

**Evaluation of the Psychomotor Education Programme
of a Community Based Early Childhood Programme
at the Dalton Trust Education Centre (KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa)
in Support of School Preparation**

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work presented in this thesis is original and my own unless otherwise stated.

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Thesis supervisor's approval of this thesis for submission

As the candidate's supervisor I have approved this thesis for submission.

Signed:

B.J. Killian (PhD)

DEDICATION

To Chiara

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ABSTRACT

The early years of a child's growth and development are crucial for health, wellbeing and success in later life. Adequate stimulation during the pre-school years is a critical factor that can be associated with higher levels of achievement and better adjustment in school (Arnold, Barlett., Gowani, & Merali, 2006). Some children, for example those growing in contexts of adversity, are in particular need of pre-school assistance.

This research evaluates a one-year implementation of the Psychomotor Education Programme (PMEP) at the Dalton Trust Education Centre, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. PMEP is an educational programme that stimulates the child's psychomotor functions and supports the development of the whole child through play in the pre-school years. An evaluation of the programme was required to establish if the PMEP had achieved the envisaged objectives of improving preparedness of children for their entrance into the formal school system.

This summative evaluation used focus group discussions to collect data on whether the outcomes had been achieved from the perspective of the trained and experienced family facilitators who had participated in the PMEP. The participants were asked about the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the PMEP. The areas identified as being attributable to the PMEP include social-emotional competence, self-awareness, emotional regulation and autonomy. The participants reported that PMEP had enabled the children to achieve the learning outcomes described by the Revised National Curriculum Statement (South African Department of Education, 2005). However, further research is needed to overcome the difficulty of maintaining the achieved outcomes in a new environment, such as the formal school context, where methods of teaching and resources may differ substantially from those provided by the PMEP.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AIDS = Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

DET = Dalton Education Trust

DoE = Department of Education

ECD = Early Childhood Development

FFs = Family Facilitators

HIV = Human Immunodeficiency Virus

PMEP = Psychomotor Education Programme

SWOT = A method of evaluation used frequently within NGO settings.

The acronym stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

ToR = Terms of Reference

UNESCO = United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNICEF = United Nations International Children's Emergency Funds

WHO = World Health Organization

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Adversity: Conditions such as poverty, illness and violence, subject children to daily stressful experiences that can seriously compromise psychological functioning and development (Barbarin & Richter, 1998).

Ecological Theory: (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Ecological Environment: A series of different spheres of environmental influence such as micro-meso-exo-macro-chronosystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Ecological Transition: Result of a person's change in setting or position in the ecological environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Engram: a permanent alteration of neural tissue, which roots in the child's memory, from early experiences (Aucouturier, 2005).

Evaluation: Assessing the value of a specific programme (Feuerstein, 1989).

Focus Group: A focus group is a group discussion that explores a specific set of issues and involves some kind of collective activity (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006).

Psychomotor Education: A psycho-educational programme designed to enhance psychomotor development of the child (Aucouturier, 2005).

Purposive Sampling: A non-random method of sampling chosen to focus on specific topics of interest (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006).

Resilience: A theoretical framework supporting variations in children's ability to cope with adversities, despite adverse conditions. Protective factors, such as personal qualities and environmental factors could be, for example, quality early childhood programmes, in reducing vulnerability (Rutter, 1998).

Sampling: A technique of studying part of something to gain information about the whole and the particular methods of analysing the information collected (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006).

Scaffolding: A Vygotskian concept referring to the structured assistance children receive from peers and adults in order to reach abilities and goals (Karpov, 2006, p.42).

School Preparedness: A gradual preparation of the child for school entry. It is a process which implies a wide range of behaviours, necessary to school entry. School preparedness competences include cognitive, language, motor, perceptual processing tasks, as well as attention, attitudes and interpersonal characteristics (South African Department of Education: White Paper 5, 2001).

Summative Evaluation: A type of evaluation concerned with evaluating the overall achievements of a programme (Potter, 2006)

Transition: A period of intense changes, through different stages and systems.

White Paper: A white paper is an authoritative report or guide that often addresses issues and how to solve them. White papers are used to educate readers and help people make decisions (South African Department of Education, 2001).

Zone of Proximal Development: According to Vygotsky (1978), it is the distance between the most difficult task a child can perform without help and the most difficult one he/she can perform with it.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This study evaluates the Psychomotor Education Programme (PMEP), which was implemented over a period of one year (June 2009 to June 2010) at the Dalton Trust Education Centre, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The Psychomotor Education Programme was conducted at the request of the Dalton Trust with the aim of improving the quality of education for children in the area by better preparing them for their formal entrance into the school system. PMEP is an educational programme which stimulates the children's psychomotor functions and supports their development through play. All activities are relevant to the children's cultural experiences and focus on traditional play activities and child-rearing practices within the community context.

1.1 Aims and Rationale of the Study

The aim of this study was to investigate whether the expected outcomes of the PMEP, in terms of children's preparedness and their ability to handle the transition into the school environment, had been achieved. Special consideration was given to the children's preparation with regard to social, emotional, personal, physical and cognitive aspects of the child's development. This study evaluated the PMEP and analysed its outcomes.

Although outcomes-based education programmes have outlined a model that includes valid socio-emotional competencies, as well as cognitive, motor and linguistic skills, at present in South Africa, there is no valid evaluation of school preparation. This research aims to explore this gap and make suggestions, in order to help teachers and psychologists to assist children who may be at greater risk should they proceed into formal school, before being mature enough to handle the transition.

The reader will note that the term 'school readiness' is not used as this term is ill-defined within the South African context, and has become fraught with both socio-political and educational judgements that may not be counter-productive and not in

the best interests of the children concerned (Arnold, Barlett., Gowani, & Merali, 2006). This may particularly be the case when children grow up in circumstances of extreme adversity in which they lack stimulation, and at times, adequate nourishment. For these reasons, the more neutral term of 'preparedness' is used to encompass the concept of preparing children holistically at the early childhood development phase in the most optimal manner possible, given their circumstances and the resources available (Barbarin & Richter, 1998).

1.2 Methodological Approach

This study adopted a qualitative evaluative approach. Participants were sampled purposefully from the Dalton communities, while data was collected by means of focus groups designed for this purpose. A combination of a SWOT analysis and thematic analysis were used to analyse the data. A SWOT analysis is an acronym for a discussion on the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. As this approach was likely to be familiar to the participants in the focus groups, it was adopted as a method for the focus group discussion. The full account of the methodology used in this study is provided in Chapter Three.

1.3 Outline of the Study

Chapter One has introduced the background and motivation for the evaluation programme, as well as the study aims and objectives of this study. Chapter Two covers the empirical literature and theoretical frameworks relevant to the current study. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) social ecological systemic approach is explained and used as a theoretical framework throughout this study. The study and the programme to be evaluated are based within a specific context of profound poverty, rural conditions, high unemployment and HIV/AIDS infection incidence. The theoretical framework of the PMEP is also critically discussed in Chapter Two, together with an outline of the expected outcomes of this Early Childhood Development (ECD) programme and philosophy.

Chapter Three addresses methodological issues such as evaluation design, sampling, data collection procedures and analysis. This study uses a qualitative

method of analysis of data collected from focus group discussions. Ethical considerations are also discussed in Chapter Three. Chapter Four describes and discusses the results that emerged through the analysis of the codes, patterns, sub-themes and themes of the data. The study findings are also presented and discussed in this chapter in relation to the literature on ECD and PMEP programming in poverty-stricken environments. Chapter Five looks at the way the results could be used in improving the quality of ECD education in rural settings, according to the systemic approach discussed in the literature review and in accordance with the findings of this research programme. This chapter will also consider the limitations of the current research and make suggestions for future research in this area. Chapter Six presents the conclusions of this study.

1.4 Limitations

Although limitations are frequently discussed towards the end of a thesis, the researcher would prefer to present these upfront. Limitations are restrictions or difficulties that the researcher encountered during the course of the study that negatively impacted on the aims of the research. In this study, there were two significant limitations. Firstly, recent policy changes require that this thesis be completed within one year which made it impossible to collect data at any time other than during the mid-year vacation period. This in turn created the second limitation in that although two samples had been intended for focus group participation (family facilitators and foundation phase educators), the foundation phase educator focus group was not successful. The data was deemed to lack reliability as the educators did not consistently or accurately identify children who had participated in the PMEP in the previous year, i.e. before entering Grade 1. The foundation phase educator focus group could not be repeated due to time constraints.

Therefore, this research is based on the perceptions of the family facilitators who are involved in conducting the PMEP. The fact that the family facilitators lacked independence is a further acknowledged limitation; however, their voices serve as a starting point in a fuller evaluation that is envisaged in terms of the PMEP.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The positive relation between the quality of children's early experiences and their development is "one of the most consistent findings in developmental science" (Shonkoff & Philips, 2000, p. 70). The early years are critical in the formation of intelligence, personality, social behaviour and physical development (Gerhardt, 2004). ECD programmes have important implications for children's future lives as they are concerned with ensuring solid foundations for children's overall development.

This chapter looks at the literature which considers transitions that children make between their early childhood experiences and their schooling, and examines ways in which these transitions can be facilitated and supported during the pre-school years. Transition and preparedness are closely related. In this context, this research looks particularly at conditions of adversity, such as poverty, and the ways in which quality early childhood programmes can be effective.

The Psychomotor Education Programme is described here as an innovative programme that has contributed to the school preparedness of the children of the Dalton community.

2.1 School Preparation and the South African Context

This study has been informed by developmental psychological theoretical frameworks, as well as cognitive theories of development. Many developmental theories, or ways to understand human development, attempt to describe the various influences on children's development that are universal in nature and occur across all environments (Rogoff, 2003). At the same time, however, the social and historical context in which children grow and develop has a great influence on developmental outcomes.

According to the 2005 statistical information, there were over 18 million children in South Africa (Statistics South Africa, 2005 & 2006). A child is a human between the stages of birth and puberty. Children constitute just over one-third of the country's population: 21% of the nation's children live in KwaZulu-Natal; 17% reside in the Eastern Cape; a further 15% live in Gauteng; and over 14% in Limpopo. Girl and boy populations are almost equal, and one-third of the nation's children are younger than six years. A large number of children enrol at school every year. However, dropouts, as well as underachievement, are particularly evident in the context of adversity, where overcrowded classes, lack of teaching and learning aids, HIV/AIDS, poverty, and home contexts contribute to a situation of poor scholastic success (Hill, Ardington & Hosegood, 2005).

In the South African context, some of the challenges that children face in the period of transition into the formal school system could create a barrier to learning. In addition, inequalities resulting from lack of resources and from socio-political historical inequalities could have a profoundly negative impact on the quality of education in the child's early years (Watts, Cockcroft & Duncan, 2009). Generally, it seems that children in conditions of adversity are regarded as less likely to be ready for school. This holds true in South Africa, where a number of factors, both at the level of the child and his/her environment, influence a child's overall development and his/her preparedness for school. Globalization, migration for work, marginalisation of social services, single-headed families, violence, and HIV/AIDS adversely affect the lives of young children in South Africa.

Poverty is one of the main factors that affect health, intellectual abilities, academic achievement and behaviour (Weitzman, 2003). Especially in early development, poverty can have detrimental effects on a child's life. Children from educationally deprived environments fail to attain their academic potential. The unmet educational needs of children in conditions of adversity have become increasingly evident (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997) and children risk becoming more withdrawn from academic pursuits, lose motivation and experience a general sense of failure. Poor health and malnutrition during the early childhood period and at school entry level can also impact negatively on the ability of children to attend school and to learn effectively (Abadzi, 2006).

Income poverty levels are important because they indicate how many children may not have their basic needs met. According to the General Household Survey (Statistics South Africa, 2005), child poverty in South Africa is extremely high. Two-thirds of children (11.9 million) lived in poor households that had an income of R1200 per month or less. This measure includes all sources of income, including social grants. The level of poverty differs across the country: KwaZulu-Natal, for instance, has one of the highest rates of child poverty compared to the national average.

To mitigate the widespread poverty affecting millions of children, community-based educational and care intervention should be adequately supported in a synergetic intervention among social welfare programmes and services targeting children and communities (UNICEF, 2000). Furthermore, children who have experienced good quality schooling in the ECD phase are regarded as more likely to progress well in all aspects of life, including academically and socially (Murphey, 2003). In view of this, the State of Nation Address in 2008 identified access to ECD as an apex priority for the country and more money was allocated to developing ECD services throughout the country (South African Department of Education: White Paper 5, 2001).

2.2 Adversity and Resilience

This research is particularly focussed on the transition into formal schooling in contexts of adversity, and on the ways in which this transition can be facilitated to increase resilience. Adverse conditions such as poverty, illness, and violence expose children to stressful experiences and numerous daily hassles that can seriously compromise psychological functioning and development (Barbarin & Richter, 1998). Children in contexts of adversity may experience greater difficulty in adapting to new situations, partly as a result of their limited resources as well as a lack of positive self-esteem. Impoverished early experiences can debilitate and, if persistent, dramatically limit physical and mental wellbeing (Garmezy, 1991). With this pattern of social adaptation, children could approach academic situations with fear, shyness, or social withdrawal.

In the last three decades, there has been much literature exploring the concept of resilience as an ability to adapt and cope well despite adverse conditions (Fonagy, Steele, Higgitt & Target, 1994). The concept of resilience was introduced to explain why some children are more able than others to cope with difficulties such as those associated with the transition to formal schooling. It is now widely recognised that resilience is an interactive and dynamic process (Killian, 2004) that can be developed through social and emotional competencies, problem-solving strategies, critical thought, autonomy, and sense of purpose (Fabian & Dunlop, 2007). According to Killian (2004), children develop through the interaction of genetic and environmental factors, internal strengths that help them to cope better with life. Children who are able to solve problems and are confident in their own ability to cope with difficulties often develop resilience in the face of adversity (Killian, 2004).

Parenting and schooling systems that encourage exploration and enquiry enhance resilience more than schooling and parenting styles that demand obedience and respect (Killian, 2004). Children who are able to identify emotions and express them in a socially accepted manner become resilient. They learn to control their emotions and gain a sense of mastery. Killian (2004, p. 6) explains that “being able to talk about or play out difficult experiences, while not dwelling on painful memories, is a basic principle underlying all psychotherapy”. Researchers are increasingly trying to understand how resilience may contribute to positive outcomes (Luthar, 2000). Such attention has been seen to be essential for designing appropriate prevention and intervention strategies for children facing adversity (Becker, Cicchetti & Luthar, 2000; Killian, 2004, Rutter 1998).

Supportive adults in the wider community, as well as effective learning programmes, can significantly contribute to the children’s resilience (Garmezy, 1991; Rutter, 1998). Indeed, Garmezy (1991) identified three levels at which vulnerability processes affecting children at risk operate. These include the community (neighbours and social support), the family, and the child’s traits (such as intelligence or social skill). Understanding resilience, as well as the factors and processes that contribute to risk for adverse childhood outcomes, have great potential in terms of suggesting strategies for effective intervention. The child could be assisted to further build resilience in cognitive, behavioural and emotional spheres (Garmezy, 1991). In

order to benefit from emotional resilience enhancing activities, children need to be able to reflect upon their own thoughts and feelings, i.e. have sense of self-awareness. According to the World Health Organisation (2004), this can be achieved through the interactions between the caregiver and the child.

2.3 Transitions in Early Childhood

Early childhood is typically considered to be the period below eight years of age (UNICEF, 2005). Research on transition during early years of life acknowledges this phase as a period of intense changes which involve multiple levels of transition and which has implications for long-term outcomes (Fabian & Dunlop, 2007).

Within the African context, the experience of transition into formal school is at times non-existent, in that it is applied only in relation to age criteria. The transition processes for children entering primary school have a major impact on their success, both socially and intellectually (Arnold, Barlett., Gowani, & Merali, 2006). Although 'National Policy' is committed to the development of young children physically, emotionally, spiritually, morally and socially, the Government acknowledges most school entrants are under-prepared (South African Department of Education: White Paper 5, 2001). It has been proposed that this lack of preparedness can be partially attributed to socio-emotional factors. Socio-emotional intelligence is considered to be an important criterion in academic success; research suggests that socio-emotional variables and academic skills are positively correlated (Goleman, 1996; Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg (2003). This is found to apply particularly within the Foundation Phase of education, where the "whole child" philosophy is applied and the concept of multiple intelligence is relevant (Gardner, 1998). For young children to adjust to school and succeed academically, certain socio-emotional competencies and life skills are critical (Ladd & Price, 1987; Murphey & Burns, 2002).

2.3.1 Vygotsky's Theory of Proximal Development

According to Vygotsky (1978), the child's cognitive development can be understood within the socio-cultural environment. From this perspective, children are seen as active agents in their own environment, engaging with the world around them.

Vygotsky's theory focuses on the importance of social interactions and environmental impact on the transitional processes accompanying children through school. Through this socio-cultural learning process, children adapt their behaviour to new insights gained through interaction with the environment. According to Vygotsky (1978), some tasks are too difficult for children to master alone, but can be mastered with assistance from more skilled people around the child. The phase between learning and development occurs in the Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978), defined as the space between the most difficult tasks a child can perform without help, and the most difficult task the child can do with support. According to Vygotsky some tasks are too difficult to master alone, but can be mastered with assistance from more skilled people around the child.

The Zone of Promixal Development (ZPD) constitutes an arena in which the child interacts with other individuals (Daniels, 2001). It was described by Vygotsky (1978, p.86) as the area between the individual's "actual development level as determined by independent problem solving" and the more advanced level of "potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers". The learning tasks are designed so that they are slightly above the child's level of ability and create a situation of conflict necessary, according to Vygotsky (1978), for the initial moving force or drive towards further development.

The potential level of development happens under adult guidance or peer collaboration, referred to through the use of the metaphor of scaffolding. Tools that are designed either too far beyond or below the child's level of ability are not adequate to enhance development. The level of tool appropriation depends also on the child's mental state (Vygotsky, 1997). Thus, Vygotsky's explanation of development provides a dialectical framework that considers relationships between tasks and tools, between the ability of the child and the task appropriation, between the internal and the external factors, and finally, between the historical and social events (Mooney, 2009).

Depending on the social and cultural context, children are faced with challenges that may or not harmonize with their transition to school. Post-Vygotskian theories

introduced the idea of “scaffolding” or the “social situation of development” (Karpov, 2006, p. 42) to describe the assistance children receive from their environments. This may be in the form of assistance from people such as peers or adults, or in the form of assistance from environments, such as their immediate contexts of home, pre-school and school settings. The scaffolding approach focuses on assistance and in providing the tools needed to achieve the tasks, thus limiting the complexity of the task to a manageable level for the child.

In Vygotsky’s terms, the goal of all preschool programmes would be to prepare a child optimally for the transition to formal schooling through the ZPD and scaffolding. Through this process, the child should enter school with the belief that formal schooling is within their level of capability, and should be confident that they will be able to internalise or learn productively within this setting.

2.3.2 Bronfenbrenner’s Theory of Systems

Ecological frameworks offer a more extensive approach for the study of transitions in early childhood. Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological framework has been helpful in understanding early experiences and the transition from preschool to school. Transition is seen as a contextualized process in which a series of structures are linked together. Interconnections between various settings or contexts are important in the development of the child. An ecological theory of systems is useful in understanding optimal development across the systems and the transition processes (Fabian & Dunlop, 2007). In Bronfenbrenner’s theory, the concept of ecological transition holds an important meaning: an ecological transition happens when a person changes his or her placement in the ecological systems, which is caused by obtaining a new role or moving into a new setting. An example of an ecological transition includes the beginning of school (Hook, 2009).

The ecological environment is composed of a number of variables associated with the individual, the processes, the contexts and the developmental factors. As seen in Figure 1 below, the contextual systems comprise a series of interrelated systems: the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, the macrosystem and the chronosystem. The child develops within the microsystem in the context of everyday

settings such as at home and at school. The microsystem is the complex set of relationships between the developing person and his or her immediate environment and usually consists of the parents, caregivers, siblings, friends and teachers. This complex set of relationships includes the connections amongst the various persons in the immediate setting (Hook, 2009) that create complex, but predictable, patterns of interaction. In the microsystem, there are basic factors influencing the relationships, such as roles and expectations, which in turn exert the greatest degree of influence over the child.

The next contextual subsystem is the mesosystem, which is formed when the developing person moves into a new setting (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The mesosystem comprises the interconnections between the microsystems – for example, interactions between home and school, or between family and peers. These connections enable networking and collaboration among the different parties and microsystems in which the child functions on a daily basis, without the child being directly involved in these systems, such as a parent's workplace, the community, the agencies or the activities of the school (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

The exosystem is described as consisting of both the formal and informal social settings that affect the developing person's life. The exosystems have an impact on the child's development and are considered to be significant in shaping support through transitions. The macrosystem relates to the important institutional patterns of beliefs, cultural settings and policies in a society. These include, for example, a nation's laws, rules, and traditions, and the customs and cultural traditions of a specific society.

The dimension of time, the chronsystm, also has a fundamental influence on the psychosocial development of children (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Time is important in two fundamental ways: understanding the pattern of social events and transition over the life-span, and the specific time in history. Events that happen in times of transition are very significant and influence the individual's psychosocial development. Time also refers to the unique socio-historical context of the developing individual and its influence at a particular time (for example socio-political values or cultural changes). In the present study, time is important because this is a

time of rapid socio-political change, raised expectations of rapid socio-political change and transformation, a technological age, a time of HIV/AIDS, and a time at which external and international funders are providing the necessary financial support to NGO's to offer ECD programmes.

To understand learning across the life spaces at home, school, community and neighbourhoods, Barron (2006) argues that a learning ecological framework has considerable influence in the learning process. A learning ecological framework refers to the spaces that provide opportunities for learning (Barron, 2006). The multidirectional spheres of learning therefore include spaces such as home, community, peers and schools where programmes can developmentally enhance the process of learning. Each context comprises a variety of activities and resources. The learning ecological framework draws on the Bronfenbrenner ecological perspective, which aims to articulate the interdependence between the child and the environmental variables in producing developmental changes.

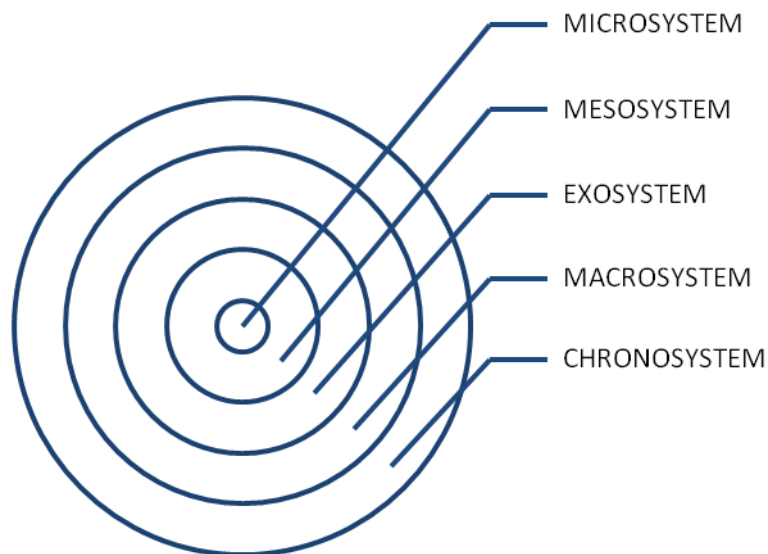


Figure 1: Outline of the Contextual Factors described in Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Framework (1979).

The ecological framework has been influential in the study of early childhood transitions and has an important bearing on the South African context. The Bronfenbrenner model suggests that developmental interventions should not only be limited to the level of the microsystem, but should extend holistically to take into account the other contextual variables. The ecological model allows for changes at

multiple levels and identifies possible agencies in the transition process, which positions children, families, communities and professionals as agents of change rather than subjects of transition factors outside their influence (Fabian & Dunlop, 2007).

Within this framework, school-preparation processes move their focus from within the home system to the wider context of the school environment. In this ecological model, school preparedness looks at the child through the influence of many contexts and the connections between home, community and school as a part of a broader, coherent framework linking early childhood development to the child's home and to primary schooling.

In planning effective transition programmes and preparing for school, children's development can be supported through various activities that actively involve children, parents and the local community, using play-based activities (Fabian & Dunlop, 2007).

2.4 School Preparedness

School entry is seen as one of the major events in the life of the child and therefore it is important that the child should be prepared and be ready for it. Preparedness for formal learning forms the basis for any future formal learning. School preparedness is a state of preparation for undertaking new experiences and activities such as those which the child will encounter in the school situation.

According to the White Paper 5 guidelines on early childhood (South African Department of Education 2001), there is strong evidence that the effects of what happens during the pre-natal period and during the earliest months and years of a child's life have consequences over the course of a whole lifetime. The kind of early care a child receives from parents, pre-school teachers and caregivers determines how a child learns and relates in school and life in general. It is during early care that a child develops all the key elements of emotional intelligence, namely confidence, curiosity, purposefulness, self-control, connectedness, capacity to communicate and

co-cooperativeness (South African Department of Education: White Paper 5, 2001 section 1, p. 8).

The early years are also critical for the acquisition of the concepts, skills and attitudes that lay the foundation for lifelong learning. These include the acquisition of language, perception-motor skills required for learning to read and write, basic numeracy concepts and skills, problem-solving skills and a love of learning. With quality ECD provision in South Africa, educational efficiency would improve, as children would acquire the basic concepts, skills and attitudes required for successful learning and development prior to or shortly after entering the system, thus reducing their chances of failure. (South African Department of Education: White Paper 5 section 1.2.2, 2001).

The gradual preparation of the child for school entry is a process which “begins at birth and which is dependent on both upbringing and development” (Reilly & Hofmeyer, 1983, p. 3). Developmental phases in the first years are significant for later success in school. From birth to the first year, the baby becomes increasingly independent. Through sensory-motor experiences, the infant processes information through his or her senses and motor experiences (Piaget, 1952). At this time, the holding environment has a significant impact on later development. The holding environment refers to the quality of the mother’s care (Winnicott, 1958). From one to three years of age, the toddler should have achieved a good level of motor abilities and experienced some growing sense of autonomy (Erikson, 1963). At the same time, he or she starts to develop language skills (Chomsky, 1959). From three to six years of age, substantial growth has occurred in gross and fine motor skills, as well as language and thought processing. Motor abilities are, in this phase, the primary vehicle of pleasurable learning, and the preschooler learns through his/her fine and gross motor achievements (Aucouturier, 2005). Language acquisition takes place at a notable speed. According to Chall and Mirsky (1978, p. 359), the cognitive life of a five-year old is characterised by “horizontal rather than vertical expansion”. The child’s experience and knowledge increase through a large variety of practical experiences.

A child who is in a stimulating and educational environment, where situations are offered and prepared for learning, is ready for school. Vygotsky (1978) suggests that school-preparedness does not just happen on its own, but it requires the involvement of the entire environment around the child, such as family, educators and teachers,

to prepare the child for school entry. The social or cultural context cannot be separated from cognitive development.

For Vygotsky,

(a) All higher mental functions are the essence of internalised relations of social order, a basis for the social structure of the individual (Vygotsky, 1997, p.106).

School preparedness implies a wide range of skills and behaviours related to the school situation. Generally speaking, school competencies include cognitive, language, motor, perceptual processing tasks, as well as attention, attitudes and interpersonal characteristics and most school preparedness models are based on assessing if the child has adequately reached a level of functioning needed for entering school (Department for International Development, 1999).

One particular area of the South African Revised National Curriculum Statement Policy (2005) - Life Orientation - is designed to develop skills, knowledge, values and attitudes that empower learners to make informed decisions and to achieve the following outcomes: health promotion, social development, personal development, physical development, orientation to the wider world.

The concept Life Orientation captures the essence of what this Learning Area Statement aims to achieve. It guides and prepares learners for life and its possibilities. Life Orientation specifically equips learners for meaningful and successful living in a rapidly changing and transforming society. (Revised National Curriculum Statement Policy 2005, p. 26)

Learning outcomes should ensure integration and progression in the development of concepts, skills and values; they should not prescribe content or method. The following learning outcomes are discussed and illustrated (Figure 2), according to the National Curriculum Statement Policy (2005, p. 30):

1. Health promotion: The child will be able to make informed decisions regarding personal, community and environmental health.
2. Social development: The learner is able to demonstrate an understanding of and commitment to constitutional rights and responsibilities and shows an understanding of diverse cultures and religions.

3. Personal development: The learner is able to use acquired life skills to achieve and extend personal potential to respond effectively to challenges in his/her world.
4. Physical development and movement: The learner is able to demonstrate an understanding of, and participate in activities that promote movement and physical development.
5. Orientation to the wider world: The learner is able to make informed decisions about life choices.

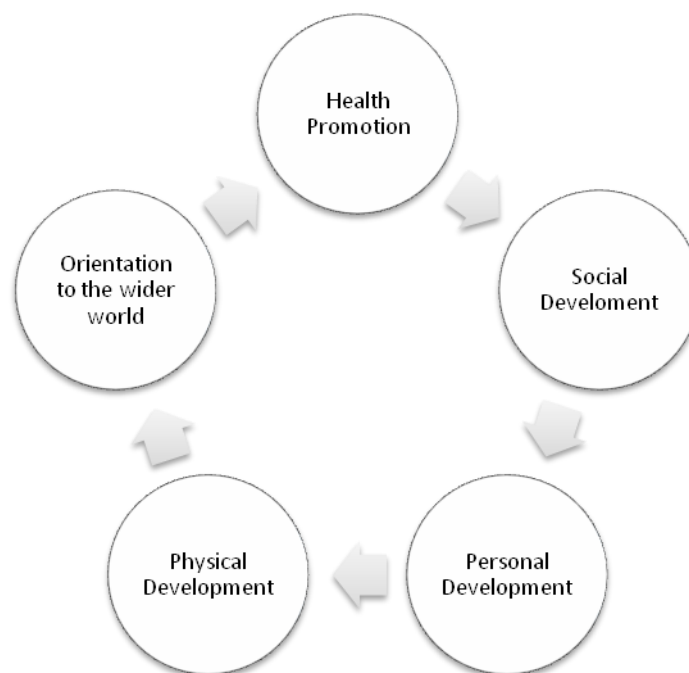


Figure 2: Life Orientation Outcomes identified in the Revised National Curriculum Statement (2005).

In order to consider preparedness as a maturity process, it is important to identify risk and protective factors that can bring change or might prevent some adverse outcomes. Various interventions have therefore been planned to reduce these risk factors. Interventions that might make a difference to adverse outcomes in early childhood may include ECD programmes, home visiting programmes, parenting programmes, and programmes for children with developmental delay or disability.

Different events and factors are intrinsic and extrinsic to the child and play an important role in school preparedness. Some factors such as interest, motivation, experience, personality and intelligence are regarded as intrinsic, and factors such as family and environment are considered extrinsic (Derbyshire, 1991). A school-prepared child has reached a level of developmental maturity that involves both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Between learning and maturity there is a strong relationship; learning is dependent on the level of maturity achieved by the child and both factors are interdependent. There is a set time for acquiring certain skills, but if this process starts too early or too late it can be detrimental for the child.

However, it would be meaningless to instruct the child in certain skills if he/she has not yet reached an appropriate level of maturity. Moore and Moore (1975, p. 34) write about school preparedness as follows:

Early childhood education must take into account the development of the child's brain, vision, hearing, perception, emotions, sociability, family and school relationships and physical growth. For each of these factors, there appears to be a level of maturity at which most children can, without serious risk, leave normal homes and begin typical school tasks.

As these authors suggest, school preparedness is an encompassing concept that can be viewed from different perspectives. However, a common observation regards the pre-school years as the most important years in the child's life; they serve as a gradual preparation of the child for school entry.

Informal preparatory programmes for school-preparedness are often employed in community centres in the different provinces, in order to assist the child who is not yet ready for school to become better prepared. In lieu of what has been discussed above, these programmes should take into account the totality of the child and therefore focus on the physical, perceptual, cognitive, linguistic, affective and social.

2.5 The Psychomotor Education Programme (PMEP)

The overall purpose of the PMEP was to establish a sound basis for transition into formal schooling for the children in the Dalton area. PMEP is a psycho-educational

programme designed to enhance the psychomotor development of the child. The programme is based on the holistic approach to the development of the child; its theory is grounded in a specific, non-directive child-centered theory, to accompany the different stages of development.

In July 2009, the Dalton Trust implemented the PMEP in the Dalton Community resource centre. For one year, in the weekly lessons, about hundred children between the ages of three and six played with specially designed equipment, which was meant to enhance specific experiences. The children participating in the programme were encouraged to use non-violent ways of communication in order to solve conflicts with their peers. In this safe, informal environment, children were helped to become more creative and autonomous in their thinking.

The PMEP is based on the Aucouturier psychomotor practice (Aucouturier, 2005), which is an innovative psycho-educational programme. The programme originated in France in the seventies (Formenti, 2009) and was widely implemented in many countries worldwide, first as a therapeutic intervention and later as a preventative educational programme. Aucouturier (2005) explains that prevention should be an integral part of the preparedness process. He describes prevention as more effective and economical than repair. The aims of the psychomotor programme are particularly relevant for children until the age of seven and in contexts of adversity. The objectives of the psychomotor education intervention are described below:

a) The emotional tone experience

In the early relationship with his or her mother or primary caregiver, each child forms unique experiences which are fundamental for his or her emotional development. The early experiences form an “engram” (Aucouturier, 2005, p. 22) and are reflected in the way the child behaves and uses his or her body. An “engram” is described by Aucouturier as a permanent alteration of neural tissue, which roots in the child’s memory, from early experiences. Through interaction with the group and the educators, the child enhances his or her self-confidence, and learns to cope better with his or her own anxieties. Special attention is given to the process of enabling effective and non-violent communication.

b) The development of the sensory-motor pleasure

The pleasurable experiences through activities in which the body acts as a mediator between the internal and the external world, are considered to form a body scheme – a structure essential for the learning processes. This can be achieved by fully using the sensory channels. Aucouturier (2005) sees the human being as a unity between the physical and psychological components. The child forms its knowledge of the outside world from its emotional foundation and its pleasurable sensory experience. The child integrates his or her experience through three parameters: other people, space, and objects.

c) The experience of the symbolical process

The psychomotor programme supports the development of the symbolization process, by taking the child from “the pleasure of moving to the pleasure of thinking” (Aucouturier, 2005 p. 12). During play, many situations offer the ideal scenario for dealing with reality; playing symbolically is an enjoyable and repetitive experience which leads to the understanding and strengthening of the inner world.

d) The decentralization process

By enhancing creativity and moving away from stereotyped ways of solving problems, the psychomotor programme promotes the process of decentralization, so that the child will not only focus on itself but will learn to adopt different views and to interact with peers and adults in a more competent and confident manner (Aucouturier, 2005).

The PMEP's aims are meant to achieve independence, responsibility, self-confidence, self-discipline and respect for others and for themselves through the different processes described above (Aucouturier, 2005). These enable the children to be better prepared for the formal learning in school. The outcomes of the programme are often reported by the parents and by the caregivers as noticeable, particularly in the area of self-control and self-discipline. The PMEP supports the children in the context of their families and in the wider community. A systemic evaluation of this programme is now required.

2.5.1 The Role of PMEP in the Development of the Pre-Primary Child

PMEP relates to early childhood transitions to school by focusing on supporting the development of pre-primary children through play and by integrating the learning outcomes described in the Life Orientation Statement into each lesson. As can be seen in Figure 3 below, the outcomes of the PMEP share the same aims as the ones described in the Life Orientation Statement.

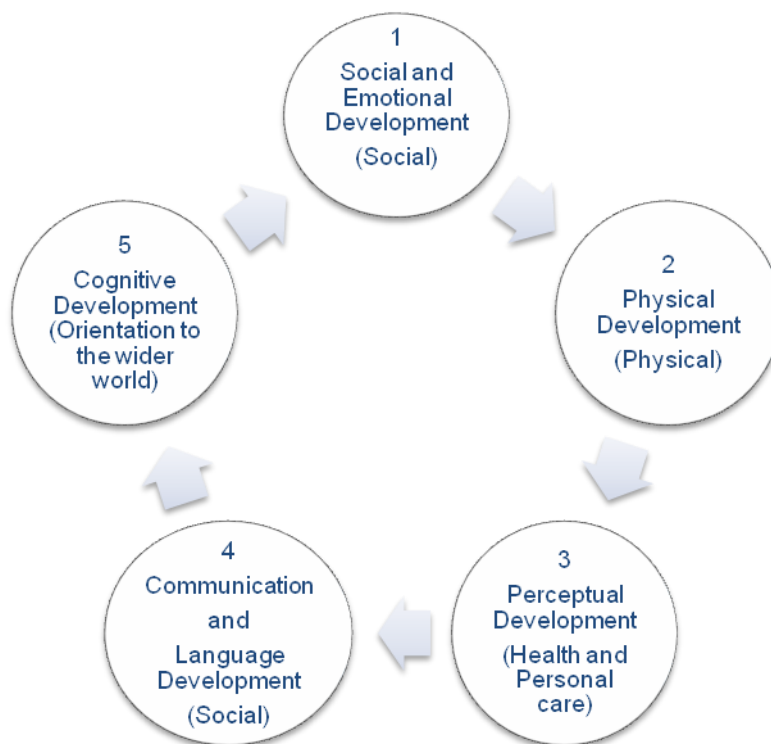


Figure 3: Integration of PMEP Outcomes and Learning Outcomes.

The socio-emotional state of the child determines their physical activities and the sensory integration follows the child's emotional development (Integration of Learning Outcome 1 in Figure 3). Self-control of the body comes through self control of the emotions (Aucouturier, 2005). The child learns to adjust to everyday challenges and develops an internal locus of control, which ultimately leads to resilience and self confidence, and builds positive identities (Garmezy, 1991).

Physical activity is not the focus of PMEP; it is the vehicle through which emotions are explored. Efficient, precise movement can only occur when emotions are

focused (Aucouturier, 2005). PMEP identifies the emotions and how the body expresses these emotions (Integration of Learning Outcome 2, Figure 3).

Perceptual activities are regarded as instruments to feelings and thoughts: through the sensory channels, the child develops a sense of agency, regarding him/herself and his/her needs. He/she learns to cope appropriately, to self-care and to become independent (Formenti, 2009). By becoming aware of his/her own body, the child soon learns the importance of protecting it, enhancing self-respect and protecting him/herself from physical and psychological abuse (Integration of Learning Outcome 3, Figure 3).

In addition, language development is enhanced by promoting verbal and non-verbal communication through expression of feelings and emotions, thus enhancing vocabulary and concept development through explanation of thoughts and ideas, using open-ended questions to encourage problem solving and creativity ((Watts, Cockcroft & Duncan, 2009). Non-verbal communication is also encouraged through mimic and body gestures (Integration of Learning Outcome 4, Figure 3).

Finally, cognitive development (Aucouturier, 2005) is augmented by the educator by fostering decentralization, facilitating symbolic play, stimulating communication with others, and providing opportunities for critical thinking to take place (Integration of Learning Outcome 4, Figure 3).

2.5.2 Phases of Psychomotor Development

Evidence from neuroscience (Brazelton, 1997), longitudinal cohort studies and population studies have highlighted early childhood as a period when the human organism responds to the environment with great malleability to affect substantially the architecture of the brain. In fact, the child's brain is plastic and responsive during the first years of life and identities are critically shaped by the influence of significant others and the immediate environment experienced in the early years (Sousa, 2001). Above all, research proves that the young brain thrives best in a consistent and reliable socio-emotional environment (Fonagy et al., 1994). From the symbiosis with the initial caregiver of the early stages of infancy, the child becomes autonomous

and unique, and this process depends mostly upon exploration and interplay with significant others (Saxe & Baron-Cohen, 2007).

During the first six years there is an increasingly close interaction between motor achievement and emotional development. Brazelton (1997) explains that as the child opens up into the world of independence he/she discovers new areas of play, as well as he/she reaches developmental milestones. As the child develops independence from the caregiver, he/she enters into many areas of developmental play. According to this, Aucouturier (2005) defines five phases of development:

1. Emotional tone experiences, which link the emotions to the tone of the body. These experiences are linked to the first interactions with the primary caregiver and provide a calming and reassuring play.
2. Sensory-motor play, which links the senses to the motor experiences, enhancing pleasure of movement.
3. Pre-symbolic play, where the inner world is expressed into the outer world through existential play.
4. Symbolic play, where the external world is internalized through fantasy, in a form of make-believe play.
5. Abstract play, which is the beginning of the development of cognitive concepts

These experiences and opportunities perceived in early childhood are crucial points of learning. The PMEP has integrated all the above experiences in the programme implemented at the Dalton Trust, in order to achieve physical, emotional, social and mental wellbeing, and to stimulate learning and creativity.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has drawn together different perspectives which are relevant to the development of the child, and offered bridges in considering the psycho-social contexts during a period of transition. The theory of cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1997) explained how the child acquires cognitive abilities and reaches a level of symbolic thinking. Particular attention was given to the theory underpinning the PMEP (Aucouturier, 2005), which arches over the previously explained frameworks and considers the learning outcomes in the period preceding school entrance.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research study used a broadly descriptive, qualitative approach (Babbie & Mouton, 2005). Through qualitative research methods, this study evaluates the outcomes of the Psychomotor Programme at the Dalton resource centre in KwaZulu-Natal with regard to promoting school preparation.

In this study, two focus groups were conducted in order to collect information regarding the effects of the PMEP on children in preparation for school. Careful consideration was given to the sampling techniques and the method of data collection and analysis. Ethical considerations guided the research in each phase, providing a respectful and appropriate way of conducting this study. Finally, reliability and validity as applied in qualitative research were taken into consideration.

3.1 Evaluation Research Design

Evaluation research was used in this study to assess the community-based PMEP for children between the ages of three and six. Evaluation focuses on community and social development (Dalton, Elias, & Wandersman, 2007), as a method within the field of community psychology, and draws on many different theories of social development (Posavac & Carey, 2003). In essence, “evaluation research is concerned with establishing whether social programmes are needed, effective and likely to be used” (Potter, 2006, p. 410).

Different types of evaluation can be conducted, depending on the phase of development of the programme, on the object being evaluated, and on the purpose of the evaluation. Potter (2006) describes the following forms of evaluation that are commonly used in social programmes: (i) needs assessments to determine a particular area of need which requires intervention; (ii) programme planning that focuses on the process of programme plans, to determine whether the intervention is feasible; (iii) formative evaluation which is used to monitor the implementation of the programme and identifies aspects of the programme that are working well, aspects that are problematic, and aspects of the programme that require improvement; (iv)

summative evaluation has a retrospective focus and examines the indicators of the intervention impact of the programme.

This research is a summative evaluation of the PMEP used by the Dalton Trust over a one year period, from June 2009 to June 2010. Summative evaluation techniques have been chosen for this study in order to assess the appropriateness of the programme to enhance emotional, physical, personal and cognitive development in preparation for formal schooling. Summative evaluation has a retrospective focus, which considers programme outcomes. It is a form of evaluation that is applied at the end of a programme and implies a judgment (Fitz-Gibbon & Morris, 1987). The summative evaluation procedure considers what has been achieved since the inception of the programme. This research includes an evaluation from the perspective of the family facilitators at the Dalton resource centre.

Feuerstein (1989) describes the process of evaluation as circular (Figure 4). The first step in planning for evaluation is to decide when the evaluation should happen and how to evaluate. The objectives are decided; the methods are chosen and used to collect the data required for the evaluation. The information and data are analyzed, discussed and presented. The final step looks at the ways in which the evaluation results could be used in the future.

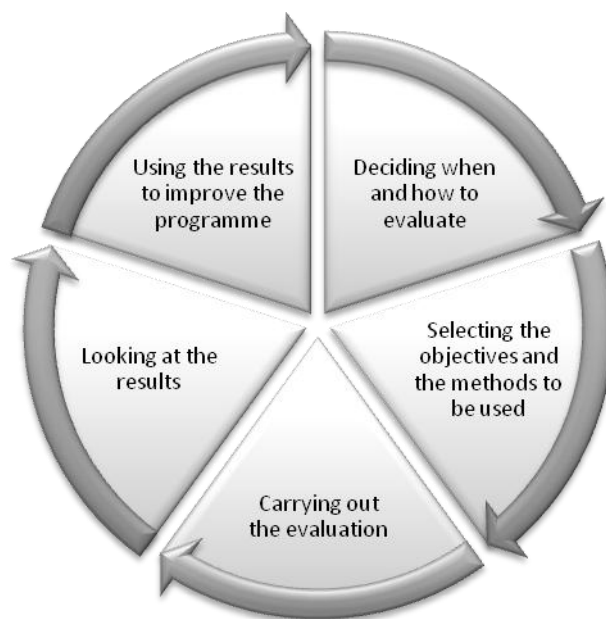


Figure 4: Evaluation process according to Feuerstein (1989).

One of the goals in an evaluation study is to open up possibilities for psychologists to engage directly with community members and to provide feedback to the relevant audiences, such the community itself, administrators and possible sponsors.

In South Africa, programme evaluation has been widely applied in educational settings (Potter & Kruger, 2001) and this particular early childhood intervention required such an evaluation. One reason for the wide use of programme evaluation is that it is often required by donors and funding agencies in order to assess the impact of the funded project.

3.2 Research Question

The research question was to explore if the PMEP had successfully met the desired outcome of better preparing children for entry into formal schooling. The objective had been to assess if the Revised National Curriculum Statement standards (South African Department of Education, 2005) had been met, but as this would have been outside of the experience of the participants, it was decided to work within a familiar framework by using a SWOT analysis and then to see if the factors defined with the Revised National Curriculum Statement had been spontaneously mentioned by the family facilitators (FFs). This precaution was necessary as the FFs were an integral part of the PMEP, and thus were not independent in the manner in which they evaluated the PMEP, even though they were encouraged to be open and honest in their feedback so as to improve future implementation of the PMEP.

3.3 Focus Group Research

Focus group research allows for a more emic approach (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1998); thus, an insider perspective is used to determine the outcomes, without being influenced by the researcher's perspective. The purpose of using a focus group approach in this study was to obtain specific information about the topic of interest and insight into what family facilitators and teachers thought about the PMEP.

Focus groups were set up in order to explore specific information relevant to this research. Focus groups were carefully designed in terms of size, purpose,

composition, and procedures. Krueger (1994, p. 6) describes a focus groups as “a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment”, where participants feel comfortable to discuss areas of interest, without feeling pressurized to make decisions, while being encouraged to express different points of view. Focus groups offer a more natural setting than an individual interview, as focus group participants “are influencing and influenced by others – just as they are in real life” (Krueger 1994, p. 19).

The main advantage of the focus group research is the opportunity to generate a large quantity of information in a relatively short time. Group discussion provides evidence about similarities and differences in people’s opinions, in contrast to separate statements from each interviewee. In this research, groups were formed to produce a range of views and opinions and ultimately to produce insightful information.

The diagram below (Figure 5) summarises the progression in the planning of focus group research. After establishing the research purpose and formulating the research question, participants are chosen and a focus group discussion follows, moderated by the researcher. It is essential, prior to the discussion, to have ethical clearance and organize the practical aspects of the focus group.



Figure 5: Steps and decisions taken by the researcher in the planning of a focus group (Litoselliti, 2003).

3.4 Design Validity

Durrheim (2006) argues that, in order for a design to be judged sound, it should be valid. This means that a research design should identify and incorporate possible

alternative explanations for the results obtained. In this study, certain factors could have influenced the outcomes of the evaluation. To enable a true consideration of the full range of impacts of the programme, the SWOT system of analysis was used so that positive and negative aspects could be elicited in a format that was familiar to the study participants, as has been discussed above.

According to Stewart and Shamdasani (1998), focus group research results in data that have ecological validity. In other words, data is expressed in the participants' own words and during the course of the focus group, participants are able to explain or elaborate on their responses.

3.5 Design Reliability

Silverman (1993) points out that, in order to achieve reliability, the researcher must accurately document the procedures followed and the observations made. Furthermore, by engaging in a constant process of reflection, the researcher attempts to achieve reliability by minimising bias as far as possible (Babbie & Mouton, 2005). To ensure reliability, accurate records should be kept and the researcher should engage in a process of reflection throughout the research. In the current study, this process was accompanied by discussion with the researcher's supervisor and other colleagues.

To ensure the reliability of the transcripts, two independent transcriptions were performed. In the first, the focus group discussion was transcribed 'verbatim' by an independent coder, i.e. without any grammatical change or any other substitution. Every word and expression was transcribed, including also moments of silence or reflection within the group. The second transcription was augmented by the notes of the researcher which provided additional information on how the focus group was organized, and, as such, this represented a more comprehensive recording of the data.

3.6 Generalisability

In qualitative research with small samples, generalisability is not based on the principles of randomness. Rather, consideration should be given to how this programme might be similar to other programmes using PMEP in similar rural environments. The results are useful in identifying features unique to this group of participants, and could then become a further focus for research in the area of child development.

3.7 Sampling

In the context of this study, the process of participant selection is referred to as the sampling process (2006). In order to gain information about the outcomes of the PMEP, the sample group needed to have specific characteristics. Therefore, the method of sampling was purposive in nature. This non-random method of sampling was chosen because it focused on the specific topic of interest. The goal of the purposive sampling used in this research was to identify information-rich participants with similar kinds of experience (Litoselliti, 2003).

In this instance, the family facilitators from the Dalton Community who had participated in the programme and worked closely with the children in the PMEP were identified as suitable participants for the first focus group. The second focus group consisted of foundation phase teachers from the local primary school. This focus group aimed to assess the foundation phase educators' impressions of the level of preparedness of the children who attended the PMEP at the resource centre the previous year and who were currently attending Grade 1 at the local primary school.

3.8 Focus Group Participants

To determine the composition of the focus groups, two considerations were essential: the participants' comfort in discussing the topic and the choice of questions to promote a productive discussion. It was important that the participants were familiar to each other, thus allowing the conversation to focus on discussing

relevant issues related to the research questions, instead of spending time getting to know each other.

In choosing the composition of the focus groups, homogeneity was also a key factor. In this study, participants were similar with respect to age, gender, education level, ethnicity and occupation (Table 1). Homogeneity on demographic characteristics as well as familiarity with the topic of interest increased the compatibility of the focus group. All the participants were female, *isiZulu* mother-tongue educators and living in a rural setting. There were ten family facilitators in the PMEP. However, only seven were present at the focus group, due to unforeseen circumstances, namely the sudden death of one of the family facilitators and the sickness of two other facilitators. The Dalton community itself chose co-ordinators and family facilitators for the implementation of the Psychomotor Education Programme and identified families and children to take part in the programme. Through the formation of a committee, family facilitators from the community were identified and recruited to work with the children. Family facilitators underwent specialized training in which they upgraded their knowledge and expertise in Early Childhood Development, while recognition was given to local knowledge systems and the FFs' prior knowledge gained through a Level 1 ECD qualification.

Participant	Gender	Ethnicity	Age	Educational level	Occupation
Participant 1	Female	Zulu	20-30 yrs	ECD Diploma Level 1	Family Facilitator
Participant 2	Female	Zulu	20-30 yrs	ECD Diploma Level 1	Family Facilitator
Participant 3	Female	Zulu	20-30 yrs	ECD Diploma Level 1	Family Facilitator
Participant 4	Female	Zulu	30-40 yrs	ECD Diploma Level 1	Family Facilitator
Participant 5	Female	Zulu	30-40 yrs	ECD Training Level 1	Family Facilitator
Participant 6	Female	Zulu	40-50 yrs	ECD Diploma Level 1	Family Facilitator
Participant 7	Female	Zulu	40-50 yrs	ECD Diploma Level 1	Family Facilitator

Table 1: Focus 1 Group Composition.

As a second group, six teachers from the local primary school were asked to participate in the focus group. However, at the meeting, only two teachers were present and the focus group only lasted about twenty minutes. As a result, this focus group was considered to have been an unreliable source of relevant data. It was

apparent that the teachers did not yet know the names of the children in their class (despite it being August) and so could not reliably identify which children had participated in the PMEP the previous year and which had not. A group of children passed in the passage and the teachers called for them to come, and each teacher gave completely different descriptors of the four children in the group, and did not know the names of the children in the group, despite them being Grade 1 and Grade 2 children whom they teach.

3.9 Focus Group Protocol

Before starting the focus group discussion, the researcher developed a protocol (see Appendix H), which consisted of the procedures and open-ended questions for the focus groups. SWOT analysis is a planning tool used to understand the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) involved in the project.

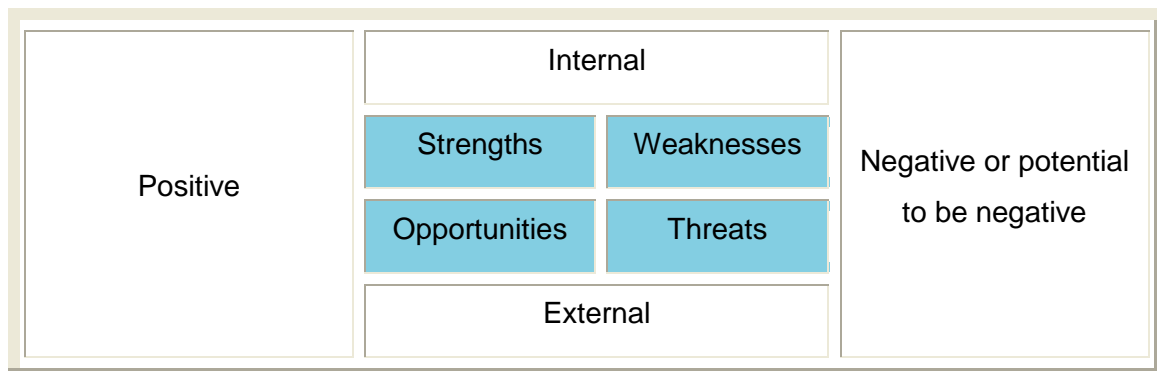


Table 2: SWOT Analysis

This evaluation question format was familiar to the study participants and was used as the data collection instrument in the focus group discussion to enable the consideration of the full range of impacts of the programme, including positive and negative aspects.

Strengths were seen in this study as positive tangible and intangible inputs, while weakness were considered factors that detracted from the ability to attain the desired goals. The opportunities were seen as attractive factors that represent the reason for

the PMEP to exist and develop. Potential threats included factors beyond the programme's control, which could place the programme at risk.

3.10 Data Collection

Data collection took place within the community at the place where the PMEP was being implemented. The researcher conducted the focus groups. After transcribing and checking the accuracy of the transcription, categorisation of the data and systematic thematic analysis occurred.

The researcher chose a semi-structured questioning approach during the focus groups, where the emphasis was on the interaction among the group participants. The participants were able to use both *isiZulu* and English languages; therefore, the focus group could be conducted in English, which was the common language between the researcher and the participants. The researcher supplied the topics relevant to the research question, which were followed by discussion, facilitated by a number of predetermined and carefully chosen open-ended questions (Appendix H). The task of the researcher was also to keep the discussion on track without diminishing the flow of the conversation and to ensure that all the members of the group contributed to the discussion.

In order to avoid the potential for the interaction within the focus group to be controlled by dominant members of the group (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1998) while more reserved people would be hesitant to speak, the researcher ensured that during the discussion each member of the focus group was given a chance to speak. According to Morgan (1997), another threat to the focus group process could be that the facilitator's presence may have affected group interaction and thus the resulting data. To ensure that the researcher did not intentionally influence the outcomes, helping the participants to find appropriate answers, and to avoid any bias, the researcher asked her supervisor to be present during the focus group discussions to monitor and to guard against the introduction of leading questions or cues.

3.10.1 The Role of the Focus Group Facilitator

In this research, it was decided that the researcher was the best person to facilitate the focus group because she understood the topic and had previously conducted focus groups. In addition, she was familiar with open-ended questions, and group dynamics. In the role of the facilitator, she had to be neutral and non-judgemental, encouraging both positive and negative comments without communicating approval or disapproval, while withholding her personal opinion. She also took responsibility for setting up the room and the necessary equipment for the session, and for the timing and recording of the discussion.

During the focus group, the role of the facilitator was to maintain the group's focus and ensure that the key questions were discussed. The facilitator used a pre-planned script of questions, structured to obtain specific information (see appendix H). In addition to verbal communication, the facilitator ensured that non-verbal communication was also noted.

In this focus group, the facilitator was in the role of an internal evaluator. An internal evaluator is a person who already has knowledge about the programme and knows how the programme functions, its objectives, strengths and weaknesses (Feuerstein, 1989). As an internal evaluator, the facilitator was familiar with the PMEP, familiar with its staff and community members, and had opportunities to communicate with the Dalton Education Trust committee. On the other hand, an external evaluator has an objective look on the programme, and is not personally involved. However, the researcher decided to be the evaluator of this study in order not to pose anxieties or disruption in the community.

Both advantages and disadvantages of internal and external evaluators are presented in the table below (Table 3).

External Evaluator	Internal Evaluator
Has a neutral look on the programme.	Knows the programme well.
Not personally involved, objective.	Personally involved, less objective.

May not understand the programme or the people involved.	Is familiar with and understand the programme.
May cause anxiety as participants are not sure about his or her motivations to conduct the study.	Poses no threats or anxieties or disruption. Final recommendation may appear less threatening.

Table 3: Some advantages and disadvantages of internal and external evaluators in focus groups (Feuerstein, 1989)

3.10.2 Procedure for Focus Group 1: Family Facilitators

The researcher began the focus group discussion by welcoming and thanking the participants and offering an introduction. The participants were provided with all the information regarding the study, the aims and rationale and the way the study was going to be conducted. The participants were informed that a tape recorder was to be used to ensure that the researcher did not miss any of the comments and that she had reliable information for data analysis. As Kvale (1996) argues, tape recording frees the facilitator up to concentrate on the topic and dynamics of the discussion. It was important to assure participants that their contributions were anonymous and confidential. The researcher further explained the voluntary nature of their participation.

Ethical procedures were followed and each member of the focus group signed an informed consent form and each member was individually asked whether she was willing to participate in the discussion (see Appendices A and B). Although the children did not directly participate, the researcher felt that the parents and the community had a right to know that the evaluation was being conducted and so asked that a letter of informed consent and a letter to the authority were given. The focus group was conducted at the Dalton resource centre and it was arranged in a way that the participants could meet in a familiar and non-threatening setting. Children were playing in the resource centre whilst the focus group took place.

The facilitator closed the focus group by thanking the participants and assuring them that their contribution would be used in the future in an anonymous manner and feedback would be given at a later stage. Participants were also provided with refreshments after the focus group. The first focus group session lasted for two hours.

3.10.3 Procedure for Focus Group 2: Teachers

The second area of interest concerned the Grade 1 teachers' perceptions of how the PMEP had impacted on the children who were currently in Grade 1 at the local primary school. These teachers were sampled on the basis that they were teaching children who had previously participated in the PMEP, and who were now in Grade 1 at this school. They were sampled because they were not involved in the programme and could therefore give an external opinion on the preparedness of the children who had been through the programme.

Ethical procedures were followed and the teachers of the focus group were previously informed regarding the nature of the study and consent was sought and given by local authorities (see appendices E and F). The focus group took place at the local primary school and the researcher was accompanied by her supervisor. An attempt was made to establish a formal focus group. However, this group did not show interest and cooperation, showing reservations in supplying information. The researcher and the supervisor were not given a chance to conduct the focus group in a confidential setting; instead, they were received in a classroom, where at the same time pupils were still present after the lessons were finished for the day. No provision was made by the teachers to allow the discussion to happen in a separate setting. This apparent resistance could have been caused by the teachers' lack of information regarding the PMEP conducted at the Dalton resource centre. Although the teachers were previously informed about the researcher and her supervisor's visit, they seemed to be not prepared to accommodate the focus group discussion.

Four areas of interest according to the SWOT analysis were nonetheless asked, but the researcher could not gather any reliable results regarding the PMEP. The teachers appeared confused about the nature of the subject discussed and no clear

information could be gathered. The participants appeared nervous and not willing to discuss the topic of interest, although the researcher and her supervisor tried to elicit information in a kind, non-threatening, and respectful manner. The major concern was the inability of the teachers to identify specific learners in a consistent manner. Therefore, the results of this focus group could not be used for research purposes, as they were not reliable. This informal focus group discussion took only twenty minutes to be completed.

3.11 Data Analysis

An interpretive thematic analysis was used to analyse the data and report patterns (themes) within the data. According to Terre Blanche et al. (1999), a thematic analysis involves six phases. The first phase consists of familiarizing oneself with the data by transcribing, reading and re-reading, and noting down initial ideas. The following step is to generate initial codes, which are interesting features of the data, in a systematic fashion, across the entire data set and collating data relevant to each code. By collating codes into potential themes and reviewing them, a thematic 'map' of the analysis is generated. The ongoing analysis aims to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story, generating clear definitions and names for each theme. Finally a report is produced, relating the analysis back to the research question and literature review.

Multiple readings of the transcribed text were necessary to ensure understanding, thorough immersion in the data. All information that fitted a specific pattern was identified and placed within the corresponding category. The next step in the thematic analysis was to combine and organize related patterns into sub-themes. This was done using a 'bottom-up approach', where the data collected was used to determine the organizing themes rather than applying preconceived themes to the data (Terre Blanche et al., 2002). The themes used the language of the participants. A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question. Terre Blanche et al. (2002) noted that too few themes could restrict the interpretation, while too many themes could confuse it. Therefore, the researcher developed main themes, which were later divided into various subthemes.

Themes emerged from the participants' comments were combined to form a comprehensive picture of their collective experience. Once the themes had been established and the literature had been studied, the researcher was ready to formulate theme statements and to develop a written account of the interpretation of the data studied, as suggested by Terre Blanche et al. (2002).

3.12 Ethical Considerations

Careful consideration of the ethical implications of the research was taken at every stage of the research. The researcher developed methods to protect the participants from any potential distressing situation. Three principles were fundamental in conducting the focus group, namely autonomy, nonmaleficence and beneficence (Wassenaar, 2006).

3.12.1 Autonomy

Prior to the focus group, the researcher ensured that informed consent was given by each member of the group and participant withdrawal was permitted at any stage. The researcher informed the participants that their anonymity was guaranteed in the transcription of the focus group discussion. Letters addressing the issue of consent as well as outlining the aims and the rationale of the research were sent to the family facilitators, parents, school teachers, local authorities and to the Dalton Trust. The letters were written in both English and *isiZulu* language (see appendices A, B, C, D, E, F, G), and the translations were independently checked to ensure accuracy.

3.12.2 Non-maleficence

The principle of non-maleficence required that the research should inflict no harm on the participants (Wassenaar, 2006). To guarantee this, the researcher made sure that the participants were not exposed to possible danger and protected by any harmful consequences. This involved assuring them that their comments would remain confidential and would not filter back to the people who employed them as Family Facilitators.

3.12.3 Beneficence

The principle of beneficence requires that the research yields benefits to the research participants (Wassenaar, 2006). By providing feedback about the outcomes of the PMEP, the researcher ensured quality in delivering an educational service to the community (feedback procedures can be found in Chapter Six).

These ethical guidelines provided a systematic framework to guide the researcher in the assessment of the information.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

The first section is a descriptive report of the findings of this study, and how they have been analysed. Chapter Five presents the researcher's interpretation of the findings in relation to theory.

A combination of SWOT and thematic analysis is used in this chapter. The results of the SWOT analysis are presented below, according to the perceptions of the FFs regarding the impact of the PMEP on the families, children, school and themselves. Codes and themes are then identified and presented in the following tables.

4.1 SWOT Analysis Results

Table 4 below shows a schematic overview of the results. The family facilitators were asked about their opinion regarding the effectiveness of the programme on the families, the family facilitators themselves, the children and the school. Outcomes of the four focus group discussion topics are presented according to SWOT analysis categories, summarized by the researcher (Table 4). The SWOT analysis gave a comprehensive overview of the topics of interest and was familiar to the participants. The analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) made it possible to describe each outcome systematically.

	Families	Family Facilitators	Children	School
Strengths	Parents recognized benefits in children regarding them being more active, healthier and more aware of social rules.	FFs felt confident, happy and enthusiastic in delivering the PMEP. FFs had a role as facilitators between PMEP, families and social networks. FFs appreciated the PMEP resources at the DET resource centre.	Children developed the following: self-confidence, self-care, non-violent and effective conflict resolution, efficient communication skills and social skills, through respect of rules, themselves and others, self-control, creativity and autonomy.	Not assessed.
Weaknesses	Parents recognised poverty as a negative primary factor, which had many consequences. Lack of food, lack of hygiene and lack of resources in households led to consequent embarrassment in sending children to the DET resource centre (children without lunchboxes and not washed with soap).	Inefficient communication styles among FFs could affect the quality of their work.	Children were not prepared in literacy and numeracy.	School had different communication styles, which did not match with what children learnt previously in the PMEP. There was no continuity to support transition. Schools were not aware of innovative programmes, such as PMEP.
Opportunities	Parents would have liked to see PMEP continuing into primary school.	FFs would have liked to become agents of change and continuity between systems. FFs would have liked to expand PMEP in more communities.	In the PMEP children had access to many resources to become agents of change, by learning about themselves and others.	Schools did not seem to support and promote opportunities in a systemic perspective, which included encouraging experiences in early childhood.
Threats	By not sending children to the resource centre, children missed out on the PMEP.	FFs expressed concerns regarding their health and about deaths in the families. There were also not enough FFs to serve the wider community.	Children did not receive continuity once they entered school and they were confronted with traditional methods of teaching.	The PMEP outcomes were not recognised and supported.

Table 4: SWOT Analysis

4.2 Thematic Analysis: Coding

The codes that emerged in the SWOT analysis (Table 5) can be summarized as follows:

Voices of the Participants	Codes
<i>I think every child needs to be prepared for school</i>	Importance of school preparedness
<i>Their minds are getting widely, opened widely</i>	Cognitive stimulation
<i>They are learning communication skills</i>	Social skills
<i>They learn to do things for themselves</i>	Autonomy
<i>They learn the rules ... they tell each other – no, don't hurt me, I don't like that</i>	Control of emotions, learning to become assertive
<i>The aggression is becoming less...it is about to finish</i>	Non-violent communication, learning to solve conflicts
<i>Children are active...a good thing a good thing</i>	Physical stimulation
<i>The parents say the children every time remind the rules</i>	Conflict resolution
<i>In PMEP we have learnt many things, especially the cards</i>	Capacity building
<i>I am feeling happy</i>	Capacity building, positive environment
<i>The child there at home is sick, here he becomes happier...and there is no sickness anymore</i>	Health promotion
<i>Here we do the PMEP, but at school there is nothing</i>	No continuity between ECD programme and school

<p><i>They won't carry the same non violent communication because nobody is responsible for the rules.</i></p> <p><i>The other children at school don't know the rules.</i></p>	No continuity in communication and social rules
<p><i>We think they (children) need to learn how to write...name, surname, abc...up to z...</i></p>	PMEP did not conventionally teach literacy competencies
<p><i>Parents feel pressurized to send the children to the resource centre clean...and with lunch boxes</i></p>	Effect of poverty on preparedness
<p><i>If it is cold, they won't send the children</i></p>	External factors, such as weather can affect school preparedness
<p><i>PMEP is well to me...in every way</i></p>	FFs felt confident and happy
<p><i>It is nice to come here with the children</i></p>	Positive environment
<p><i>In Grade 1 they will miss the toys</i></p>	Lack of resources

<i>We are lacking the communication...complaining maybe sending the bad rumours</i>	Lack of communication amongst FFs
<i>It is difficult if I am sick or if somebody in the family passed away</i>	FFs' vulnerability to cope with adversities
<i>They will be non-violent children</i>	Non-violent communication Mediation of conflicts
<i>PMEP help the children to be non-violent and non-competitive</i>	Mediation Non-competitive Self-decision
<i>They think before they act</i>	Planning
<i>They become self-confident.</i>	Self-confidence
<i>You need toys and things for them to play</i>	Emphasis on available resources (due to the age of the children)
<i>Some families don't have food; they won't send the children, because other children could laugh at them</i>	Family exposed to embarrassment
<i>Some families don't have food we help them to the social worker or to get food parcels</i>	Networking system

Table 5: Codes

4.3 Thematic Analysis: Themes

Themes have been analysed and matched to the learning outcomes in the following table.

Learning Outcomes	Themes
Health promotion	Children became healthier by being active and participating in the PMEP
Social development	Communication skills improved through non-violent communication mode
Personal development	Children applied what they learn in PMEP in their life, forming positive identities and becoming active agents of change
Physical development	Children became active by interacting and discovering new ways of communicating. They became more creative in their non-verbal expression
Orientation to the wider world	Children were seen in a systemic framework; the PMEP encouraged children to apply what they learnt in the wider community, such as family, community and later in school. They became inquisitive and interested in their environment.

Table 6: Themes

CHAPTER FIVE: PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This discussion unpacks the findings of this research in the light of the theory reviewed in Chapter Two. In the South African context, education plays a key role in determining the quality of the outcomes regarding success in school. Periods of transition are particularly important and need consideration. Transitions determine the level of success in the following phase of life and are determined by the context in which the child lives.

The aim of this study was to explore whether the children who participated in the PMEP had achieved the learning outcomes of the Revised National Curriculum Statement, in other words, whether they had achieved preparedness and an ability to handle the transition into the school environment.

This evaluation was based on the reports of the Family Facilitators, collected during the focus group discussion. The original intention of the study was to use a second source of data collection, namely the first phase teachers, which would have provided a second opinion on the PMEP outcomes. However, as mentioned above, only one group's data was used as part of this evaluation. The results and the discussion are combined in this chapter.

This research study argues that participation in this programme promoted socio-emotional, as well as cognitive development in the short term and prepared children to succeed in school. Based on the responses from the focus group, exposure of children to the PMEP had a positive influence on the lives of the children in the Dalton community, equipping them with life skills necessary not only for school preparation, but for their general development. One of the most important findings showed that through the programme children learnt to engage in activities that involved making choices, solving problems and taking responsibility.

In this chapter, the following discussion deals with the focus group participants' perceptions and experiences of the PMEP. The questions of the focus group were posed according to the SWOT format which asks for PMEP's strengths,

weaknesses, opportunities and threats, as they related to children, families, family facilitators and schools. Although the participants were not explicitly asked whether the PMEP outcomes were achieved, the researcher examined their responses in terms of how they related to the research question, which asked whether the PMEP outcomes had been achieved. This chapter also discussed the relationship between these outcomes and the learning outcomes envisaged by the Revised National Curriculum Statement.

A thematic analysis of the responses proceeded as follows: under each outcome, a set of transcribed focus group discussion, which dealt with strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, was presented and discussed.

5.1 Outcome 1 – Health promotion

According to the Revised National Curriculum Statement, health promotion was described as ability to be able to make informed decisions regarding “personal, community and environmental health” (South African Department of Education: Revised National Curriculum Statement, 2005, p. 30).

5.1.1 Strengths

The FFs described the children as healthier and ready to be active and interested in the environment.

5.1.2 Weaknesses

Interviewer: And for the families, what do they find that is not really nice for the programme, which other weakness? What are the families or the parents telling you?

Participant 2: They've a got a problem to clean their children if they are going to psychomotor ()

Interviewer: Ok. So they want to come here clean.

Participant 2: No, they won't come here at all

The Family Facilitators reported that some families were reluctant to send their children to school if they were not washed. As discussed in the literature review, children in adverse conditions were more likely to encounter difficulties which prevent them from succeeding at schools (Hill, Ardington & Hosegood, 2005).

This was an example how a lack of resources even as 'insignificant' as soap could create a barrier to learning, because the families did not send the children to the resource centre, unless they had been washed with soap.

5.1.3 Opportunities

Through the PMEP children were presented with an opportunity to be in a stimulating environment, which had made them healthy and happy.

5.1.4 Threats

Poverty is one of the factors that affect health (Weitzman, 2003). Especially in young years, poverty can have detrimental effects on a child's life. Children from educationally deprived environments failed to attain their academic potential. As discussed in the literature review, poor health and malnutrition during the early childhood period and at entry to school also impacted negatively on the ability of children to attend school and learn (Abadzi, 2006).

5.1.5 Conclusions

In order for ECD programmes to be truly efficient, a focus on children's nutritional and other health requirements, safety, physical development and water and sanitation needs needed to be included.

5.2 Outcome 2 - Social development

Social development referred to the child's ability to demonstrate "an understanding of and commitment to constitutional rights and responsibilities and show an understanding of diverse cultures and religions" (South African Department of Education: Revised National Curriculum Statement, 2005, p.30).

5.2.1 Strengths

Interviewer: Which other key points would you see in the programme? If you think of them playing and () which other features, which are the key important points ((of the programme))?

Participant 1: They learn to do things themselves.

Interviewer: So they become autonomous. Can you tell me more about that? In what way?

Participant 2: In here, in psychomotor classes, children, they are learning many things, such as the rules. Now that the psychomotor children they know that 'Don't hit other people'. They don't hit and they, they learn to share. They can wait for their turns if they are playing with the toys.

Interviewer: Ok. So when you say they don't hurt each other, how do they communicate that? How do they say to each other that they don't, or how do they control each other?

Participant 1: Their control is very well. But (.) and if you, said, if you said that to them, 'tell the other one the rule', he or she can tell that other one, 'No, don't hit me, I don't like that'.

Interviewer: So they remind each other about the rules.

Participants: Yes.

Interviewer: And do they really apply that? Do they really not hurt each other or do you notice that they do still.

Participant 4: Sometimes, sometimes (.)

Interviewer: Sometimes, many times? Or (.) fewer times?

Participant 4: No few times ((laughter))

Interviewer: Or few times, ok. So they drop a little bit the level of aggression, is it?

Participants 4: Yes, yes. The aggression is becoming less. It's about to finish the aggression

Interviewer: Ok, because they can communicate to each other and remind each other to the rules?

Participant 1: The children, er, the parents said the children every time they remind the rules.

Interviewer: To the parents?

Participant 1: Yes. The children, to the other one. They said you, you remember the rule? What did the rule said?

Interviewer: Ok. And they do it with the parents as well?

Participant 1: Yes.

In this extract, the Family Facilitators pointed out two important aspects of the Programme, which were that 'the rules' were reinforced among the children themselves and even with their own families, and children learnt to do things by themselves. One of the aims of the PMEP was for the children to attain an efficient level of communication and respect for each other. The respect of rights and responsibility was shown in the acquired ability to respect the rules as well as to take responsibility of own actions, in line with the envisaged learning outcome.

The second topic addressed was autonomy. Although the Family Facilitators did not use the word 'autonomous', participant 1 said the children learnt to do things by themselves. One of the envisaged outcomes of the Revised National Curriculum

Statement (South African Department of Education, 2005) was autonomy.

5.2.2 Weaknesses

Interviewer: And for the children going to school, do you think there is some value, there is some strength. The programme: does the programme bring some strength for the children before they go to school?

Participant 7: Ja. But there is such a problem if I'm thinking about the psychomotor education here, because at school [background talking]

Interviewer: You were translating, ok, just a sec, let's finish.

Participant 7: I think, if I'm thinking maybe alone, at home, thinking about the psychomotor...we are doing psychomotor here with our kids, but at school, there is no psychomotor.

Interviewer: Mmmmm

Participant 7: They, at school they will learn about the schools for the, the things for schools, the teachers will stand in front of them talking, talking, and talking to them [to make the thing that the teacher is talking about]. But here we are dealing with them, they, their minds they can decide on their own. So at school there is no psychomotor. Psychomotor is only here, not at school. I think this thing will be a problem. They forget psychomotor when they are there.

One of the weaknesses of the PMEP was the lack of continuity into the following year of schooling. Children learnt ways of communicating which were not always recognized and valued in the school system. This innovative programme aimed to give responsibility to the individual, in order to become more resilient in the experiences that he/she faces daily.

5.2.3 Opportunities

Interviewer:Now what are ... the key points, the things that stand out, mainly?

Participant 6: To the children?

Interviewer: Mmmm.

Participant 6: The children, if they are here playing together, their minds are getting widely, opened widely. They learn many things in different ways, to other children. They learn how to share things with other children and they are learning communication, playing together, many things.

Interviewer: Which kind of communication do they, er, learn? In what way do they communicate?

Participant 6: They play together...

Participant 1: Talking.

Participant 6: Talking...

In this section the Family Facilitators reported that the children learnt to share and communicate amongst them. The PMEP seemed to offer an opportunity for young children to learn basic communication skills which can lead to a better way of socializing within the group. As Killian (2004) suggested, such relationships helped children to face adversity and created opportunities for positive interactions; these values were important factors “through which change, development and transformation become possible” (Killian, 2004, p.6). PMEP targeted aspects of both microsystem and macrosystem in order to build resilience and minimize adversity.

5.2.4 Threats

Interviewer: So the teachers are not prepared to accept the children like you do here and have to learn in a specific way. But what they learn here, would the children not carry with them to school? What they learn about sharing, about space, about violence, about all what you’ve said, would the children not carry this once they go to school?

Participant 3: I think they, they won’t carry...

Interviewer: They will not carry...

Participant 3: No.

Interviewer: Because...

Participant 3: Because no one there who is responsible for these rules. And the other parents said that if, maybe, you can do this thing, maybe one of the psychomotor educators must be there at school to make the psychomotor move forward.

Interviewer: Ok. Would you like to add something?

Don’t you think the children will bring what they’ve learnt here into the schools?

Participant 4: They’ll bring, but at school it will disappear.

Interviewer: It will not be accepted at school.

Participant 4: Yes, yes, yes.

Interviewer: Ok.

Participant 4: The other children, maybe the Grade 1 child can hit the child who is coming here in psychomotor and that child will say ‘No hitting, no fighting, no everything’ [the Grade 1] and continue hitting, hitting. But if there is a psychomotor educator who can encourage them about the rules, even maybe all the classes.

The FFs were aware of the limitation of the programme in terms of not continuing in the school. They underlined the importance of having educators in charge of these transitions and who could guarantee continuity.

5.2.5 Conclusion

The social aspect has been emphasised in this section. The PMEP clearly had an influence in the way children learn social skills; they learnt an effective, non violent way to communicate. One of the limitations was the lack of continuity and insufficient trained teachers to facilitate the transition process.

5.3 Outcome 3 - Personal development

The Revised National Curriculum Statement described the learner as “able to use acquired life skills to achieve and extend personal potential to respond effectively to challenges in his/her world” (South African Department of Education: Revised National Curriculum Statement, 2005, p.30).

5.3.1 Strengths

Interviewer: Ok. And what else, through the [programme], what do they bring out from here in the school? What are the opportunities that they had, which are the opportunities? They have learned many things in the psychomotor. Now what are they bringing in the school that will help them?

Participant 5: They will go [indistinct]. They will be non-violent.

Interviewer: So respect of the rules?

Participant 5: Yes.

Interviewer: Will make them become less violent?

Participant 5: Yes.

One of the most evident aims of the programme was the development of self-confidence, through the enhancement of mediation in dealing with conflicts. The acquired ability to negotiate conflicts and become agents of change (Aucouturier, 2005) in the community seemed to be a very important aspect of the programme.

5.3.2 Weaknesses

Interviewer: Ok. Ok. And um, for you, what are the challenges for you.

Participant 1: If somebody is doing things maybe in the wrong way, we don't go together explaining that problem, or that wrong thing. We are going to maybe, are going to...

Interviewer: Complain.

Participant 1: complain, maybe sending the bad rumours about Participant 2 or 3.

Interviewer: Ok.

Participant 1: Communication is not good.
Interviewer: Is not good. All right. And what else? What do you find, um, challenging for you, to run the programme?
Participant 3: If I don't have enough children to come here...
Interviewer: The number of children.
Participant 3: Yes.
Interviewer: Ok. What else. You have been a bit quiet. [laughter] What do you find difficult in as an [indistinct] to come here and do the programme?
...
Interviewer: Participant 4?
Participant 4: If I'm sick sometimes...
Interviewer: Not feeling well. Ok.
Participant 4: And if my relative is passed away...

In this extract the family facilitators stressed an important factor which regarded communication within the group. Although the family facilitators were briefed with communication styles amongst children they perhaps needed to have more workshops regarding the interaction within the family facilitators. The conditions in which they worked depended also on other's perceptions of their own abilities and 'rumours' about each other seemed to jeopardize their jobs.

Another aspect that emerged from the discussion was the fear of being sick and perhaps losing relatives in their families. In conditions of adversity, FFs and children were constantly faced with losses of members of their family. The PMEP helped them to find comfort and strength in the environment of the resource centre, through emotional tone experiences, which gave the children a specific space to feel in harmony with themselves (Aucouturier, 2005).

5.3.3 Opportunities

Interviewer: Ok. Now last question and then we are done. Which are, if you look in the future now, look at the future, which are the opportunities that the children have through this programme?
Participants: [General discussion in *isiZulu*]
Interviewer: I want you all to reply. In English.
Participants: [laughter]
Participant 6: I think it must be a, a lot of teachers...
Interviewer: A what?
Participant 6: A lot of educators from psychomotor (.)

The FFs suggested increasing the number of psychomotor teachers in the area, to guarantee support and care for the children in the transition to school, as well in the school environments (Vygotsky, 1997).

5.3.4 Threats

Participant 5: And if they don't have lunch boxes...

Interviewer: Lunch box? Then they won't send the children. Ok.

Participants: No.

Interviewer: Ok. And what else?

Participant 5: If they don't have clothes to wear, they don't send the children.

Interviewer: But they know that we have here, that they change here. They know that.

Participant 5: If the weather's cold...

In this field the result of my study showed that again poverty was detrimental to the development of the children. If the children did not have a lunch box they would have not been sent to the resource centre, restricting their ability to interact and benefit from the environment.

5.3.5 Conclusions

Personal development was achieved through the positive interaction with the environment and through the guidance and support of the FFs.

5.4 Outcome 4 - Physical development

Through the physical and movement development outcome the children were encouraged to take active part and become agents of their own developments (South African Department of Education: Revised National Curriculum Statement, 2005).

5.4.1 Strength

Interviewer: Ok. Now in the family, which are the strengths that the parents would tell you about the programme? When you bring your children back to their families, when you work with them here and then you bring them...and you bring them back, what are they saying? Do they notice any er, improvements or any strengths that comes from the programme?

Participant 1: They notice an improvement in...in this project.
Interviewer: In what way?
Participant 1: They said their children now are very hyperactive[laughter]
Interviewer: Ok...and then?
Participant 1: And they learn to do things their own, like to dress.

In this field the result of my study showed that the children were active and they liked to move, discovering new ways of engaging in experiences. The parents informed the FFs that the children had discovered pleasure in moving and using the space around them. Movement in the early years of life is regarded as essential for the healthy and harmonious development of the children (Aucouturier, 2005).

5.4.2 Weaknesses

No weaknesses were pointed out by the FFs.

5.4.3 Opportunities

Interviewer: Ok. What else? Which are the things they like about the programme?
Participant 3: Other, [they just] said the children they like to go on the bed and jump, jump, jump. [laughter]
Interviewer: Ok.
Participants [Counting ...indistinct]
Interviewer: So they are more capable of moving and doing things? Ok, so what do they notice about the physical development or...
Participant 3: The physical development...
Supervisor: Is this seen as a good thing or a bad thing?
Participant 3: Good thing, a good thing.

Movement appeared to be an important aspect of the child's daily activities, which enhanced a healthier development.

5.4.4 Threats

No threats were discussed in this section.

5.4.5 Conclusions

Physical development seemed to be an integral part of the children's daily activities and seemed to contribute to a healthier and active growth. As suggested in the literature review, movement and active exploration enhanced brain functions and higher cognitive abilities, stimulating new pathways and neurological connections. (Sousa, 2001),

5.5 Outcome 5 - Orientation to the wider world

The life orientation outcome five described the orientation to the wider world as ability of the child "to make informed decisions", thus empowering the young learner to become independent and autonomous and able to make decisions (South African Department of Education: Revised National Curriculum Statement, 2005).

5.5.1 Strengths

Supervisor: ... what do you mean by psychomotor, what is psychomotor? ()
Is it like the rule, 'don't push, don't bite'. Is it, you know, what is psychomotor.
Is it the exercises (). What is psychomotor?

Participant 1: Psychomotor is ((where)) our minds, getting, developing in many things. Psychomotor we can do things ourselves. Psychomotor helped us to be non-violent and it is not competitive –

Interviewer: Non-competitive.

Participant A: So it's non-violent, non-competitive, it taking on self-decisions. What else?

Participant1: Doing things on your own.

Supervisor: Doing things on your own, taking on the initiative as it were.

Participant 1: Yes. Think before you ().

Supervisor: Think before you act. Is there any other things that you would say is what psychomotor is?

Participant 1: And you learn to be self-confident.

Supervisor: Self-confident. That's a, those are the critical things that you think are important.

Interviewer: So you think the children themselves become self-confident?

Participant 1: Yes.

The FFs reported that the children had achieved a level of development which enhanced self-awareness, self-control and self-discipline and ready to engage in the

wider world. The children learnt to take initiative, thus reinforcing their ability to cope with changes and becoming resilient (Fonagy et al., 1994).

5.5.2 Weaknesses

Interviewer: If you think of a weakness, do you know what a weakness is? Something weak, that doesn't really work well, of the programme. What do you think for the children, what is the point that you think doesn't really work. Which are the weaknesses?

...

Interviewer: What else should they learn and is not done?

Supervisor: To help them for schools.

...

Interviewer: Before they go to school, what is missing in the programme that they should still (.)

Participant 5: We think they need to learn how to write, the writing.

Participant 1: Write your own name and surname, and write a,b,c up to Z.

Interviewer: So they must learn the alphabet before they go to school, and the programme doesn't teach that. Ok.

Some of the facilitators reported that they thought writing instruction was missing from the PMEP. The FF thought that reciting the alphabet was a pre-requisite to school preparedness and would have prepared the children to be more aware of their environment. Although this was not one of the aims of the PMEP, it could be construed as a weakness. No further discussion was done in this regard.

However, Aucouturier (2005) stressed the importance of not introducing cognitive skills until school. This was because children needed to experience different kinds of play, such as sensory-motor play and symbolical play before they were prepared for writing or reading. Particular care should be given to ensure that when addressing children's intellectual developmental needs, educators made use of developmentally appropriate practices (Vygotsky, 1978). In other words, the kinds of opportunities that children were offered had to meet the children's needs at their particular stage of development.

Unfortunately, some schools had systems of teaching which did not yet consider the recent research in developmental psychology. According to Fabian & Dunlop (2007), the concept of transition was particular relevant in the early years of life. In the

ecological perspective the child could be supported by competent adults to handle transitions.

5.5.3 Opportunities

Interviewer: Now, for the children leaving this place and going to school. Which are the weak points, what are they missing or what is not done for them before school? (Grade 1)

Participant 5: If they go to Grade 1, they miss the toys.

Interviewer: They miss the toys, ok? So what you're saying is the weakness. The point is that here they have um, resources, but when they go to Grade 1, they will not have resources. Ok. Something else?

Participant 5: They are not going to the resource centre anymore if she or he is at school.

Interviewer: So they will miss the place?

Participants: Yes.

Interviewer: They will miss playing?

Participants: Yes.

PMEP provided children with a stimulating environment which fostered exploration. PMEP encouraged children to apply what they have learnt in the wider community, such as family, community and later in school. They became inquisitive and interested in their environment. The availability of competent adults who served as consistent role models was important in creating a positive attitude and coping resources (Karpov, 2006).

5.5.4 Threats

No threats were reported by the FFs.

5.5.5 Conclusions

In the course of the PMEP children seemed to be interested in their environment and actively took part by making use of the experiences offered to them. They took informed decisions and engaged in positive risk-taking situations which promoted self-confidence and self-esteem.

5.6 Concluding Remarks

The aim of this study has been to evaluate whether the PMEP has achieved the learning outcomes envisaged by the Revised Nation Curriculum, namely health promotion, social development, physical development, personal development and orientation to the wider world. The focus group questions that were posed to Family Facilitators did not use these exact terms, and instead asked generally for the programme's strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and threats because this is a familiar mode of asking questions which is non-threatening. In order to answer the original question of the children's preparedness for school in terms of the learning outcomes, therefore, the researcher has reported the facilitators' answers as they relate to each LO.

PMEP was seen as a programme that provided opportunities to foster children's emotional, social, intellectual, and physical development, through the use of play as the primary vehicle. Especially in the phases of transition before entering school, children should be prepared in all the above areas, in order to achieve the learning outcomes during their school careers. PMEP has enhanced a positive emotional climate and the availability of supports and resources within the broader community context served a protective function and enhance resilience (Killian, 2004). A supportive environment helped to develop personal qualities that enabled children to better cope with adversity (Killian, 2004).

Bronfenbrenner (1979) supports the importance of cultural connections and a sense of belonging within the children's family, home school and community. This sense of belonging broadens the network of support and helps the children to access support (Killian, 2004).

PMEP has created a resilience-promoting environment, which served as a positive factor especially in a situation of adversity. ECD centres and schools have therefore the potential to be major resources for children. Positive experiences associated with success and pleasure build resilience, social competencies and academic skills, as well as protection against exposure to possible risk.

CHAPTER SIX: RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

The results of this evaluation were shared with all relevant stakeholders in order to improve developmental programmes in the Dalton area. In particular, the Dalton Trust could make use of these results to improve the organization and the managing of the educational programmes, as well as for future planning and decision making. The evaluation indicated where action was needed and provided a guideline as to how further research should be conducted.

6.2 Flow of Information

This evaluation report was distributed among the programme staff and the community participants. The same information was shared with the members of the community in a form of a newsletter. This method was chosen as it is already a preferred way of communication used by the DET (www.daltoneducationtrust.com.) to address a larger audience. The results of this research were shared with all the members of the community and various agencies that might have been interested in improving the quality of education in the area. In order to provide sponsorship, national and international agencies were going to be informed. A general schematic overview of the flow of information (Table 7) is reported.

6.3 Recommendations

Early childhood innovative programmes, such the PMEP, can be seen as tools in which agencies could invest for their national futures. By ensuring socio-emotional, as well as physical and cognitive wellbeing during the transition period, learning and preparedness for formal school is likely to progress. In order to achieve this, a co-construction of transition becomes the responsibilities of all the participants: children, parents, family facilitators and teachers, in their own community context.

Audience	Role in Evaluation	Which results need to be discussed	How to report results
Community not involved in the PMEPE	Information letter.	A brief summary of result to create interest and support.	Meetings and newsletter.
Community indirectly involved in the PMEPE = Parents	Informed consent received.	A detailed summary of result to create interest and support.	Meeting and newsletter.
Community directly involved = Family Facilitators	Took part in the focus group discussion.	Full results and recommendations, to plan if and how results can be used.	Meetings. Study of results. Newsletter.
PMEPE Staff / FFs	Responsibility for co-ordination, facilitating community decision-making and action.	Full result and recommendations to put them into action.	Meetings. Study of report.
District level department, agencies, organization	Received information and specified active role.	Full result or summary only for analysis and policy decision making.	Full report or summary (1 or 2 pages). Discussion with evaluation co-ordinators.
Regional level	Same as district level.	Same at district level.	Summary. Meetings.
National level	Received information. Dissemination of results. Support future action.	Full results or summary for analysis of lesson learnt and policy making.	Summary. Meetings. Conferences.
External funding agency	To receive information. Dissemination of results and support future action.	Full results for analysis of lesson learnt and policy making.	Full report plus summary. Meetings. Presentation.
International agencies. UN development agencies	To receive information. Dissemination of results and support future action.	Full results or summary for analysis of lesson learnt and policy making.	Summary only. Meetings.

Table 7: “Flow of Information Matrix” from Van Brunt, Save the Children Federation, adapted by Feuerstein (1986, p. 154).

This study has identified areas in which the PMEPE has been effective in preparing children for school. However, one of the difficulties encountered was the lack of continuity in the primary school system. To achieve a long-lasting effect of the PMEPE and to ensure continuity the following suggestions are made:

- To Implement PMEPE into mainstream ECD services.
- To establish systems of communication and close interaction between family, pre-school setting and primary school, where information about children’s progress is given and received.

- To inform primary schools about the PMEP's aims and objectives.
- To establish continuity across phases of education in view of the Children's Rights and Responsibilities.
- To provide special training for staff working with children across the transition process. Transition research has great potential to identify those factors at micro, meso, and macro level that explain why some children have a greater opportunity for development than others.

6.4 Conclusions

The current study found that the PMEP's outcomes, specifically social, emotional, physical, and cognitive, have been achieved in the Dalton community and children have benefitted from the programme. Results have shown that PMEP as a quality centre-based early childhood programme was a highly promising strategy to achieve good outcomes in school, especially for children during the preschool period. To achieve a successful transition from preschool to school and to have the greatest impact in the child's life, PMEP should include close interaction between children, parents, teachers and community, in a systemic approach.

In order to achieve a better understanding of new paradigms in education and to become agents of change and transformation, teachers need to be informed and further training should be carried out. The development of workshops to facilitate professional growth of the foundation teachers could be considered. Further training in the understanding of the development of the child needs to be provided for, with the aim to bring the acquisition of new and creative ways of thinking about education in a challenging time of change.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Letter of consent to participate in the Focus Group for family facilitators and Grade 1 teachers (English).

School of Psychology
P/Bag X01 Scottsville
PIETERMARITZBURG, 3209
South Africa
Phone: +27 33 2605371
Fax: +27 33 2605809



4 June 2010

Dear Participant

RE: Consent to participate in the research study

I am currently a Masters Psychology student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Pietermaritzburg campus). As part of my degree requirements I am conducting an Evaluation Study on the Psychomotor Education Programme that took place from June 2009 to June 2010.

I have presented you with this letter as you have been selected as a potential participant in the study; and I would like to obtain your written informed consent to participate in the study.

Participation in the study will require you to take part in a focus group discussion. The aim of the group discussion will be to explore the level of preparedness of children entering school. The discussion will be tape recorded.

Every care will be taken to ensure that your identity will remain confidential throughout the study. Upon the completion of the study, the findings will be made available to you and will be written and presented as a research study.

We would like you to participate in this study, but you are free to refuse. If at any point in the research process, or afterwards during the analysis, you wish to no longer be a participant, then you can leave the study (withdraw). You can leave the study by informing us either verbally or in writing. If you leave the study you will not be penalized. If you consent to participate in the study it must be of your own free will and desire to do so. If you have any questions about anything that has been said about the study or written in this letter please ask me. It is important that you understand everything you have been told before you give your consent to participate in the study.

My research study is supervised by Dr. Bev. Killian, a clinical psychologist in the School of Psychology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. If you would like (or require) further information about any aspect (part of) the research study please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor, Dr. B. Killian.

Rossella Meusel Cell: 082 757 7070 E-mail: 982210385@ukzn.ac.za	Supervisor: Dr. Beverley Killian Telephone: 033 2605371 E-mail: Killian@ukzn.ac.za
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Thank you kindly for your time.

If you do wish to participate in the study please read and sign the attached page.

Regards,

Rossella Meusel

Informed consent:

-If you do not wish to participate in the study please do not sign this form.

-If you do wish to participate in the study please sign the form but note that signing the form does not mean that you have to do anything you do not wish to do and that you can leave the study whenever you want to, if you want to.

Name of participant: _____

I (the participant) understand the information given to me and agree to participate in the focus group discussion.

I am aware that my identity will remain confidential throughout the study.

I have been informed that the discussion will be recorded.

Signature of participant: _____

Date: _____

Appendix B: Letter of consent to participate in the Focus Group for family facilitators and Grade 1 teachers. (isiZulu)

School of Psychology
P/Bag X01 Scottsville
PIETERMARITZBURG, 3209
South Africa
Phone: +27 33 2605371
Fax: +27 33 2605809



20 July 2010

Mbambi: weqhaza

Isivumelwano sokubamba iqhaza kusifundo sokucubungula, ngingumfundi kuziqu eziphakeme zokuhlola kwengqondo e-Nyuvesi yase KZN e- Pietermaritzburg. Njengengxenyha yalazidingo zalesifundo ngihola isifundo Ohlelweni lwezemfundo yengqondo eyaba kusukela ngo- June 201 2009 kuya ku- June 2010.

Ngidlulisa lencwadi kuwe njengoba ukhethiwe njengobalulekile kulesifundo, ngifisa ukuthola incwadi yakho ebhaliwe evuma ukubamba iqhaza kulemfundo.

Ukubamba iqhaza kulemfundo kuyodingeka ube yingxenyha kuleliudlanzana. Inhloso yalelidlanzana ukuthi lithole izinga lokulungela kwabantwana abangena esikoleni.

Konke ukunakekela kuyothathwa ukuqiniseka ukuthi ingubani kuyoba imfihlo kuze kuphele ukufunda.

Uma usuphothulile ukufunda imiphumela uyoyithola, iyobhalwa bese ikhishwa njengesifundo, socwaningo.

Uma kwenzeka ngesikhathi shlelo locwaningo, noma kamuva uma imibono isiqoqiwe noma ngesikhathi kuhlazwa, ufisa ungabe usaqhubeka, unghoxa ekufundeni.

Ungahoxa ekufundeni usazise ngomlomo noma ubhale incwadi uma uhoxa ngeke ujeziswe noma uphoqwe ukubamba iqhaza. Ukuzinikela ukubamba iqhaza kumele kube isifiso sakho. Uma unemibuzo ngalokhu asekuphawuliwe

Ngalokufunda ungangibuza. Kubalulekile ukuthi uqondisise yonke into oyitsheliwe ngaphambi kokuba ubambe iqhaza kulesifundo.

Lesifundo socwaningo siphethwe u- Dr. Bev. Killian, oyi clinical psychologist kwi School of psychology e- Nyuvesi KZN. Uma udinga ulwazi ngalengxenywe yocwaningo ungangabazi ukuthinta mina noma umphathi, u-Dokotela Bev. Killian.

Rosella Meusel Cell: 082 757 7070 E- mail: 982210385@ukzn.ac.za	Supervisor: Dr. Beverly Killian Telephone No: 033 – 260 5371 E –mail: killian@ukzn.ac.za
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Ngiyabonga isikhathi sakho, uma ufisa ukubamba iqhaza siza ufunde usayine ikhasi elilandelayo.

Umcwaningi
Rossella Meusel

Umphathi wesikole se –Psychology
Dr. Bev. Killian

School of Psychology
P/ Bag X 01 Scottsville
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3200
South Africa
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Fax: +27 33 260 5809



Isivumelwano Esazisiwe

❖ Uma ufisa ukubamba

Iqhaza kulesifundo sayina lefomu.

❖ Uma ufisa ukubamba iqhaza siza usayine lefomu, kodwa okusayina kwakho lefomu akusho ukuthi uzokwenza ukufunda uma ufisa ukwenzenjalo.

Igama:

Mina (umbambi weqhaza) ngiyayiqonda imininingwane engiyinikiwe, ngiyavuma ukubamba iqhaza kwi- Dlanzana lecebo lokuxoxisana.

Ngiyaqonda ukuthi ubukhona bami buzoba imfihlo kuze kuphele ukufunda.

Ngazisiwe ukuthi ingxoxo iyoshicilelwa phansi.

Isignesha yobambi qhazi _____

Usuku_____

Appendix C: Parental informed consent (English)

School of Psychology
P/Bag X01 Scottsville
PIETERMARITZBURG, 3209
South Africa
Phone: +27 33 2605371
Fax: +27 33 2605809



4 July 2010

Dear Parent/primary caregiver/legal guardian,

My name is Rossella Meusel and I am studying towards my Masters degree at the University of KwaZulu Natal.

I am writing to ask for your permission to discuss the programme, in which your child participated at the resource centre in Dalton. Being aware of the effect that neuropsychological disorders in young children may have on schooling and life in general, it is of utmost importance that I try my best to help children in this regard.

The Project will be an Evaluation of the Psychomotor Education Programme your child participated in from June 2009 to June 2010.

If you have any further questions or feel unsure about anything, please feel free to contact me on 082 757 7070. Alternatively, please contact Dr. Bev Killian, the supervisor of the project. Dr Killian is also the head of the Child and Family Centre on campus and will ensure that the welfare of your child is protected. She may be contacted at 033 2605371 or 033 260 5166.

If you are willing to allow your child to participate in the project, please read and sign the attached reply slip.

Thank you very much.

Rossella Meusel

I have understood the information I have been given and am willing to allow the study on the Psychomotor Education Programme.

I understand that my child's identity will remain confidential.

Name of child:

Age of child:

Date of birth of child:

Signature of parent/guardian:

Date:

Appendix D: Parental informed consent (*isiZulu*)

School of Psychology
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PIETERMARITZBURG, 3209
South Africa
Phone: +27 33 2605371
Fax: +27 33 2605809



20 July 2010

Mzali / Msizi

Igama lami ngingu Rossella Meusel ngifunda iziqu eziphakeme e Nyuvesi yase KZN. Ngibhala ukucela imvume jokuxox ngaloluhlele lapho ingane yakhe ezobamba iqhaza kuya.

Njengoba sazi ukuthi izinto eziphazamiga ingqondo ezinganeni ezisakhulu zinomthelela ekufundeni nasempilweni yengane, kubalulelule ukuthi ngizame ukuzisiza izingane maqondana nalokhu,

Loluhlelo kuyoba ohokutshungulwa lohlelowezemfundi yokuhlolwa kwengqondo; ingane yakho eyabamba iqhazo kusukela ngoJune 2009 kuya kuJune 2010.

Uma kukhona ongakuzwisizi hahle thintana name ku 082 757 7070, noma uDokotela Killian ongumhabhi waloluhlelo, utholakala ku 033 260 5371 noma 033 260 5166.

Uma ufisa ingane yakho ibanibe iqhaza, siza ufunde usayine ngezansi.

Umcwaningi

Umphathi wesikole se –Psychology

Rossella Meusel

Dr. Bev. Killian

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3200
South Africa
Phone: + 27 33 260 5371
Fax: +27 33 260 5809



Nginyaqondile yonke imininingwane ebeyinikeziwe,
Ngiyafisa ukukwamukela loluhlelo lokufunda

Igama lengane : _____
Ubudala bengane : _____
Usuku lokuzalwa : _____

Ukusayina Komzali / Msizi: _____

Usuku: _____

Appendix E: Letter to local authorities (English)

School of Psychology
P/Bag X01 Scottsville
PIETERMARITZBURG, 3209
South Africa
Phone: +27 33 2605371
Fax: +27 33 2605809



4 June 2010

Dear Sir/Madam

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH PROJECT

As a Master's Psychology student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, I am required as part of my Master's requirement to conduct a research project.

I am doing evaluation research regarding the Psychomotor Programme that took place in your Community from June 2009 to June 2010. The findings of the study might be published and the data might be used in future projects.

There will be no cost to the participants in participating.

Please contact me at 082 757 7070, or my supervisor, should you require more information.

Thanking you for supporting this research study, I send you my warmest regards.

Yours Sincerely

Researcher
Rossella Meusel

Supervisor, School of Psychology,
Dr. Bev Killian (033 260 5371)

Appendix F: Letter to local authorities (*isiZulu*)

School of Psychology
P/Bag X01 Scottsville
PIETERMARITZBURG, 3209
South Africa
Phone: +27 33 2605371
Fax: +27 33 2605809



Isahluko

Incwadi eya kubaphathi bomphakathi

20 July 2010

Mnumzane / Nkosazane

IMVUME YOKWENZA UHLELO LOKUCWANINGA

Njengomfundi ofundela iziqu eziphakeme ku Psychology e- UKZN: - Pietermaritzburg, kudingeka ngenze ucwaningo lwaloluhlelo.

Ngenza ucwaningo oluqondene nohlelo oluphathelele nengqondo Okwenzeka, e- Mphakathi|jni kusukela ngo June 2009 kuya June 2010.

Izinto ezitholakalayo kulesifundo zingakhishwa amaphepheni, nolwazi Lungasetshenziswa ezinhlelweni ezingalandela.

Ngeke zibekhona izindleko kobambe iqhaza ngithinte ku 082 757 7070, umphathi uma ufuna ulwazi.

Siyabonga ukusixhasa esifundweni socwaningo.

Ozithobayo

Umcwaningi
Rossella Meusel

Umphathi wesikole se –Psychology
Dr. Bev. Killian

Appendix G: Letter to the Dalton Education Trust

School of Psychology
P/Bag X01 Scottsville
PIETERMARITZBURG, 3209
South Africa
Phone: +27 33 2605371
Fax: +27 33 2605809



4 June 2010

Dear Sir/Madam

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH PROJECT

As a Master's Psychology student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, I am required to conduct a research project.

I plan to do an Evaluation Research on the Psychomotor Programme conducted in the Dalton area from June 2009 to June 2010.

Please note that all ethical considerations will be strictly adhered to and in particular the identity of the children will not be disclosed. The protocols will be stored safely in the researcher's and or his supervisor's office. The findings of the study might be published and the data might be used in future projects.

I take this opportunity to thank the Dalton Education Trust for the support that has been given throughout this Programme.

Please contact me at 082 757 7070, or my supervisor, should you require more information.

Yours Sincerely

Researcher
Rossella Meusel

Supervisor, School of Psychology,
Dr. Bev Killian (033 260 5371)

Appendix H: Focus Groups Schedule

Thank you for coming here today to discuss the Dalton Trust Psychomotor Education Programme (DT PMEP).

During the course of this discussion, we will talk about the various strengths, weakness, and opportunities that you as Family Facilitators/Educators feel are associated with programme. The aim of the group discussion will

be to explore the level of preparedness of children entering school. The discussion will be tape recorded. Every care will be taken to ensure that your identity will remain confidential throughout the study. Upon the completion of the study, the findings will be made available to you and will be written and presented as a research study. It is important that you feel free to be open and honest about your feedback so that the children and community can benefit from the opinions and your feedback. We need your willing participation and if you feel you would prefer not to participate please feel free to leave. You will not to be penalised in any manner if you were to leave.

Focus Group Discussion Schedule

General experience:

1. Let us begin at a general level, and simply ask how you feel children from this area should be prepared for their entry into school. What are the special circumstances about these children that make you say they need preparation for school in a particular manner or do you think all children need the same preparation?
 - What do you think are the key features of the PMEP?
 - What are the strengths of the PMEP?
 - For the children
 - For the families
 - For the FFs
 - For their school preparation
 - What do you think the weaknesses of the PMEP
 - For the children
 - For the families
 - For the FFs

- For their school preparation
- What do you think are the major challenges presented by the PMEP for these
 - children
 - families
 - FFs
 - Educators
- What do you think are the major opportunities presented by the PMEP for these
 - children
 - families
 - FFs
 - Educators