. I agree to participate in the study. I am also fully aware that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any point should I wish to do so, without any negative or undesirable consequence. I am also aware that there are neither any foreseeable direct benefits nor direct risks associated with my participation in this study. I therefore understand the contents of this letter fully and I do **GIVE CONSENT / DO NOT GIVE CONSENT** for the interviews to be digitally recorded.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

School stamp

TURN-IT-IN CERTIFICATE

Mrs Muteweri E

## ORIGINALITY REPORT

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STUDENT PAPERS

## PRIMARY SOURCES

1	Xin Zheng, Hongbiao Yin, Yuan Liu, Zheng Ke. "Effects of leadership practices on professional learning communities: the mediating role of trust in colleagues", Asia Pacific Education Review, 2016 Publication	<1%
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# Mrs Muteweri E

*by* Muteweri Evelyn

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Submission date: 21-Apr-2020 07:50AM (UTC+0200)

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Word count: 27127

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**LANGUAGE CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE**

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**Dr Saths Govender**

---

4 MAY 2020

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

**LANGUAGE CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE**

This serves to inform that I have read the final version of the dissertation titled:

EXPLORING LEADERSHIP IN EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT CENTRES: NARRATIVES  
OF THREE PRINCIPALS IN TWO TOWNSHIPS by EVELYN MUTEWERI, student no.218081503.

To the best of my knowledge, all the proposed amendments have been effected and the work is free of spelling and grammatical errors. I am of the view that the quality of language used meets generally accepted academic standards.

Yours faithfully



-----  
**DR S. GOVENDER**

B Paed. (Arts), B.A. (Hons), B Ed.  
Cambridge Certificate for English Medium Teachers  
MPA, D Admin.