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REALISATION OF CULTURE AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN ECCE DAILY PRACTICE: A CASE STUDY OF TEACHERS IN TWO POLOKWANE EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION CENTRES

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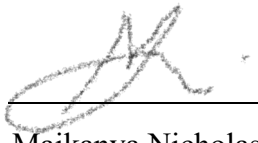
In fulfilment of the requirements

For the degree in Master of Education (Early Childhood Development)

March 2022

PLAGIARISM DECLARATION

I Maikanya Nicholas Lebopa undersigned declare that this research is my own work, except where indicated, and that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any institution of higher learning both locally and abroad. It is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of Masters of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, All phrases, sentences and paragraphs taken directly from other work have been cited and the reference recorded in full in the reference list.



Maikanya Nicholas Lebopa

Protocol Number: H19/09/20

Dedications

This study is dedicated to my late mother Anastacia Mashapa who stood by me and was keen to see the completion of the study, unfortunately God had other plans as she departed prior the completion.

Acknowledgements

I would like to extend my gratitude to my supervisor Dr Alta van As and Dr Lorayne Excell, who despite their busy schedule worked with me tirelessly until the submission of this dissertation. My appreciation goes to the staff of the two ECCE centres and the children in which this research was conducted and for being able to accommodate me even though we were facing the COVID 19 pandemic. Thanks to DHET and EU for the opportunity to study further in the ECCE field. Also thank my family for standing with me and encouraging me to soldier on when it was tough, my colleagues in the Foundation Phase at the University of the Witwatersrand who were rallying behind me to complete this study.

ABSTRACT

Children from diverse cultural backgrounds in South Africa are now afforded the opportunity to attend institutions of learning with each other. This implies that the ECD population will be diverse, coming from different racial, ethnic, and cultural groups and this calls for new understandings and insight into cultural values and practices. The study seeks to understand the impact of culture and cultural diversity in the day-to-day activities in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) centres and how these are attended to by practitioners in their teachings/activities. The study is thus underpinned by the Bioecological Systems Theory of Bronfenbrenner (1994) as well as Vygotsky's Socio- Cultural Theory. Vygotsky's Socio-Cultural Theory promotes the construction of knowledge through a socio-cultural lens where both the child and the teacher actively co-construct knowledge. Qualitative research design and a Case study approach were employed as modes of enquiry in this study, while constructivism/interpretivism was used as philosophical paradigm. Using a qualitative research design enabled me to obtain in-depth information from the teachers in their natural setting. Group focus interviews were used with teachers and semi- structured interviews used with the one principal from the centre B. In addition, observations and document analysis were used to collect data. The study comprised eight ECCE teachers including one principal who were chosen using purposive sampling drawn from two ECCE centres in Polokwane. Data was analysed using thematic content analysis. The findings reveal that teachers are comfortable in their multicultural settings and this sense of comfort comes from the fact that they follow a 'good enough' early learning programmes (one that is based on recognised developmentally appropriate principles). Issues related to the children's cultural heritage and to the management of diversity had not been considered. Difference was negated and dealt with in a uniform way. This approach to cultural diversity was not done with malicious intent. There was no attempt to exclude children from diverse cultural groups or to marginalise children who were not competent in the LOLT. because of a lack of knowledge about how to manage diversity successfully, teachers genuinely felt they were doing their best for all the children.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

According to South African History Online (SAHO), 2017) South Africa is one of the more diverse nations in the world with 11 official languages as stated in the Constitution (RSA, 1996a). It is a home to a fascinating mix of citizens - the Venda, the Tsonga, the Nguni (comprising the Zulu, Xhosa, Ndebele and Swazi people), the San people, and the Sotho (south and north). Then there are the 'Europeans', as well as people of mixed raced and Asian descent. This means that unity in our country will have to be achieved within multi-culturalism created by the coming together of people of many different races (Buqa, 2015). This melting pot of cultures resulted in South Africa being referred to the "Rainbow Nation"; a moniker the country embraced from Bishop Desmond Tutu, whose reference to the rainbow followed the idea of the American "melting pot," which implied diversity, multiculturalism, acceptance, and cohesion (Palmer, 2015: 136). Further, Palmer (2015) asserts that Tutu was not denying difference; rather, he was attempting to use the analogy to foreground his belief in the ability of all South Africans (Black, White, Coloured, and Asian) to co-exist despite the challenges experienced with diverse cultures.

The term culture is used to refer to the ways of life of a specific group of people, which includes their belief, religion, social relationships, ways of behaving and artefacts, as stated in SAHO, 2017. According to SAHO (2017) the term culture is problematic, causes much confusion and can be misused. Aswathappa (2003) refers to culture as a complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and other capabilities and habits acquired by humans in a society. This was the first definition of culture to specify that culture is learned, acquired and not a natural biological trait (Kroeber & Kluckhohn 1952, p.181 cited in Adler 1997). If one's own culture can be learned, it is also possible to learn about the culture of others. It is through this learning that a more cohesive society can be promoted. Because of the complex nature of this term culture this study has adopted an open -ended understanding of the term which is unpacked in more detail in Chapter 2 (see 2.2. Understanding Culture).

This attempt to promote a cohesive society was one of the intentions of The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, (RSA, 1996a) which is deemed to be most progressive. This idea of

cohesion is embedded in the Constitution (RSA, 1996a) because it gives protection to the rights of all, enshrines the notion of equality where everyone is equal before the law and therefore has the right to equal protection and benefit of the law. According to this Constitution (RSA, 1996a), every citizen has the right to human dignity, life, freedom of speech and freedom and security of person. Every person has rights to privacy in their homes and property, freedom of religion, belief and opinion, freedom of expression, freedom to assemble, demonstrate, picket and petition if peaceful and unarmed. Furthermore, everyone has freedom of association, freedom to exercise political rights, freedom of movement and residence, freedom of trade and occupation. The rights of all children regardless of race, gender, sex, colour, sexual orientation, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture or language to basic education are entrenched in the Bill of Rights (RSA, 1996a). These Rights includes basic education which the state, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible: "Everyone has the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in public education institutions where the education is reasonably practicable" (RSA, 1996a, p.14).

This acknowledgement of every citizen's Rights - which were not prevalent prior the dawn of democracy in 1994 - becomes a founding value of the South African Constitution (Hall, Woolard, Lake & Smith, 2012). The Constitution seeks to redress the imbalances created by the previous apartheid government, which was racially discriminative and unjust, even to children. This is evident in the fragmented system of Early Childhood Development (ECD)[1] and service provisioning. Corroborating the latter statement, Selati (2009) asserts that even for those privileged - mainly Whites, and to a lesser extent Coloured and Indian children - very few benefited from the ECD system and black children were generally excluded. The right to education as stated in the 1996 Constitution opened doors for all, also in preschool education. This gradually led to improved access to ECD services, resulting in an increasing number of children enrolling in ECD facilities throughout the country even though the quality was not guaranteed (Excell, 2016). The ECD/Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) centres have become a "melting pot of cultures", as children from all cultures are now free to be enrolled at any centre of their choice in South Africa.

[1] ECD is a broad term that refers to children from birth -9 years. Terminology relating to early years learning is varied and often confusing. For ease of reading the different terms are explained in section 1.7 of this chapter.

Children are now afforded the opportunity to engage in a variety of educational and social activities that stimulate their all-round rapid development and learning (physical, cognitive, emotional and social). Quality ECD input is very important in ensuring that children are competent and will be successful when they enter formal schooling. Such children are likely to be confident, curious, resilient, creative, settle more easily at school and become life-long learners (e.g. participate in different school and extra mural activities). The Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS) in Australia has indicated that quality ECD input allows children to grow and develop as competent and confident learners (DECS, 2008). Sommer (2005) defines a competent child as having potential or future possibilities to achieve depending on culture, situations and age, among other things. And these contexts are invariably constructed by adults.

Within ECD, children's lives are lived through childhoods constructed for them by adults' understandings of childhood and what children are and should be (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 2013; Mayall, 1996). In early childhood these adults are firstly parents, the child's primary educator, and secondly ECD/ECCE teachers who become secondary educators to all children who enter early childhood centres. It is thus crucial to acknowledge and respect that children, from before birth, are connected to family, community, culture and place. Their earliest development and learning take place through these relationships, particularly within families, who, as already mentioned, are children's first and most influential educators. Consequently, adults make choices about who they think the child is and what they think the child should become. These choices have decisive consequences since the adult construction of child and early childhood determines the type of institutions provided for children, as well as the pedagogical work that adults and children undertake in these institutions (Dahlberg et al., 2013).

The teachers responsible for early childhood pedagogical programmes should therefore take into cognisance that from a very young age children can internalize messages about their contexts, situations and environments. These messages, often implicit, also relate to aspects of power and privilege regarding gender, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, language, as well as appropriate gender roles and relationships, which children perpetuate through their talk and play. This emphasis on understanding children's contents and situations offers an alternative lens through which to construct children, namely as the *belonging*, *being* and *becoming* child (DECS, 2008). Thus, these understandings of children's cultural contexts provide a foundation

for their everyday becoming and offer different ways of being and doing culture and developing a sense of belonging.

The notion of Belonging implies knowing where and with whom you belong and is essential to human existence. A sense of belonging shapes children in who they are and who they can become, by being a central pillar to the other two constructs being and becoming (DECS, 2008). The Being as stated in DECS (2008, p.7) recognises the importance of "the here and now in children's lives and involves children developing an awareness of their social and cultural heritage, of gender and their significance in their world. It is about the present and them knowing themselves, building and maintaining relationships with others, engaging with life's joys and complexities, and meeting challenges in everyday life". The idea of Becoming reflects how children's identities, knowledge, understandings, capacities, skills and relationships change during childhood. It is during the early years that children grow and learn most rapidly. The emphasis is on learning to participate fully and be active in society (DECS, 2008). These notions of belonging, being and becoming will be further unpacked in the last two paragraph of literature review/ Chapter 2 of the dissertation.

It is against this complex understanding of children and childhoods that the present study seeks to examine how teachers in ECCE centres realise culture and cultural diversity in their daily practice, in two early childhood education and care centres in Polokwane.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

As described in the introduction the dawn of democracy in South Africa in 1994 led to improved access to ECD services, resulting in an increasing number of children enrolling in these facilities throughout the country (Excell & Linington, 2021). Children from different cultural backgrounds in South Africa are now afforded the opportunity to attend institutions of learning with each other. This implies that the ECD population will be diverse, coming from different racial, ethnic and cultural groups and this calls for new understandings and insight into cultural values and practices. Meaningful understandings of culture in a South African context implies taking into consideration all the people who are united by calling South Africa home; the many diverse cultures and religions, and therefore, the lives of all contribute to the country's heritage and identity. This national heritage and identity should include and acknowledge the contributions of all cultures. This is essential for helping South Africans to

understand and respect each other and to learn from each other's cultural practices (SAHO, 2017).

Given that increasing numbers of children are attending ECD/ECCE centres it becomes imperative for teachers to have greater insight into the cultural practices of the children they care for. This is especially important because early childhood centres can be viewed as an extension or substitute home for young children and ECD teachers therefore help shape the child's early learning and development, including cultural values and practices. An understanding of culture and cultural diversity is important for teachers to ensure a smooth transition from home to the ECD centre. Such understanding will better enable the ECD centre to value the cultural and social contexts of children and their families and respond to each child's unique circumstances and cultural traditions (Bennett, 2021). These practices are varied, and include for example, how to be successful, competitive, assertive, tolerance and respect in society (Dahlberg et al., 2013). Therefore, there is a need to explore the impact of culture and cultural diversity in the day-to-day activities in ECCE centres and how these are realised by teachers in their daily practice.

1.3 RESEARCH AIMS

The main aim of this study is to explore how ECCE teachers' views and understandings of culture and cultural diversity are realised in their daily practice. To achieve this, the study will firstly examine how teachers understand culture and view cultural diversity. Additionally, the meaning of culture, which is a complex and multifaceted term, is explored. Finally, the research investigates how these understandings and views shape their daily interactions with children, parents and staff in two ECCE centres in Polokwane.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Emanating from the research problem are the following research questions:

The main research question:

> How do teachers in ECCE centres in Polokwane realise culture and cultural diversity in their daily practice?

The following are sub questions:

1. What are teachers' understandings of culture?
2. What are their views of cultural diversity?
3. How are ECCE teachers' understanding and beliefs of culture and cultural diversity reflected in their daily practice?

1.5 RATIONALE AND MOTIVATION

We live in a highly diverse country. Our Constitution (RSA, 1996a) recognises and provides a framework for acknowledging and implementing cultural equity and equality in all walks of life, most certainly in education. The framework also informs the South African Education Act (RSA, 1996b) as well as the National ECD Integrated Policy (DSD, 2015). This translates to the right of every young child's culture to be acknowledged, celebrated, and included in early learning programmes. The necessity of knowing and affirming every child's unique cultural context in the ECCE setting is thus important. This is particularly important as an extensive literature review reveals that little has been written on how teachers' understandings and views of culture and cultural diversity informs their daily activities within South African ECCE context.

In addition, the current emphasis on decolonisation and Africanisation demands relevant research on ECCE teachers' actual understandings and views around culture and cultural diversity and the realisation thereof in the centre. Though much has been written about African culture, within the South African ECD context, very little information is available on the meaning of 'culture' and how it impacts child development and learning from an African perspective. For example, it is well accepted in traditional ECD circles that in early childhood children learn best through participatory, play based experiences (Moyles, 2015; UNICEF, 2018). Yet this participatory play-based approach can be at odds with parents' cultural practices and understandings of early learning (Nsamenang, 2008). As Penn (2005) noted over a decade ago there has been minimal research on exploring play-based learning through alternative lenses such as an African perspective. Ensuring that ECD teachers have greater insights into African perspectives can only enhance young children's holistic development and learning.

Zeleza (2014:4) corroborate the above-mentioned statement by noting that, "ever since the African continent's tragic encounter with Europe, African peoples and phenomena have always

been measured according to Euromerican master reference, from humanity to history, civilisation to culture, ethics to economics…Africa is constantly found lacking, lagging behind Euromerican." Zeleza (2014) asserts that the burden facing African intelligentsia is how to effectively empower and emancipate their beloved continent from colonialism. Since little has been written about South African children of different cultures and how they negotiate collaborative play in different cultural spaces in the context of current constructions of child and childhood, this study will attempt narrow this existing gap identified by Zeleza, 2014.

The study is further motivated by my involvement in the teaching and learning of ECD in the Foundation Studies Division at Wits School of Education, and the desire to broaden my knowledge base on issues pertaining to ECD from birth to five years. In my previous inclusive education work experience (at district level as a senior education specialist), the impact of culture became clear when I observed how adults from different cultural groups reacted when their children with physical disability were identified and referred for help. Often children from these families are hidden and denied the opportunity to interact with the rest of the community. People often cite cultural beliefs? as one of the main reasons that prohibits certain interventions being made available to their disabled children. Further, my observations showed that in some cultures children are not allowed to attend school. Boys are groomed to be traders at an early age, and they have to sell homemade products like, for instance, steel made pots, feather dusters and brooms in the streets. Girls, on the other hand, are taught to be housewives and earmarked for marriage at an early age. These practices, which are deemed cultural customs, are against the Constitution of South Africa (RSA, 1996a) where individual rights and the right to be a child are acknowledged.

The Department of Education's White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001b p. 6), states that "all children and youth can learn" and that "all children and youth need support and respect despite differences in learners, whether due to age, gender, ethnicity, language, class, disability, HIV or other infectious diseases". I believe that if adults, in particular teachers, have insight into the [culturally based] interactions of children with other children from different cultures, they will be in a better position to make informed decisions, leading to the optimal development and learning of all children from birth to five years in their care. In other words, they will be able to make informed decisions drawing on their knowledge and insights of the cultural contexts and practices of all children in the centre. I have chosen to conduct the research in Polokwane,

the capital city of Limpopo Province because it is renowned for its cultural and ethnic diversity (Tikkanen, 2019). Limpopo is the home of different ethnic groups namely, Venda, Tsonga, Pedi, Ndebele, Afrikaners, English speaking and Coloured people. These citizens from diverse ethnic groups have different ethnic cultures/culture and they are from different local communities. Since all children within South Africa are afforded the opportunity to enrol in any ECCE centre or primary school of their choice, the ECCE centres accommodate children from many different communities. Polokwane ECCE centres have become the real 'melting pot' of cultures as indicated in the introduction. The composition of learners/children that are diverse and multicultural fits well with the aims and purpose of this study. Due to a dearth of literature on the interaction of young children in these 'melting pots of culture', this study aims to address the gap and contribute to an improved understanding of how to support intercultural interactions between children in diverse ECCE settings.

1.6. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

A lot has been written about South Africa as a country rich in cultures and diversity (Hatting, 2013). However, in all these writings there is very little unpacking of culture beyond artefacts. Also, and importantly, few writers take any note of the impact of culture on young children's holistic development and learning. While research has been done on living and working in plural societies, hardly any available research can be found on the impact of culture on South African children within the plurality of the learning environment in the ECCE (birth – five years) phase. This study was prompted by the limited research within the South African context on how the understanding of culture and views of cultural diversity inform teachers daily practice in the ECCE centres of a culturally diverse South African society.

The study will contribute towards the body of knowledge flowing from both national and international debates around the notion of culture and how to promote positive cultural interactions within diverse ECCE contexts. This knowledge is essential for helping South Africans on ECCE environment to understand and respect each other and to learn from each other's cultural practices - or words to this effect.

1.7 EXPLANATION OF TERMINOLOGY

There are various terms used to refer to early years teaching and learning. At times these can become confusing. To minimise confusion the following explanation is provided. International development agencies typically use the terms Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) or

Early Childhood Development (ECD), or Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) to refer to holistic and converging services in health, nutrition, family care, education, and social protection for children from birth to eight years (Rao, Zhou & Sun, 2017). Another internationally used term is Early Childhood Education (ECE) that traditionally refers to the education processes which aims at effecting developmental changes and learning in young children in early childhood centres (Gordon & Browne, 2014).

In the South African context, the term Early Childhood Development (ECD) is used to refer specifically to the education of children from birth to nine as noted in the ECD White Paper 5, (DoE, 2001a). Further, within the South African context, Early Childhood Development is a comprehensive term which includes all aspects of child growth, development and learning from birth to nine years – the stated developmental domains are physical, mental, emotional, moral and social. There is also a strong focus of the child's overall health, nutrition and wellbeing (DoSD, 2015). However, in practice this term ECD frequently refers to the care and education of young children before they commence formal schooling. The term early childhood care and education (ECCE) has been recently introduced which refers to the child from birth to 4 years (DHET, 2017). In this study, the two acronyms ECD and ECCE are used interchangeably according to the context in which they are applied in the Early Childhood Care and Education setting.

1.8. CHAPTER DIVISION

The study consists of seven chapters, which are arranged as follows:

Chapter one, the introductory chapter, outlines the background and aim of the study. It provides a strong rationale for this study and explores the significance of the study. And finally, it gives an outline of the arrangement of the chapters.

Chapter two offers a review of existing literature on understandings of culture and cultural diversity as well as insights into cultural practices. It further explores the relationship between construction of childhood, specifically the notions of the belonging, being and becoming child.

Chapter three outlines the two theoretical frameworks of the study. These are the Bioecological Systems Theory of Bronfenbrenner (1994) as well as Vygotsky's Socio- cultural Theory that promotes the furthering of learning and development where both the child and the teacher actively engage collaboratively to construct knowledge.

Chapter four describes the research methods and investigates the research design and methodology used to collect and analyse the data. The research process including the setting and procedures for selecting participants includes questions regarding reliability and validity, as well as the ethical considerations that informed this study.

Chapter five highlights the research findings and are presented in the form of two case studies. Each vignette presents an overview of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) centres, the views of the participating ECCE teachers and the principal of one ECCE centre.

In Chapter six, I interrogate and analyse the data according to three themes emerging from the findings. The themes are:

Theme 1: Culture: teachers' views

Theme 2: Teachers' understandings of cultural diversity

Theme 3: Culturally responsive teaching in a multicultural setting

Chapter seven is the concluding chapter of the study. I present a brief summary of the study, the answers to the research questions and propose a way forward.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Literature review is the process of consulting written scholarly documents that enable the presentation of a logically argued case founded on a comprehensive understanding of the state of knowledge about a topic of study (Machi & McEvoy, 2012). The literature review in this study will firstly explore different meanings of culture and unpack cultural diversity. It will then explore constructions of children and childhood and show the important link between adults' construction of children and childhood and the realisation of children's cultural beliefs and practices.

2.2 UNDERSTANDING CULTURE

Culture is a multifaceted and complex term. There are different definitions of culture that emanate from different theories, and all seek to explain human activity. Spencer-Oatey (2012, cited in Taylor, 1967) provided an early definition of culture in which she claimed culture is treated as a complex whole of social traditions and is a prerequisite for one to be a member of a particular society. This understanding of culture as being a social concept continues up until today. For example, Rong (2013) asserts that culture can be a set of fundamental ideas, practices, and experience of a group of people that are symbolically transmitted from generation to generation through a learning process. Further, culture refer to beliefs, norms, and attitudes that are used to guide one's behaviour and to solve human problems (Rong, 2013).

According to Idang (2015) culture entails a totality of traits and characters that are peculiar to a people to the extent that it marks them out from other peoples or societies. These specific traits go on to include the people's language, dressing, music, work, arts, religion, dancing, a people's social norms, taboos and values. This understanding builds on that of Rathje's (2009, p.35) who claims that "the most common understanding of culture is one that imagines a high level of internal uniformity within a social system." Previously, this concept was limited to contexts of ethnicity or nationality (e.g., "Italians dress smartly"), while today common characteristics are often ascribed to quite different social systems of various sizes (e.g. "the liberal values of the Christian-European West"). Miller (2008) and Fasset (2013) concur and

describe culture as a set of socially acquired traditions shaped by lifestyles, a system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviours, and artefacts that members of society use to cope with their world and with one another, and that are transmitted from generation to generation through learning.

The above-mentioned understandings reinforce the notion that culture is generally continuous, cumulative, and progressive (Fleras & Elliot, 2002; Leininger, 2002). These ideas garner support from age old understandings of culture. For example, Fafunwa (1974) stated that the continuity of culture it is passed on as a generational heritage. The child just grows into and within the cultural heritage of his people. Culture, in traditional society, is not taught; it is caught. The child observes, imbibes and mimics the action of his elders and siblings. He watches the naming ceremonies, religious services, marriage rituals, funeral obsequies. He witnesses the coronation of a king or chief, the annual yam festival, the annual dance and acrobatic displays of guilds and age groups or his relations in the activities. The child in a traditional society cannot escape his cultural and physical environments. Culture is thus regarded a powerful construct for explaining how groups, such as communities and organizations behave (Wildavsky, 1987).

Bello (1991) has a slightly different understanding of culture. Culture is:

> the totality of the way of life evolved by a people in their attempts to meet the challenge of living in their environment, which gives order and meaning to their social, political, economic, aesthetic and religious norms thus distinguishing a people from their neighbours (p. 189).

Aziza (2001) expanded on this view and asserted that

> culture refers to the totality of the pattern of behaviour of a particular group of people. It includes everything that makes them distinct from any other group of people for instance, their greeting habits, dressing, social norms and taboos, food, songs and dance patterns, rites of passages from birth, through marriage to death, traditional occupations, religious as well as philosophical beliefs (p. 31).

This view is supported by Sibal (2018) who states that culture is the way we live; it entails the food we eat, the clothes we wear, the language we speak, the stories we tell and the ways we celebrate. Further, culture is also peoples' roots. This includes possessing the knowledge of where ancestors come from and knowing family stories. Culture embraces all the aspects of human life and ways of communicating and interacting with other human beings.

Based on the descriptions and definitions provided in this literature review, culture in seen as comprising all the practices, beliefs and behaviours of a society, including how people think and express themselves. Culture is learned. Culture comprises the non-material and material (Little, 2016).

The material culture includes physical objects such as eating utensils, means of transport, tools and technology, clothing and some symbols that contribute to defining the society. Material culture is generally much easier to identify and to articulate than non-material culture. Though the non-material culture is looked at through different lenses these often overlap and include symbols, language, values and beliefs that define a particular society. These are often the less tangible aspects of culture and are sometimes difficult to discern. They focus more strongly on human behaviour and beliefs and are now briefly discussed.

2.2.1 The non-material elements of culture

2.2.1.1 Symbols

Every culture has different symbols. Every symbol has a specific meaning, and all symbols have emotions attached to them. Cohen (1969, p. 215, cited in Udechukwu, 2019) defines symbols to be "objects, arts, relationships or linguistic formations that stand ambiguously for a multiplicity of meanings." Some symbols are types of non- verbal communications, while others are material objects. A good example of a non-verbal symbol is the shaking of hands, which is done in some societies but not in others. In the western context shaking hands commonly conveys friendship and is also used as a form of greeting and departure (Axtell, 1998). Yet a handshake does not carry the same meaning for some Asian communities.

In many instances people of the same culture attach a specific meaning to an object, gesture sound or image. For example, Christians tend to view the cross not merely as two pieces of wood attached to each other, nor as an ancient object of torture and execution, but as a foundational symbol of their religion, as such the cross as a religious symbol is afforded great respect.

According to Udechukwu (2019) symbols can become a cultural artifact and be generally accepted in a community when they have the following characteristics:

- Symbols are meaningful through their setting in life. In order to understand the full implication of symbols, it is needful to appreciate the given situations of the people for whom the symbols are useful. For example, "without the history and full knowledge of traditional religion, all the objects of worship such as Ofo, Ikenga, white chalk/clothe, kola nut etc., will become meaningless" (p. 111).
- Symbols are meaningful only when there is consensus about the meaning. Symbols do not have meaning in themselves but have meaning as conferred to them in the society in which they are used. And this meaning must be generally accepted by the community in question, it is not an individual matter.
- Symbols in effect are mediators and givers of meaning of things and events. Symbols convey to people the full meaning and presence of the cultural practices that they represent.

Symbols in the African Society

Within diverse South African contexts, it is useful to know the different symbols of different societies. Examples of some symbols are provided and discussed from different authors, in relation to their cultural importance for this study. Early childhood education, like all other forms of education, is intended by the society that controls it to transmit important cultural values to the participants. Therefore, symbols might be deemed to have stronger meanings for young children in ECCE settings.

a) Animal symbols

Animals are very important in human existence as they constitute human food (Mbiti, 1999). Africans in general have many religious associations with them. For instance, in some African societies, the buffalo and lion are associated with God. The tortoise/chameleon symbolises the messenger who brought news from God that men should die. The dog, on the other hand, symbolises the messenger who should have brought news of immortality or resurrection, but

lingered on the way and the other slow animal overtook it and got to God first and delivered a death message. Even though the spider is a small creature, it appears in many myths and stories. Mbiti, (1999) asserts that, among the Akan and Ashanti who lives in Ghana and the Ivory Coast, the spider symbolizes wisdom. For that reason, God is given the title of "Ananse Kokroko" which means the "Great Spider" that is the "Wise One." Animal parts or bodies, like elephant tusk, eagle feather, python, tortoise, monkey, snail etc carry many symbolic meanings in their culture (Udechukwu, 2019).

b) Ritual Symbols

"Ritual" is defined as a set form of carrying out a religious action or ceremony (Mbiti 1991). It is also a means of communicating something of religious significance, through symbol, word or action. Therefore, a ritual embodies a belief or beliefs. Udechukwu (2019) adds that through rituals, people not only act out their religion but also communicate it to the younger generation. In addition, ritualistic symbols are the most valuable means for passing on the culture of a people from one generation to the other. An example is sacrificial symbolism belonging to the metaphysical world of ancestor worship, which is performed with the sole aim of appeasing the ancestors. This is called the act of *go phasa* (to sacrifice) or *go phasa badimo* (to sacrifice to ancestors) in North Sotho (Sepedi) in South Africa and is also a practice of other ethnic group such as the Nguni people (Sekhukhune, 1993, p. 68). The ritual may be performed for purposes of praying for the sick, telling of general difficulties and asking for relief, praying for the alleviation of an epidemic as well as giving thanks to ancestors. African beer is always the medium of sacrifice, and may be accompanied by slaughtering goats, sheep or cattle, white chicken (Sekhukhune, 1993).

c) Ancestral Symbols

In most traditional African societies, the elders of every family or community are regarded as the representatives of the ancestors, because of the role they play in providing guidance to the members of the family who are still young. These elderlies are acknowledged spiritual guardians of the community who also perform special rituals on behalf of their family or communities. Respect for the elders is often exploited and used as a symbol of repression and authority (Udechukwu, 2019). They are also believed to be the cohesive factors of the society and guardian of morality within the group. As part of the African traditional ethical behaviour in general. The young ones are quite often indoctrinated to accord due respect to these symbolic

representatives of the ancestors and must not defy their authority or they will feel the wrath of the ancestors (Alubafi & Kaunda, 2019).

d) Gestural Symbols

In Africa, gestures and body movement play an important part in religious ritual and in religious conduct of men, also in behaviour of young ones as well as showing of respect to different authoritative figures within the community/society. Such behaviours and gestures derived their meanings from the relationship to the sacred. Procession of masquerades during festivals are done not only to signify appearing before the sacred presence, but also to enhance the sacred power. When kneeling down in prayers the worshippers approach the realm under the mould and also demonstrate humility. Kneeling or crouching when interacting with people in authority is common and expected in many Africans communities (Mutonono, 2020). Children are socialized to kneel to elders in traditional culture to show respect and this becomes a deeply ingrained part of their way of life. Bowing down expresses reception and acceptance of sacred word of leader (Kaunda, 2016).

2.2.1.2 Values and beliefs

Mintz, (2019) contends that values could be described as broad principles that underlie beliefs which are specific statements that people hold to be true whether or not there is factual evidence to support this truth, and because of the complexities surrounding values they become difficult to define. According to Stewartetal (2009), values are deep seated beliefs about what is right or wrong and about what is important or unimportant. They are principles, standards or qualities that people care about and that contribute to driving people's behaviour. Values refer to the attitude, beliefs, behaviours, and actions that become the cherished and acceptable standards of behaviours which each society expects its members to abide by (Awoniyi, 2015). Further, Falade et al. (2009) define the term values as a coherent set of attitude, behaviour and action adopted and/or evolved by a person, organization, or society as a standard to guide its behaviour and preferences in all situations.

Griffiths and Keirns (2015) argue that the first, and possibly most crucial elements of culture are values and beliefs. Values are an important cultural standard for distinguishing what is good and just in society. Further, they are of the view that values are deeply embedded and critical for transmitting and teaching a society about their cultural beliefs (Griffiths & Keirns, 2015).

Values are cultural elements that define what is good or bad, accepted or unaccepted, and are shared by members of that culture as a system that outlines what is good and what is bad. Within this understanding of cultural values, are the core principles and ideals upon which an entire community exists. The core principles comprise several parts including customs, which are traditions and rituals; values, which are beliefs; and culture, which contains all of the group's guiding values. This also includes social, moral, religious, political, aesthetic and economic values (Idang, 2015).

In conclusion, good ECCE teachers' practices are expected to uphold the expected values, moral and beliefs to help children to be able to distinguish and define what is good or bad, accepted or unaccepted according to their society. Failure to impart this value education system, children might become drug addicts, consume alcohol, gamble and enter into anti-social activities.

2.2.1.3 Language

Language is regarded as one of the most important and extensive sets of symbols in cultural transmission. Okon (2007) views the role of language as being very important in any society because it makes it possible for the members of the society to interact easily with each other. Language like culture is transmitted from generation to generation. It is predominately through language that communities tell stories, dramatize situations, express emotions and analyse and advocate ideas - and in so doing transmit cultural practices to new community members (Roberts, 2010). Language is a communication tool used by everyone in their daily life as a means to convey information and arguments to others (Rabiah, 2012). Therefore, language cannot be separated from culture because it is through language that societies cultural practices are shared, and these practices have a close relationship to the attitudes and/or behaviours of groups of speakers of the languages. According to Okon et al. (2012) language, communication and culture features in all societies, and they therefore claim that culture is communication and communication is culture (idib, 2012). Language and culture are irrevocably intertwined. Rabiah (2012) reinforce the close relationship between language and culture and claims that language is strongly influenced by culture and shapes peoples' ways of thinking about cultural matters. Summing up, Okon et.al. (2012) assert that there is no society without a culture and language performs its function as a vehicle for cultural transmission. Culture and language are the two things that cannot be separated (Rabiah, 2012).

The importance therefore of language as a means of communication both for general purposes as well as for transmission of cultural practices cultural transmission cannot be underestimated. As Simanjuntak (2012) argues it is frequently through language that we are able to adapt to a situation place. In ECCE centres therefore how teachers engage with children through language is an essential underpinning component of good teaching. The role of language as a tool for cultural transmission will be further investigated in Chapter 3 when Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory is interrogated.

2.3 THE THIRD CULTURE KIDS CONCEPT (TCKS)

Because of a variety of circumstances, many children spend a significant part of their formative years in cultural environments that differ from that of the family. Some conventional reasons for this disruption to the children's environments include parents who are constantly moving from one place to another because of, for instance study, international business, military placements, and immigration. The American sociologist Ruth Hill in the 1960s coined the term 'third culture kids' (TCKs) to describe this cohort of children. Frequently these children are exposed to varying cultural practices that are influenced amongst other things by political views, educational resources as well as economic status. Often the language of teaching and learning is also different from their mother tongue.

TCKs are placed in contexts where frequently traditionally held cultural beliefs and practices are disrupted. This traditional view relates culture to ethnicity. Idang (2015) holds that it is within each ethnic group that the cultural elements (symbols, values, beliefs, norms, language) are passed down from one generation to another and thus preserved. Goto & Chan (2003) challenge this view and suggest that cultural groups are based upon individuals who are the primary building blocks. They assert that these individuals bring with them their past experiences based on socialisation and knowledge that have been reinforced by influential others such as peers, social groups, family members and co-workers. When attributes are shared from different people, it results to the formation of a different/ new culture.

Limberg and Lambie, (2011) and Mafela (2012) support this view of culture being more dynamic and being able to adapt according to different contexts. They suggest that this cultural adaptation is experienced by many people who are international rovers. And often it is the children who are most affected because they attend schools in other locations that could be

very different to their place of origin. TCKs are described as individuals who having spent a significant part of the developmental years in a culture other than the parents' culture, develop a sense of relationship to all the cultures while not having full ownership in any (Pollock & Van Reken, 2001). Elements from each culture are incorporated into the life experience, but the sense of belonging is in relationship to others with whom they share similar experience.

Lijadi and van Schalkwyk (2014, p. 2) extend these views of TCKs to include three cultural statuses. The first cultural status is the TCKs parents' home country (or countries). The second culture is the one they are raised in during their primary developmental years, and their third culture also referred to as interstitial culture is an abstract culture that is created from their shared experiences and relationships with people from other cultures living the same lifestyle. This idea of a third culture was suggested by Waiters and Auton-Cuff (2009, p. 755) who stated that, "the 'third' culture refers to a created culture that is neither the 'home' culture nor the host 'culture'; it is the culture between cultures". It is this third culture, rather than the first or second culture that gives them a sense of belonging and being understood among others with similar experiences (Lijadi, & van Schalkwyk, 2014).

This argument could be extended to include many South African contexts and children. Though they do not necessarily leave the country or even the province of their birth, because they are placed in centres that are culturally disparate from their family cultural practices they could be viewed as TCKs. Parents place their young children in centres that differ both culturally and linguistically from the home context. Children spend a significant amount of time experiencing the 'second culture' to the detriment of their primary culture. If children are able to adapt and assimilate the third culture created from their shared experiences and relationships with people from other cultures, they possibly develop a sense of belonging and feeling of acceptance because they are amongst others who are sharing similar situations despite the cultural diversity experienced within the group.

2.4 THE CONCEPT OF DIVERSITY

Diversity is a subjective phenomenon that is created by group members themselves, who based on their different social identities, categorize others as similar or dissimilar (Mazur, 2010). A group is diverse if it is composed of individuals who base their own social identity of different characteristics (O'Reilly et al., 1998). Loden and Rosener (1991) define diversity

as that which differentiates one group of people from another along primary and secondary dimensions. Later a third dimension was added by Arrendondo (2004). These dimensions are briefly described and are outlined in Table 2.1

Primary dimensions are those that exert primary influences on our identities, such as gender, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, age and mental or physical abilities and characteristics. Mazur (2010) asserts that these primary dimensions are responsible for shaping our basic self-image as well as our fundamental world views. In addition, these primary dimensions have most impact on groups in the workplace and society.

Secondary dimensions of diversity are said to be less visible and exert a more variable influence on personal identity, adding a more subtle richness to the primary dimensions of diversity. Educational background, religion, first language, family status, work style, geographic location, work experience, military experience, organizational role and level, income and communication style are regarded as secondary dimensions. These dimensions impact our self-esteem and self-definition (Mazura, 2010).

The third dimension is the tertiary dimension that according to Mazura, 2010 encompasses historical moments experienced by individuals. It is important to note that Mazura (2010) asserts that the dimensions appearing in the table below (Table 2.1) are only some possibilities and the list is in no way exhaustive.

TABLE 2.1: THE THREE DIMENSIONS OF DIVERSITY

Primary dimensions	**Secondary dimensions**	**Tertiary dimensions**
• Race • Ethnicity • Gender • Age • Disability • Culture • Social class • Language	• Religion • Culture • Sexual orientation • Thinking style • Geographic origin • Family status • Lifestyle • Economic status • Political orientation • Work experience • Education • Language	• Beliefs • Assumptions • Perceptions • Attitudes • Feelings • Values • Group norms

	• Nationality • Healthcare beliefs • Recreational interests	

(Adapted from Rijamampinina & Carmichael, 2005.)

Table 2.1 shows that diversity has many dimensions which may link to produce unique syntheses of human profiles, made up of both differences and similarities. Rijamampinina and Carmichael (2005, cited in Mazura, 2010) assert that the dimensions interact with and influence one another, therefore emerging differently in different contexts, environments and circumstances. This leads to the position and dominance of each dimension not being static. Rather they are dynamic, making the concept of diversity more complex, not easier to grasp and manage. Harvey and Allard (2005, cited in Booysen, 2007) assert that this complexity has resulted in much debate around topics of diversity in the USA.

The debates have taken place around various topics of diversity and related subjects such as affirmative action, understanding and valuing both differences and diversity, pluralism, multiculturalism and inclusion. Booysen (2007) contends that by placing all the above-mentioned topics under the umbrella of diversity creates confusion. The confusion becomes more intense because diversity is seen as akin to affirmative action in America. This situation is synonymous with what is happening in South Africa (Van der Wal & Ramotsehoa, 2001; Booysen et al. 2002, cited in Booysen, 2007). It is therefore very appropriate to clarify the use of the concept diversity in this study, especially as it pertains to cultural diversity.

In addition, the recent calls within higher education for decolonisation and Africanisation of the curriculum add further support to unpack the meaning of diversity (Mbembe, 2016**)**. This call has been extended to the ECCE sector where a number of policy documents such as the National Curriculum Framework (DBE, 2015) and the National Integrated Policy document for ECCE (DSD, 2017) have highlighted the detrimental effects of discrimination and inequality on the growth and development of young children. Therefore, the call for the promotion of cultural heritage and diversity is important. However, it is more than just showing appreciation and respect. It requires children to be assisted in learning to understand what it

means and how to appreciate cultural diversity. Teachers therefore need to appropriate input to help children develop this understanding.

O'Mara (1994) gives a detailed outline of what comprises diversity. Diversity includes "race, gender, age, language, physical characteristics, disability, sexual orientation, economic status, parental status, education, geographic origin, profession, lifestyle, religion, position in the company hierarchy, and any other difference." (p. 115). Loden and Rosener (1991) in April & Shockley (2007) concur and define diversity as the vast array of physical and cultural differences that constitute the spectrum of human diversity. Likewise, Esty et al. (1995) claim that diversity is about acknowledging and understanding, accepting and valuing differences among people with respect to age, class, race, ethnicity, gender, disabilities). Hence, for these authors, diversity centres on difference.

Thomas (1995) on the other hand describes diversity as any mixture of items characterised by differences and similarities. He further states that the items of a diversity mixture include differences and similarities between and among races, ages, genders, educational levels, religious affiliations, geographical origins, and work styles. Rooseveldt (1995, p. 246) agrees with Thomas and states, "Diversity refers to any mixture of items characterised by differences and similarities." Fasset, 2013 uses the metaphor of fruit to explain how something can be both similar and different at the same time. Using pictures of different fruit, he indicates their difference and highlights their similarities – they are all fruit and they all come from South Africa.

Within the South African context Magubane (2006) and Neuliep (2012) explore understandings of diversity from an ethnic perspective. They refer to South African ethnic cultures such as Isizulu and Sesotho as comprising a diverse people who can subscribe to a specific micro-culture in their local communities, with their own vernacular, ethos and expectation. Diversity for this study especially in the ECCE context is seen as comprising both difference and similarities because for example children are the same, might be placed in different age groups, be at different developmental stages but they are all treated as children. They are from different ethnic cultural background therefore teachers are expected to acknowledge that in their daily practices.

The previously mentioned definitions of culture predominately speak to diversity between different cultural groups. It is also important to note from these definitions, that diversity is not

synonymous with differences but encompasses both differences and similarities simultaneously. If similarities are recognised and differences respected this view will influence how young children in ECCE centres are constructed and in turn ECCE practices are shaped.

2.5 CONSTRUCTIONS OF CHILDREN AND CHILDHOOD

No two views about children or childhood will be the same. Just as we have different understandings of what comprises culture and cultural diversity, so we have different views of children. These views shape the contexts in which children develop and learn as well as their experiences. These contexts and experiences are determined, amongst other factors, by cultural beliefs and practices. It is therefore pertinent to explore understandings of children and how childhood is constructed as ECCE teachers' practices will be influenced by these understandings.

Constructions of children and childhood are discussed under two sub-headings, namely How is childhood constructed' and 'Constructions of childhood: their meanings for ECCE practice'. Given the influence of colonialism of ECCE practices in South Africa (Pence & Nsamenang, 2008) these constructs are firstly be explored from the traditional western perspective. They are then examined though alternative lenses including African views of childhood.

2.5.1 How is childhood constructed?

The words 'children' and 'childhood' are not new, yet according to Hendrick (1997) it is only in the latter part of the nineteenth century that scholars began to pay attention to the actual in-depth meanings of these words. The starting point for understanding childhood as both a historical and social construct is credited to French sociologist Ariès who in 1962 stated that the idea of childhood did not exist in medieval society; children were viewed as simply being "little adults" who before the age of seven required no special attention. Ariès (1962) claimed that in medieval times children entered the adult world at the age of about seven and that they were not perceived to be different from anyone else, including adults. In support of this argument, Boakye-Boaten (2010) suggested that the status of a person in the medieval period was not determined by age or physical maturation, but by a person's ability to contribute to production or mingle with adults. However, Johnny (2006) claims that even though children were immersed into the workforce at a young age, adults still recognized the distinct nature of children. For Ariès (1962) however, it was not until the late seventeenth century that the

concept of childhood began to emerge. And this concept was shaped by the predominant sociocultural and historical forces of the day.

Wagg (1992) and Kapadia (2014) acknowledge that defining childhood is challenging as it is culturally and socio-historically constructed (like so many other vitally important aspects of social life – gender, health and youth etc.). In other words, childhood is what members of particular societies, at particular times, and in particular places, say it is. Taking the argument further, Coşkunsu (2015) concluded that the concept childhood is too complex to be fully understood from a single perspective, due to its time-, history-, region-, culture-, and memory-situated nature. In addition, Clark (2016) notes that the more we try to pin down and identify what we mean by childhood, the more slippery a concept it turns out to be, because childhood is a cultural and social invention. There can be no agreed definition of childhood, without reference to the social context and perceptions within which childhood is experienced. Thus, there cannot be a meaningful definition of childhood that could hold true for all societies and cultures; the definition will always vary according to cultural norms and expectations (Kapadia, 2014; Clark, 2016). These cultural norms and expectations will be based in different communities, countries, ethnic groups as well as the era in which they exist.

The historical context, according to Wilkie, (2000) and Baxter (2005) makes it even more difficult to establish a precise definition of childhood. Pem (2015) noted the impact of historical context on childhood and children. He commented that the physical and intellectual development could be stunted by strenuous work, chronic disease unsanitary living conditions and poor recovery and treatment as the result of the of the environment in which they worked and lived. Crawford et al. (2018) support this claim and give the example of childhood in the nineteenth century where they state it was complicated by the liminal status of working children, as they inhabited social and workspaces which in middle-class life were firmly associated with adulthood. In more modern times, Kapadia (2014) remarks how the 21st century new technologies, novel approaches to information gathering and many demands and challenges have had their effects on the meaning of childhood. For example, very young middle-class children use cell phones, iPad and that has become an acceptable childrearing practice.

James and James, (2008) argue strongly for the social construction of childhood. They define social construction as “a theoretical perspective that explores the ways in which ’reality’ is negotiated in everyday life through people’s interactions and through sets of discourses” (2008:

122). In other words, it relates to the idea that different 'realities' arise from the interactions people have with each other and their environment and that not all societies in the world have the same concept of childhood, which proves that childhood is neither universal nor natural (James & James, 2008; Sultan & Torill, 2016). Thus, childhood is socially constructed; however, it differs from society to society and context to context based on differences in cultures and beliefs. Furthermore, childhood also differs even in the very same society, depending on other social factors for example gender and social class (Sultan & Torill,2016). Norozi (2016) concurs with the idea that childhood is socially constructed and refers to the understanding that childhood is not a natural process, rather it is society which decides when a child is a child and when a child becomes an adult.

Different perspectives therefore offer diverse explanations to the concept childhood and what it entails. These diverse perspectives will influence ECCE provisioning. For example, it is 'society' that decides on what is a suitable age to commence early learning, 'society' that determines when a child goes to formal school and 'society' that determines the learning content. These factors are all driven by 'societies' understandings of children and childhood and often this understanding does not consider the children's contexts, experiences and cultural practices (Mac Naughton, 2005).

Often, the dominant perspective is the one that informs decisions about children and childhood. For example, UNICEF, (2005) captures a more modern acceptance of childhood but this endorses the traditional western perspective of childhood. It sees childhood as:

> the time for children to be in school and at play, to grow strong and confident with the love and encouragement of their family and an extended community of caring adults. It is a precious time in which children should live free from fear, safe from violence and protected from abuse and exploitation. As such, childhood means much more than just the space between birth and the attainment of adulthood. It refers to the state and condition of a child's life, to the quality of those years" (p. 1).

This understanding is one, that since the latter part of the 20th century, has influenced ECD movements worldwide and has shaped early childhood service provisioning. Its influence has also been felt in South Africa where many ECD policies and decisions have been underpinned by UNICEF (DBE, 2009; DSD, 2015). I would argue however, that these documents are somewhat idealistic; they do not necessarily consider the contexts of many of South Africa's

children, who grow up in dire socio-economic circumstances (May et al., 2020). Perhaps unintentionally, they have tended to understand childhood from a single universal western perspective (Dahlberg et al., 2013).

As this discussion has shown childhood is a complex phenomenon that defies easy definition or description. In the next section I will unpack some of the different constructions of childhood and show how these constructions could influence ECCE practices.

2.5.2 Constructions of childhood: their meanings for ECCE practice

As already mentioned, childhood is created and defined by society; it is what members of particular societies, at particular times and in particular places say it is. Childhood is an historical, socio-cultural construction.

2.5.2.1 Constructions of childhood: traditional western perspectives

Dahlberg et al. (2007; 2013) offer four interesting constructions of childhood which are predominately influenced by a more 'scientific approach' which has attempted to embrace a set of assumptions concerning the truth about the world (MacNaughton, 2003). This 'truth' has been refined in accordance with the principles of paediatrics, medical hygiene, and child psychology (Hendrick, 1997). These constructions are: the child as 'knowledge, identity and culture reproducer; the child as an innocent, in the golden age of life; the young child as nature…or as the scientific child of biological stages; and the child as labour market supply factor. Each of these constructions is briefly discussed.

The child as knowledge, identity and culture reproducer

In this construction the child is seen as an empty vessel or tabula rasa – Locke's child. The child starts life with nothing. Relevant knowledge, skills and dominant predetermined and socially sanctioned cultural values are imparted to the young child with the aim of getting the child school ready and preparing the child for successful progress though life (Dahlberg et al., 2007). This child begins a journey starting from the incompleteness of childhood to the maturity and full human status of adulthood. The child is in the process of becoming an adult. Within the ECD context this construction of childhood determines a particular learning and teaching programme possibly negating the child's own capabilities and cultural heritage.

The child as an innocent, in the golden age of life

This age-old construction is based on the views of French educationist Jean Jacques Rousseau. The child is viewed as being innocent, possibly even a bit primitive. This construction involves a fear of the unknown - that which is uncontrollable - and a form of sentimentalisation. Because of adults perceived young children to be innocence and helpless, they have a deep desire to protect the child from a potentially harmful and violent world. However, as Dahlberg et al. (1999; 2007) comment, hiding children away from a world of which they are already a part is self-deceptive on the part of the adult as well as showing children that they are not taken seriously or respected. From an ECD perspective the teacher who constructs a child in this way will tend to be overprotective and possibly not encourage the child to take sufficient responsibilities for their actions. In so doing the teacher might negate important cultural practices and beliefs held by the child and their family.

The young child as nature…or as the scientific child of biological stages

This construction closely relates to the previous two constructs, but the emphasis is placed on the notion of all children having universal characteristics and inherent capabilities. Development is biologically determined (Dahlberg et al., 1999; 2007). This construction results in a normalised child; ones whose growth and development dependent upon notions of maturity or stages of development – this is a universal child made up of many different developmental domains (Dahlberg et al. 1999; MacNaughton, 2003). Despite talk of the importance of holistic development the construction of this child is frequently reduced to separate measurable domains of development; often with an emphasis on cognition (MacNaughton, 2003; Dahlberg et al., 2007). Cultural determinants and the idea of a child having agency have little purchase in this construction.

The child as labour market supply factor

This fourth understanding, according to Dahlberg et al. (2007) is becoming increasingly influential in the western world. It stems from the twentieth century's construction of motherhood and the demands of an industrialised world where parents, particularly mothers, have to leave the home to work. The argument is thus: the biological construction of children necessitates that they require exclusive maternal care. Absence of this type of care could be harmful and distort children's attachments to their mothers and/or other people (Bowlby, 1969). But changing economic and social conditions with more women entering the labour market make it increasingly difficult to meet this perceived need for exclusive maternal care (Dahlberg et al., 2007). Plus, the 'traditional two parent family' is on the decline (if this ever

was a norm in South Africa). These factors have led to a further construction of children as a labour market supply factor. Viewed from this construction various groups and organisations are now investing in non-maternal childcare with varying impact on the quality of ECD service provisioning. Where ECD provisioning becomes an economic driven service consideration of children's contexts, experiences and the reinforcement of their cultural practices are often negated (Dahlberg et al., 2013).

The significance of these different constructions

All four constructions tend to depict a dependent, needy and under-developed child and a childhood that has been made into a very specific kind of age-graded and age-related condition (James & Prout, 1990) where these needs (which are acknowledged to be variable and many) have been prioritised. These constructions that reinforce the image of a universal, one model fits all, understanding of childhood has continue to gain traction. This is evident in the dominant traditional western construction of the developmental child, which draw on the four constructions mentioned above and remains extremely influential in modern times.

Construction of the 'traditional western developmental child'

This construction of childhood draws heavily on the work of developmental theorists such as Arnold Gessell, a maturational theorist; Jean Piaget, a cognitive constructivist; Vygotsky, a social constructivist; and Erikson, a psychosocial theorist. These theorists developed an age and stage approach towards development which outlined specific ages by when children should reach specific milestones. This construction embraces all four constructions outlined by Dahlberg et al. 2007.

Though developmental milestones have relevance for guiding the young child's development and learning an overemphasis on reaching predetermined milestones has resulted in a deficit model of construction of children (MacNaughton, 2003). In fact, as early as 1992 Wagg argued, for example, that although all humans go through the same stages of physical development, different cultures construct or define these stages differently. Consequently, these stages cannot be viewed in the same way and there is no single universal childhood experience (Wagg, 1992; MacNaughton, 2003; Dahlberg et al., 2007). Despite this construction of childhood being heavily criticized in recent years it remains a dominant model and is the model which informs the South African ECCE curriculum (DSD, 2015) and as such has relevance for this research study.

An important criticism of this traditional model is that the child development norms have been standardised on white middle class American children. These children have very different cultural practices and experiences from the average South African child. Hence the identified milestones are not necessarily applicable to South African populations. In an attempt to address some of these criticisms early learning outcome measurements (ELOMS) have been drawn up for the South African population (DSD, 2015). However, ELOMs cannot account for and regulate all the factors that influence development. Children's specific contexts, their cultural practices, their daily experiences will all have an influence on the child's development and learning. As Woodhead noted in 1990, p. 65 "If one delves a little bit more deeply there are a range of complicated personal and cultural values alongside empirical claims about childhood". As such, different material and cultural forces that define the features of childhood need to be recognised and acknowledged.

Woodhead (1990) argues that cultural values can be readily overlooked in a homogeneous society as it becomes easier to share a normative framework of cultural practices and values. In a diverse society, simple generalisations about children's needs are problematic. In diverse societies it becomes important to distinguish the 'scientific from the evaluative, the natural from the cultural' (p.73). In other words, various contexts, for example, historical, social and cultural experiences and expectations should be considered when interacting with and teaching young children.

Despite highlighting the importance of the social and cultural components that construct childhood, Woodhead (1990) argues that a consideration of children's developmental needs cannot be entirely abandoned. Jungmann and Brand (2012) assert that development is necessary but not sufficient as childhood is a period of immaturity and dependency which requires judgments made for children. The length of the dependency and the cultural articulation of what is in their best interests will vary from society to society and from time to time (Woodhead, 1990; Boyden, 1990; Rogoff, 2003).

Nsamenang (2008) offers support for these arguments when he suggests that an Africentric approach to ECD should draw on long standing traditions and heritages as well as modern perspectives. Norozi (2016) concurs and suggests that different perspectives can offer diverse explanations to the concept childhood and what it entails as well as influence the type and quality of ECCE provisioning. These criticisms have resulted in constructions of childhood from alternative perspectives.

2.5.2.2 Constructions of childhood: An African perspective

Dahlberg et al. (2013) blame science (positivism and rationalism) for the rigid view of childhood based on Western understandings, not taking into consideration different perspectives that can offer diverse explanations to the concept childhood. Aruldoss (2011) claims that social constructions not only differ at the cultural or material level they also differ at the individual or institutional level. In a modern society, individuals, professionals, service institutions and policy communities all construct their own version of childhood based on their subjective understandings, experiences and theoretical perspectives. Hence it becomes essential to consider constructions of children from an African perspective especially in the light of Higgs' (2008) statement that with colonialization and the introduction of schooling, African cultural practices, philosophies and beliefs were totally disregarded. This even though African traditional education, like any effective system of education, was based on sound philosophical foundations or principles (Higgs, 2008).

In most traditional African communities, children are highly valued. Child-rearing practices are informed by indigenous knowledge systems, which have been accumulated over centuries and form the basis of African traditional lifestyles, as well as education. The traditional system was similar in most African countries and involved intellectual, physical and attitudinal training for children to develop into acceptable adults who could take their place in society (Gwanfogbe, 2011). In traditional African culture, children, sometimes no older than toddlers, were introduced to traditional practices. It was accepted that by partaking in domestic tasks, children not only developed physical skills, but also self-esteem and self-efficacy as their endeavours were recognised by family and community members (Nsamenang, 2008). Cognitive abilities, technical skills and local cultural competencies develop in parallel. For example, numeracy is stimulated as children learn to recognise (and count) family cattle by the patterns on their hides and children who help parents to sell vegetables learn about profit (Nsamenang, 2008). The African education experience was strictly set up to prepare the young for society in the African community and not necessarily for life outside the ethnic community (Nsamenang & Lamb, 1994).

Cultural norms were included in many everyday practices such as storytelling, the sharing of proverbs and myths and this was based on a strong oral tradition. For example, in South Africa, various proverbs reinforce the importance of appropriate socialisation and early

learning. Proverbs in Sepedi (North Sotho) such as *ga le ile go baba leraka, le tswa modung wa lona* (the way a child is brought up is the way they grow) and *thupa e kobja e sa le meetse, ya oma e a robega* (a tree must be straightened while still young) remind adults that the child's character will be a reflection of the socialising process that the child undergoes. Learning was seen as practical, needs-based and driven by cultural relevance, and it was a lifelong process.

For instance, Marfo and Biersteker (2011) note that, in most African cultures, music and dance are notably rich dimensions and children participate from an early age coupled with play that is inclusive of multi age groups and children with physical handicaps. Yet, indigenous games are seldom deployed as resources for enrichment in ECCE) programmes in Africa (Mtonga 2012).

Thus, within the diverse South African contexts ECCE teachers must consider different understandings of children and childhood to ensure that they [teachers] adopt a contextually and culturally responsive approach all children regardless of, for example, their religion, ethnic group and cultural practices. One way of attempting to implement a contextually and culturally responsive approach that is also nurturing and developmentally appropriate is by viewing children through yet another lens, that of the *belonging, being* and *becoming* child.

2.5.2.3 Constructing childhood through an alternative lens: The belonging, being and becoming child

These three perspectives on the *belonging* child, the *being* child and the *becoming* child are now further discussed as indicated in Chapter 1. They offer a fresh lens through which to construct children. They are not three distinct and separate constructs. They should be seen as interrelated and interlinked concepts to explain the multiplicities of childhood and children. This holistic view acknowledges how diverse and complex the ideas are and safeguards issues of diversity, equity and inclusion. This construct is depicted in Figure 2.1.

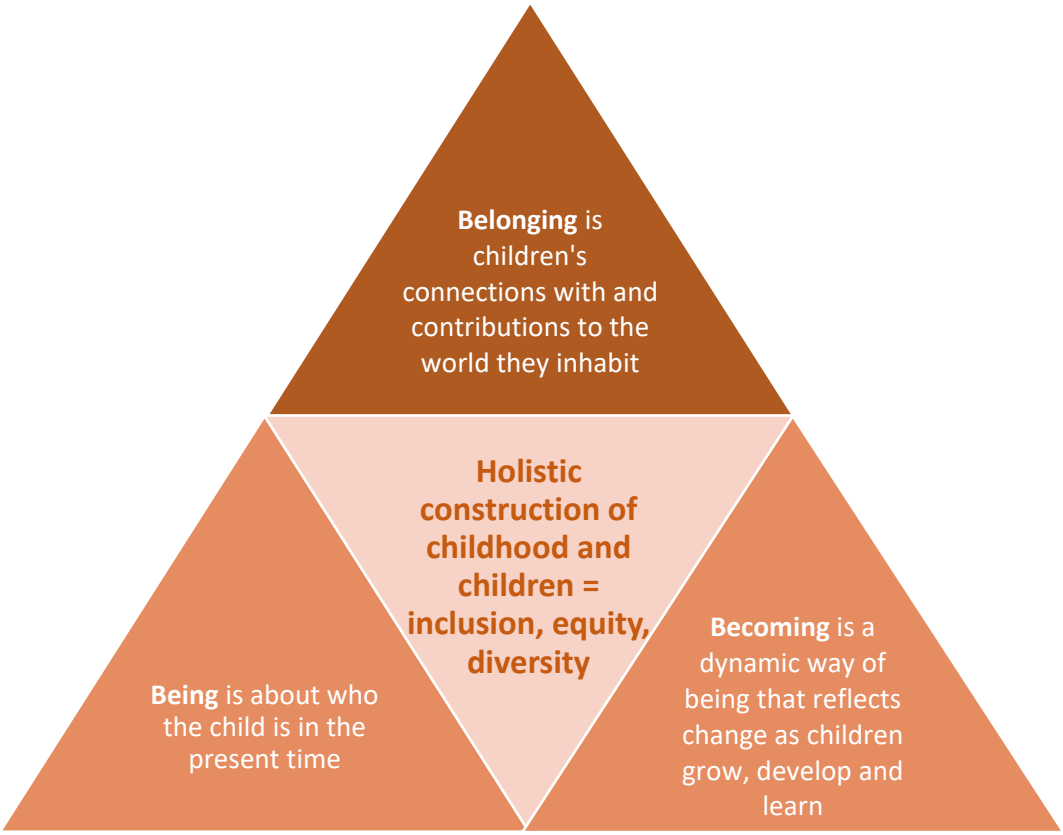


FIGURE 2.1: THE HOLISTIC CONSTRUCTION OF CHILDHOOD AND CHILDREN (Excell & Martin, 2020)

From conception, children are connected to families, communities, cultures and places. Children's development, growth and learning take place through these relationships. The family is the child's first and most influential teacher. Children's interests develop through their participation in daily life, and through this participation they construct their own identity and understanding of the world.

In relation to *belonging,* knowing where and with whom you belong is pivotal to human existence. We belong to multiple groupings – the family, cultural groups, neighbourhood groups and the wider community (DECS, 2008)- (See the discussion on Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological theory in Chapter 3). When children have a sense of belonging, they engage and participate with others in meaningful ways. Positive relationships are crucial to a sense of belonging in early childhood settings. Belonging shapes who children are and who they can become. Therefore, it is fundamental to the constructs of being and becoming.

The notion of the *belonging* child emphasises the cultural rather than the biological nature of children's development. Culture does not mean ethnicity or race, but rather the forms of cultural development that are passed down from one generation to the next. These include values, ethics, morals, concepts and specific ways of thinking about and doing things valued in a particular community (Fleer and Veresov, 2018, p. 16). Although biological influences are not discounted, the child's development is framed as a cultural process that is determined by the community in which the child grows and develops. Within the ECCE context, relationships with parents, teachers, peers and significant others are important to establish a sense of belonging in this space. Belonging allows children' to relate with others, and that form the basis of relationships in defining identities. In early childhood, and throughout life, relationships are crucial to a sense of belonging (DECS, 2008).

The construct of *being* acknowledges who the child is now and how, in the present time, the child seeks and makes meaning of their world (DECS, 2008). It includes how children build and maintain relationships with others, how they participate in meaningful ways on a day-to-day basis, how they appreciate the joy and complexities of childhood, and how they meet the daily challenges of their everyday lives. Consequently, the focus of the early years of childhood should not only be on preparation for the future, but should also focus on the here and now, i.e., the present time. Uprichard (2008 cited in James & James, 2004) and James and Prout (1997) mentioned that the 'being' child is seen as a social actor in his or her own right, a child who is actively constructing his or her own 'childhood', and who has views and experiences about being a child.

The *becoming* child refers to the rapid and significant changes that occur during childhood. Children's identities, knowledges, understandings, competencies, skills, relationships, attitudes and values are continually being shaped and reshaped during childhood. Consequently, the becoming child is moulded by different events, circumstances and interactions with significant others in their lives. Becoming reflects this process of change and development as children grow and learn. The emphasis is on learning to participate as full and active members of a society. Because becoming implies something yet to come (i.e., what the child will grow and develop into), it is often related to developmental theory where the focus is predominantly on child development (age- and stage-related milestones), which leads to a narrow interpretation of becoming. Uprichard (2008) assert that the 'becoming' child is seen as an 'adult in the making', who is lacking universal skills and features of the 'adult' that they

will become. Burman (2008) maintains that these established ideas about the becoming child in early childhood education are characterised by an entrenched and unquestioning adherence to developmentalism.

In sum, these perspectives on the belonging, being and becoming child provide the ECCE teacher with a way of considering each child's unique personal circumstances and potential. This understanding of children and childhood allows the teacher to consider each child's specific context and helps to ensure that the teacher adapts and adjusts her/his practice to meet each child's unique needs and interests that are informed by their cultural contexts.

2.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter examined important concepts that underpinned this study. It gave an extensive overview of culture, providing different definitions and outlining how this concept and its elements are understood globally. It introduced the concept of the Third Culture Kids as a way of understanding some of the specific cultural challenges experienced by children in the diverse South African context. The concept of diversity was also discussed. The meaning of diversity was unpacked and its relevance to this study explored. Different constructions of children and childhood were interrogated. The chapter concluded that a constructive way forward for ECCE teachers to recognise and support children from diverse cultural contexts could be to change the way they construct children and childhood and consider the notion of the belonging, being and becoming child.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3. 1 INTRODUCTION

The concepts of culture and cultural diversity are complicated and complex, therefore a combination of two theories is used as I realised that no one theory can offer a comprehensive explanation of these concepts, as well as offer an analytical tool for exploring teachers' practices. The study is thus underpinned by Vygotsky's Socio- Cultural Theory as well as the Bioecological Systems Theory of Bronfenbrenner (1994).

Vygotsky's Socio- Cultural Theory promotes the construction of knowledge through a socio-cultural lens where both the child and the teacher actively co-construct knowledge. Gordon and Browne (2014) state that Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory focuses on a child as a whole and incorporates ideas of culture and values into child development and learning, particularly the areas of language and self-identity. Bronfenbrenner Bioecological Systems Theory emphasizes the importance of studying children in multiple environments in the attempt to understand their development. According to Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, children generally find themselves enmeshed in various bio ecosystems, from the most intimate home ecological system to the larger school system, and then to the most expansive system which includes society and culture. Each of these bio ecological systems inevitably interact with and influence each other in all aspects of the children's lives.

Thus, these theories are suitable and appropriate to use in this study as they sought to find out if culture and cultural diversity are realized in ECCE daily activities in those chosen centres in Polokwane.

3.2 VYGOTSKY'S SOCIO-CULTURAL THEORY

Shabani, Khatib and Ebadi (2010) assert that sociocultural theory of mind attempts to account for the processes through which learning and development take place. In this theory De Valenzuela (2006) rightly points out that cognitive development is seen not as unfolding in a biologically driven sequence, but as emerging as a result of interactions within a cultural and historical context. In this view, learning is seen as leading, or fostering, cognitive development.

According to Vygotsky (1978) learning is situated within a particular culture and society which enables knowledge to become contextually defined and relevant. He claimed that both development and learning are strongly entrenched in culture. Understandings of culture have been interrogated in Chapter 2, but in brief culture can be said to comprise a peoples' total way of life; their food, knowledge, norms, and values (Idang, 2015). Hence, Vygotsky's theory becomes important in informing this study as cultural diversity is informed by a community way of life and this influences teachers' interactions with the children they teach. The socio-cultural theoretical perspective of Vygotsky seeks to explain the growth of an individual in terms of opportunities, guidance and support provided through the broader cultural context (Daniels, 1999). The central idea is that knowledge is socially constructed through interaction with a more capable another person. Learning and teaching are embedded or situated within specific cultural contexts (Dockett & Perry 2004). This view therefore has relevance for teachers' understandings of culture and cultural diversity and how these understandings influence their daily practice.

3.2.1 Fundamental tenets of socio-cultural theory

Socio-cultural theory is defined by four fundamental concepts, namely, (a) the important role of social interaction in learning; (b) language which is an essential tool in the learning process and the primary means of mediation; (c) the notion of the more knowledgeable other (MKO) and that person's role in the learning process; and (d) the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). These tenets will each be discussed separately even though they are closely interrelated, non- hierarchical and connected to each other. They all emphasise the important place of socio-cultural contexts in the learning process.

3.2.1.1 Social interaction

Vygotsky (1978) asserts that thinking has social origins, and social interactions play a vital role, especially when it comes to the development of higher order thinking skills. Further, Vygotsky contends that cognitive development cannot be fully understood without considering the social and historical context within which it is embedded. Vygotsky stated (1978 p. 57) that, "every function in the child's cultural development appears twice, first between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological)." This statement can be understood to mean that it is through working with others on a variety of tasks that a child adopts socially shared experiences and associated effects and acquires useful strategies and

knowledge (Scott & Palincsar, 2013). Rogoff (1990) further notes that this process is referred to as guided participation, where a child actively acquires new culturally valuable skills and capabilities through a meaningful, collaborative activity with an assisting, more knowledgeable other (MKO). The concept is discussed later in this chapter.

Vygotsky (1987) noted that social interaction together with cultural artifacts form the most important part of child's psychological development. Simple things such as a pen, spoon, or table, as well as more complex things such as language, traditions, beliefs, arts, or science are regarded as cultural tools or artifacts (Shabani et al., 2010). All these cultural artifacts become an important means of sharing cultural heritage with children. As McLeod (2018) notes Vygotsky's emphasis is placed on social contributions to the process of child development. And many of these social contributions draw on cultural practices.

Matusov (2015, p. 315) further states that development is a "transformation of participation in a sociocultural activity" not a transmission of separate and different cultural knowledge or skills. Therefore, guided participation reveals Vygotskian view of cognitive development as the transformation of socially shared activities into internalized process, or an act of enculturation, meaning that the cultural surroundings also influence the cognitive development of a child (Polly, 2017).

Guided participation in socio-cultural theory is a form of mediation which is an important principle of this theory. Mediation is "purposeful guidance and support offered in a collaborative context to promote learning" (Excell & Linington, 2021) and refers to the role of teachers and MKOs in supporting the children's development and learning. It provides the necessary support structures to enable the child to reach next stage or level of capability.

Though Vygotsky used the term mediation, in the West this term has become synonymous with scaffolding which in western contexts is the more frequently referred to term. Kurt, (2020) states that Vygotsky viewed scaffolding as a tool for growth, by helping children achieve independence. Crain, (2016) suggests that this adult assistance is like a temporary scaffold that comes down when construction is finished. Children complete small, manageable steps in order to reach their goal. Working in social contexts collaborating with a skilled

instructor or more knowledgeable peers help children make connections between concepts. Obviously, language becomes an essential tool in the learning process.

3.2.1.2 Language: an essential tool in the learning process and the primary means of mediation

Language is the system of words or signs that people use to express thoughts and feelings. Language is an important learning tool in socio-cultural theory since it is culturally determined and is regarded as the thinking tool as well as an essential tool for imparting knowledge (Vygotsky,1978). Vygotsky (1978) therefore, regards language as an essential mediating tool and as the means of facilitating social interaction. Kozulin (1986, cited in Burkholder & Peláez, 2000) states that language plays multiple roles including the culturally shaping of the overt behaviour of individuals as well as influencing their covert behaviour, such as thinking. Vygotsky (1979) views language as a psychological tool that shapes other mental functions, while at the same time being socially shaped itself.

Vygotsky believed that thought and language are initially separate systems from the beginning of life, merging at around three years of age, producing verbal thought or inner speech. Language plays two critical roles in human [cognitive] development. Firstly, it is the main means by which adults transmit information to children and secondly as a powerful tool of intellectual adaptation (Vygotsky, 1962).

Vygotsky differentiates different forms of language namely, social speech, private speech which becomes silent inner speech. These different forms are now briefly discussed.

i) social speech

This is when the child is talking to the outside world. It is an external form of communication used to talk to others and this is noticeably at around age two. Kurt, (2020) however asserts that social speech is used at a much younger age by babies to communicate their feelings and express their emotions. Children use social speech to state their needs and to respond to their parent's speech. The social influence is evident on behaviour during this stage based on the reactions to their demands. Children can cry, laugh, shout to express their simple thoughts and emotions.

ii) private speech/silent speech

Private speech is typical from the age of three, it is speech that is directed to themselves. This form of speech supports the growth of the child's mind and thus serves an intellectual function. Children begin to talk to themselves as they begin to rationalise their action and behaviours internally. This assists them in controlling their reasoning and organizing their thoughts. Meanings are interpreted from the reactions of others, which integrates cultural beliefs into their own cognitive development (Kurt, 2020). Private speech which becomes silent speech and goes underground (meaning it becomes internalized), diminishing in audibility as it takes on a self-regulating function and is transformed into silent inner speech, typical from age seven. Once private speech diminishes, speech becomes self-regulated and flows as a natural conversation with one's self-words (self-talk) (McLeod, 2018). Goldin-Meadow et al. (2014) are of the view that acquisition of speech is of great importance to the growing child because it is through speech that the child is able to take part intelligently in the social life of his or her peer/group. Speech acquisition also facilitates the child 's own individual thinking. Vygotsky (1978) stated that in the absence of language, humankind would be limited to more primitive functions, therefore Vygotsky viewed language as an ultimate tool by which desired behaviours are communicated leading to the development of a society and its culture.

3.2.1.3 The More Knowledgeable Other (MKO)

The concept refers to a person, either an adult or child who has a better level of understanding or a higher ability level than the learner, with respect to a particular task, process, or concept (McLeod, 2018). The MKO might not be a teacher but an older person, an adult or a peer with more knowledge or experience. MacLeod (2018) also asserts that even electronic tutors are sometimes used in educational settings as MKOs to support and facilitate the learning process. The concept of a MKO is integrally related to the Zone of Proximal Development that is the fourth important principle underpinning Vygotsky's work.

3.2.1.4 The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

The ZPD relates to the difference between what a child can achieve independently and what a child can achieve with guidance and encouragement from a skilled partner. Vygotsky believed that every person has two stages of skill, concepts and knowledge development. The first being a level they can achieve by themselves and secondly, a level they can achieve with

the help of an experienced mentor or teacher. He referred to the level an individual can achieve with the help of an expert as their ZPD. The ZPD is seen as the area where the most sensitive instruction or guidance should be given allowing the child to develop the knowledge and skills they will then use on their own, leading to development of higher mental functions (Vygotsky,1978). Figure 3.1 provides a diagrammatic outline of the ZPD.

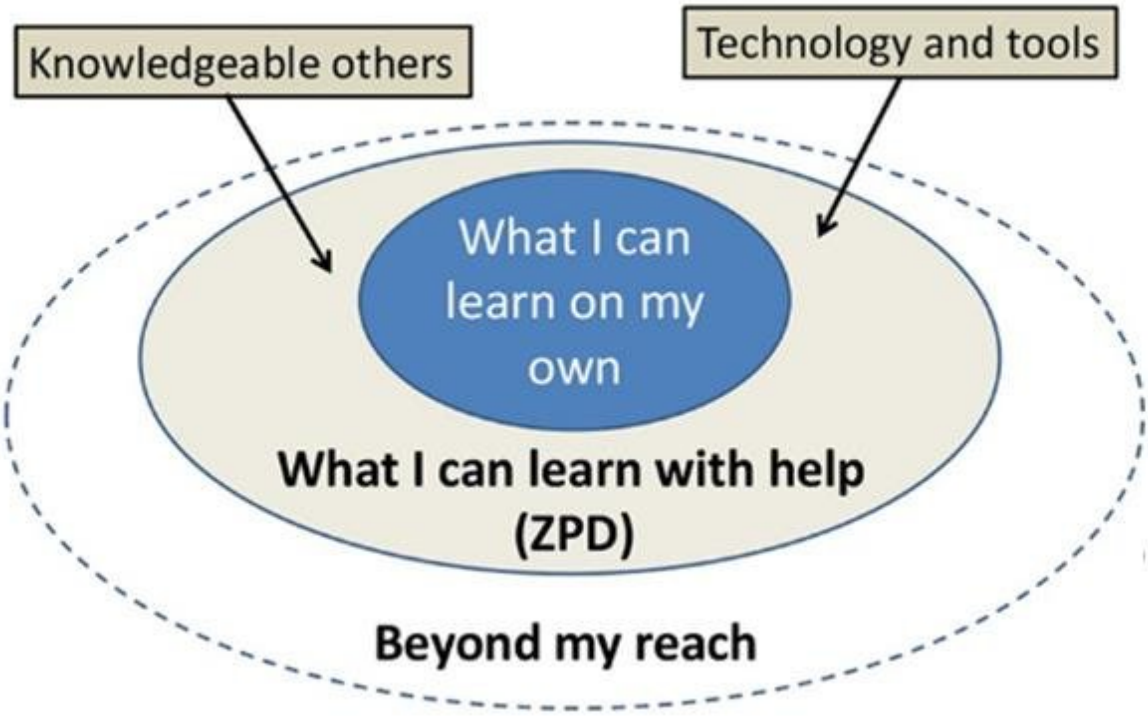


FIGURE 3.1: THE ZONE OF PROXIMAL DEVELOPMENT (Steve-Wheeler, 2013**)**

The core idea of the ZPD is that a more knowledgeable person can enhance a child's learning by guiding them through a task that slightly above their ability level. Legg, (2020) contends that as the child becomes more competent. The MKO) or the expert gradually stops helping until the child can perform the skill by themselves. The person giving instructions should only help as much as is necessary, not more than - thus, the term "proximal" refers to those skills that the learner is "close" to mastering (MacLeod, 2018). The main goal of education from a Vygotskian viewpoint is to keep learners in their own ZPD as often as possible by giving them interesting and culturally meaningful learning and problem-solving tasks that are slightly more

difficult than what they do alone (Roosevelt, 2008). Vygotsky's (1978) concept of tools of intellectual adaptation is useful for unpacking how support in ZPD can be given to children.

3.2.2 Tools of intellectual adaptation: the role of cultural in intellectual adaptation

Tools of intellectual adaptation are methods of thinking, learning, or remembering, including strategies for problem solving, which are internalised by children through their interactions with more competent members of society (Sam, 2013). Vygotsky claimed that infants are born with basic abilities called elementary mental functions (EMFs) that support intellectual learning (McLeod, 2018). These EMFs include attention, sensation, perception, and memory. It is through interaction within the sociocultural environment that these elementary mental functions are developed into more sophisticated and effective mental process which Vygotsky referred to as higher mental functions (idib, 2018). Each culture provides children with tools of intellectual adaptation that allow them to use their basic mental functions more effectively, therefore these EMFs are not culturally universal.

Figure 3.2 is a diagrammatic representation of how EMFs support the development of higher mental functions, independent thinking and independent learning in young children.

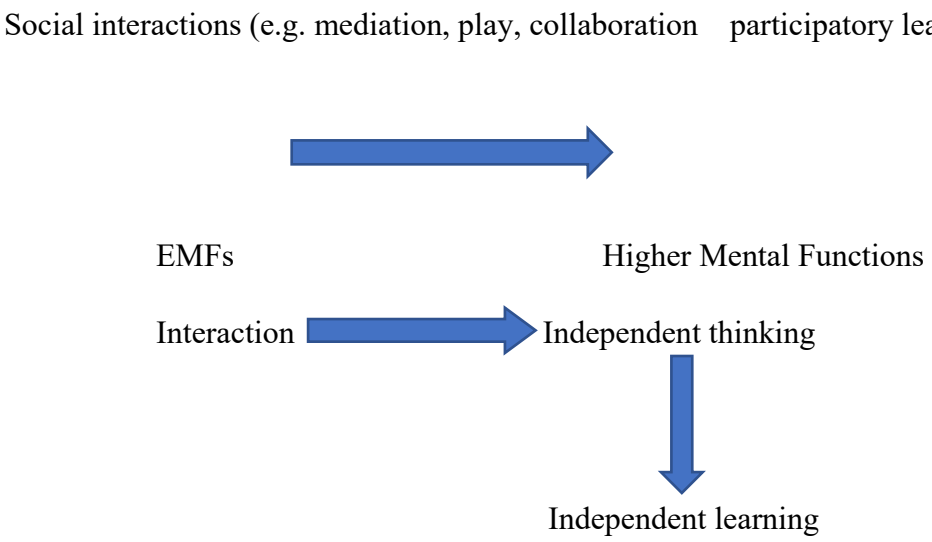


FIGURE 3.2 A DIAGRAMMATIC REPRESENTATION OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF ELEMENTARY MENTAL FUNCTIONS

Vygotsky observed how higher mental functions developed historically within particular cultural groups, as well as individually through social interactions with significant people in a child's life, particularly parents, but also other adults. Through these interactions, a child learns the "habits of mind" of her/his culture. According to Rashed and Roff, 2009 these include speech patterns, written language, and other symbolic knowledge through which the child derives meaning and which affect a child's construction of her/his knowledge and deepen their cultural heritage. This key premise of Vygotskian psychology is often referred to as cultural mediation (Guerrero- Nieto, 2007). The specific knowledge gained by children through these interactions also represents the shared knowledge of a culture. This process is known as internalization (Bodrova, 2015). An example is given by McLeod (2018) stating that in Western culture, children learn note-taking to aid memory, but in pre-literate societies, other strategies must be developed, such as tying knots in a string to remember, or carrying pebbles, or repetition of the names of ancestors until large numbers can be repeated.

Children with appropriate [cultural] mediation thus become active agents in their own learning. In other words, children engage in participatory learning and for Vygotsky participation is a social interaction which is best realised through play. In fact, for Vygotsky socio dramatic play is an essential part of any child's learning and it is through this form of play that children acquire self-regulatory behaviours (Karpov, 2005). Through socio dramatic play children also learn about their cultural heritage and their cultural practices are reinforced. Drawing on Vygotsky's sociocultural understandings of learning and play, a strong movement to support play-based pedagogies has emerged (Wood, 2007). This approach is referred to as a playful pedagogy.

3.2.3 Playful pedagogies

In this approach an emphasis is placed both on learning as well as teaching through play (Wood, 2009). This approach reinforces the social nature of learning through interactive collaboration where the teacher as mediator co-constructs knowledge with the children. Language is one of the chief means of mediating new knowledge to children and thus play-based social contexts, where children engaged playfully with each other, are viewed as being ideal learning environments. Through purposeful play, children are given opportunities to explore their environment, build their personality and to construct knowledge that is unique to them (Bodrova & Leong 2010), including cultural heritage.

A playful pedagogical approach requires the teacher to not only have a deep understanding of children and their development but also to have a deep insight into the learning content as well as the children's unique contexts (Jordan, 2009). This means teachers must genuinely care about the children they teach and be responsive to children's cultural contexts. I would argue that within the South African context, a culturally relevant pedagogy of play would be dynamic and continually changing to meet on-going issues of diversity including addressing children's unique cultural practices.

As Ellerbrock, Cruz, Vásquez and Howes (2016) note culturally relevant pedagogy is premised on the idea that culture is central to learning as it focuses on diversity awareness and identity development. This approach supports children to become empowered intellectually, socially, emotionally and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Han, et al,.2014).

Though traditional Western preschool approaches advocate play-based learning, and this is what is advocated in ECCE policy documents (DSD 2015) understandings of play and learning are complex. It is therefore incumbent upon the ECCE teacher to have some insights into the controversial issues surrounding play especially as many of these are informed by deeply entrenched cultural beliefs and practices.

3.2.3.1 Alternative perspectives on play: implications for practice

Durojaiye (1977) claims that many parents, including 'educated' ones, insist that their children even those as young as two or three years must immediately settle down to the 'serious business of learning'. In other words, there is widespread belief that ECCE is "a simple extension of primary school, enabling formal instruction to start a little earlier and therefore ensuring entry to primary school and a head start on admission there" (Durojaiye 1977 p. 9). Dahlberg et al. (2013) concur and refer to this as schoolification of the early years. Hirsch-Pasek et al. (2009) have warned of the erosion of play in favour of more didactic approaches to teaching literacy and mathematics. The negation of play-based approaches to learning has also led, I would argue, to the exclusion in the curriculum of children's relevant cultural practices.

This work play dichotomy is also found in many African cultures where there is not necessarily a distinction between the two and work is often prioritised over play (Boyette, 2016). Wadende, Oburu & Morara (2016) note that children growing up in an African community learn and play by doing tasks such as caring for a sibling and helping older siblings or parents clean up. Play

is reserved for the children's break or lunch time, whilst work is to be observed within classroom activities/ ECCE centres.

Ng'asike (2014) and Wadende et al. (2016) further argue that in an African community children's play and learning is deeply rooted in the local indigenous cultural knowledge. Therefore, people's beliefs about play, and learning through play, will be directly impacted by their cultural practices. The child's social, cultural and historical contexts including their home environment will thus have a direct influence on how children play (Ng'asike, 2014). It is thus important to make parents and teachers aware of the long-lasting learning benefits of play so that children are able to participate in meaningful early play experiences.

Despite this strong push for play-based learning it must be acknowledged that not all play experiences are necessarily beneficial for all children (MacNaughton, 2003). There is evidence to show that play-based learning can be problematic (Wood, 2007). The terms play, playful, and learning are complex and complicated constructs with ambiguous relationships between and among them. For instance, not all play is playful (e.g., professional football). Although play often supports learning, some forms of play described by King (1987) as "illicit play" can also undermine and subvert targeted learning (cited in Sutton-Smith, 1988). MacNaughton (2003) further argues that though all children learn through play, this is not necessarily a cultural belief held by all parents. She therefore challenges what she claims is a one-size-fits-all approach to play-based learning found in many conventional ECCE centres. Dahlberg et al. (2013) extend these concerns. They cite the specific western constructions of children as being vulnerable, needy and requiring thoughtful and nurturing care which includes a loving, secure environment where they are able to learn through play (see Chapter 2). Hall, et al. (2018) claim that this type of childhood is not possible for many of the world's children, including South African children. Life represents many hardships and challenges and from an early age many children are forced to fend for themselves. Thus, the image of happy children who learn through play-based pedagogies is only true for a relatively small number of privileged children.

Privileged children usually come from advantaged backgrounds which more readily embrace social, cultural, socioeconomic and personal contexts. For example, in a traditional ECCE setting, play based learning privileges the dominant cultural group, namely children growing up in a western, often middleclass society. These children have voice and agency and have been encouraged to explore freely. They are therefore more likely to interact meaningfully with

the ECCE environment. They will avail themselves of the resources and move on to others when bored etc. Whereas children coming from more conservative homes might be reluctant to take toys off the shelf and to play with them as in their home context they either have to either ask for permission to play or are told what resources they may access and when. Choice is not an option. Children who do not speak the language of learning and teaching might also be excluded from participating; either because other children ignore them, or they fail to follow conversations or to make themselves understood.

Furthermore, shy children do not necessarily readily engage socially with the group; they might be excluded from play-based activities because of their reluctance to initiate contact with other children. Children who are more extrovert or perhaps children who are bossy or who tend to bully other children might, through their behaviour, exclude other children from interacting with resources or joining a group. Children who suffer from various afflictions or illnesses (chronic or acute) might also be excluded from playing with others.

Thus, how play opportunities are presented to children need to be interrogated by those offering them play-based learning experiences, especially parents and teachers because of the importance of meaningful play in the transmission of cultural knowledge and practices. ECCE teachers should therefore heed Wood's (2007) concerns that if play is to be of educational value, teachers should neither idealise, nor trivialise play. It must be of sufficient intellectual challenge and play-based pedagogies should be informed by children's cultural contexts.

Teachers should be engaging in ongoing debates about the multifaceted and complex nature of play and question their own beliefs around culturally relevant play-based learning. They should be asking questions such as 'how best we can introduce play-based learning experiences to all children in a way that will enhance their holistic development and learning?'; what is culturally relevant knowledge?; and how can we ensure that we take children's cultural heritage and practices into account when planning activities?

In conclusion, sociocultural theory looks at the important influences that humanity makes to individual development. It emphasises the collaboration between developing individuals, who in this study are young children, and the ethnicity or culture in which they exist and indicates that human learning is largely a societal process. Cultural artifacts become an important means of sharing cultural heritage with the young children in cultural contexts and are mediated by language and other symbol systems.

3.3 BRONFENBRENNER'S BIOECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS THEORY

Bronfenbrenner's work has been central to the shift where sociology and education have moved away from the traditional approach to studying children in isolation. More attention is given to understanding children and childhood in a wider sociocultural context where children are seen as active participants (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1994). According to Berk (2000) Bronfenbrenner ecological systems theory posits that children develop within a complex system of relationships affected by multiple levels of environment. These systems are represented in a series of concentric circles which place the child in the middle. For Bronfenbrenner, development was a function of the interplay between the individual and his/her environment (Hayes, et al., 2017).

3.3.1 What Constitutes the Bioecological System?

Bronfenbrenner located the developing child within a series of systems, which he called the 'microsystem', the 'mesosystem', the 'exosystem' and the 'macrosystem' in his original model. By adding a fifth system 'the chronosystem' this model was extended to recognising the importance and influence of time and history in development (Ettekal & Mahoney, 2017).

These systems, or levels, are organised from those closest, or proximal, to the child to those whose influence is indirect or distal (Greene & Moane, 2000; Ettekal & Mahoney 2017). Drawing on his Russian heritage he referred to these systems as 'nested' each within the next like a set of Russian dolls (the matryoshka dolls) (Elliott& Davis, 2020).

The inner circle houses the *micro-systems.* This first level of Bronfenbrenner's theory entails those aspects which constitute children's most immediate environment. This includes the child's parents, siblings, teachers, school peers and other primary care givers. Guy-Evans (2020) views relationships in a microsystem as bi-directional, meaning other people within the child 's environment can be influential to him, while at the same time the child is also capable of changing other people's beliefs and actions. Within the microsystem level interactions are very personal and important in fostering and supporting the child's development. The reactions of the child to the experiences and influence from people within the microsystem can also in turn influence these experiences (Guy-Evans, 2020).

Using the classic example of a developing child, Neal and Neal (2013) state that the family is a microsystem where the child plays a direct role. For example, the daughter is emersed in

direct experiences by enjoying family meals. This child also has direct interactions with others when reading with her mother or playing with siblings.

Secondly, the *meso-system* describes interrelationships between different microsystems. These include childcare programmes and ECCE centres. For example, a mesosystem could include a meeting between a parent (from the child's family setting) and teacher (from the child's ECCE setting) about a child's behaviour in the centre. This meeting represents a social interaction between two microsystems namely, members of the child's family microsystem and the ECCE microsystem. Parental involvement in children's education can therefore have a positive influence on children's academic competence as children, through parental interactions, also come to value academics (Neal & Neal, 2013).

The *exosystem* defines the larger social system; a system in which the child does not function directly. The structures in this layer impact the child's development by interacting with various structures in their microsystem (Berk, 2000). According to Neal and Neal (2013) an individual child generally does play a role in or have direct experiences in the education policy-making community, but educational policies nonetheless influence the child's preschool and school experiences. An example was given by Neal and Neal (2013) of a district that decided to consolidate schools to save money which may lead to larger classroom and school sizes, therefore changing the microsystems in which children interact.

At the exosystem level the effect is on an individual's developmental outcome. It is indirect as it is a setting in which the individual does not actively participate. For example, a non-governmental organisation decides to implement a feeding scheme at local ECCE centres. The outcome, improved child nutrition will have a positive impact on changing the microsystems in which children interact (Zhou & Brown, 2017).

The *macro-system*, which is the third circle consists of the values, laws and resources of a culture (Berk, 2000). Neal and Neal (2013) assert that macrosystems include broad cultural influences or ideologies that have long-ranging consequences for the focal individuals who in this study are young children at ECCE centres in Polokwane. Bronfenbrenner (1994) regarded learning as a social process affected by many forces at many levels, including government policies. The macrosystem involve the society, includes cultural values and describes the economic conditions under which families live together with material resources, and opportunity structures (Bronfenbrenner, 1976; 1994). The interrelations among these nested

environments allow for examination of how patterns of interactions within these systems influence each other and affect individuals' developmental outcomes (Bronfenbrenner, 1977,1979).

The *chronosystem* is the fifth level, and it refers to events over time that could be far distanced from the child's daily life but could still impact on the development of the child. According to Excell and Linington (2021) patterns of events such as a continual influx of immigrants from neighbouring countries and historical conditions over time are examples of this system.

Figure 3.3 is a diagrammatic representation of Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological System. This figure illustrates the different systems and the specific environments which comprise each system. It also clearly depicts the interrelationships and interactions between the systems.

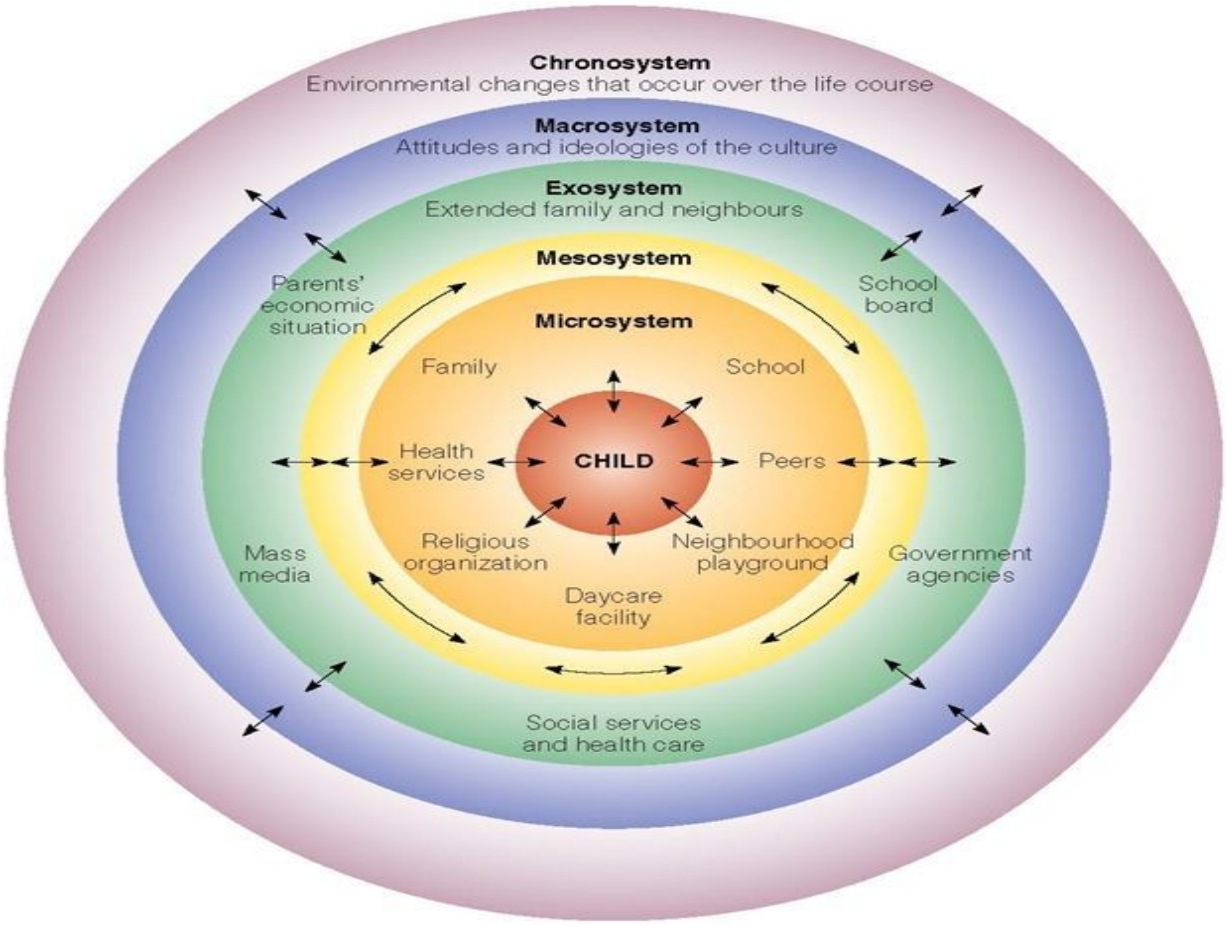


FIGURE 3.3: A DIAGRAMMATIC REPRESENTATION OF BRONFENBRENNER'S BIOECOLOGICAL SYSTEM (Guy-Evans, 2020)

3.3.2 The significance of Bioecological Systems Theory

This theory interrogates the impact of various environmental contexts on the developing child. Within this framework culture is viewed as a powerful macrosystemic influence that shapes identities and value systems at global, national and local levels, along with transactions at the micro-level of social ecology (Theron & Liebenberg, 2015). Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory affords a good opportunity to explore cultural influences on development and learning by looking at the environment as a system of circles nested inside each other with the child at the centre. These circles interact with and influence each other, this will then influence the development and learning of the child. Further Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological System Theory views people as embedded in ecologies of interdependent micro- through to macro-level systems; therefore, changes or conflict in any one level will ripple throughout other levels.

Further the theory acknowledges that humans do not develop in isolation, and that children grow in relation to the environments they encounter, family and home, school, community and society. These environments make unique impacts on the children and Bronfenbrenner argued that human growth is encouraged when there are positive and consistent links between these environments.

3.4 CONCLUSION

In conclusion this chapter discusses the two theoretical frame works, Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory that looks at the important influences that humanity makes to individual development. It places emphasise on the collaboration between developing individuals, who in this study are young children and the culture or ethnicity in which they exist. Sociocultural theory indicates that human learning is largely a societal process where the sharing of cultural heritage with young children is made possible by using cultural artifacts in cultural context mediated by language and other symbol systems. Bronfenbrenner, Bioecological systems theory affords a good opportunity to explore cultural influences on development and learning of young children by looking at the environment as a system of circles nested inside each other with the child at the centre. These circles interact with and influence each other, this will then influence the development and learning of the child. Further Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System theory views people as embedded in ecologies of interdependent micro- through to macro-level systems, therefore changes or conflict in any one level will ripple throughout other levels.

In Chapter four the type of methodology, the research design, a description of participants and the data collection process will be explained.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the research methods and investigates the research design and methodology used to collect and analyse the data. The research process including the setting and procedures for selecting participants, make reference to questions regarding reliability and validity, as well as describing the ethical considerations.

4.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

This is a qualitative study within the interpretive paradigm. Willis (2007) describes interpretivism as usually seeking to understand a context, and the core belief of the interpretive paradigm is that reality is socially constructed. Interpretivist researchers discover reality through participant's views, rather than own background and experiences (Creswell, 2009; Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2011). Therefore, to discover reality through participants' views the interpretive paradigm makes use of naturalistic qualitative methods such as interviews, observations and document reviews (Hatch, 2002). These methods are applied when there is an assumption about the social construction of reality, i.e., research can be conducted only through interaction between researcher and researched (Guba & Lincoln, 2000). Eichelberger (1989, as cited in Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006), stated that the interpretive paradigm grew out of the philosophy of Edmund Husserl's phenomenology, Wilhelm Dilthey and other German philosophers' study of interpretive understanding, which came to be known as hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is the study of interpretive understanding or meaning and plays a role in a number of disciplines whose subject matter demands interpretative approaches, characteristically, because the disciplinary subject matter concerns the meaning of human intentions, beliefs, and actions, or the meaning of human experience as it is preserved in the arts and literature, historical testimony, and other artifacts (George, 2020). Historians tend to use the concept in interpreting historical texts, to try to understand what the author was attempting to communicate within the specific time period and culture in which the documents were written (Mertens, 2009).

Mirroring the historians, interpretivists use the term "hermeneutics" more generally as a way to interpret meaning from a given standpoint or in a particular situation (George, 2021).

Kivunja (2017) argues that all meaning, including the meaning of research findings, is fundamentally interpretive, therefore all knowledge in this sense is developed within a pre-existing social environment, prior to interpreting and reinterpreting itself.

The interactive approach is sometimes described as hermeneutical and dialectical, because of efforts to obtain multiple perspectives that yield better interpretations of meanings. Those meanings are subsequently compared and contrasted through dialectical interchange involving the juxtaposition of conflicting ideas, which leads to previously held positions having to be reconsidered (Mertens, 2009). In justifying this, Eichelberger 1989p. 9 in Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006), provides a description of the methodological work of the interpretivist (hermeneutical) researcher as follows:

> They want to know what meaning people attribute to activities and how that relates to their behaviour. These researchers are much clearer about the fact that they are constructing the "reality" because of the interpretations of data with the help of the participants who provided the data in the study. They often carry out their research much as anthropologists do in their studies of culture. They do a great deal of observation, read documents produced by members of the groups being studied, do extensive formal and informal interviewing, and develop classifications and descriptions that represent the beliefs of the various groups.

The existence of multiple realities implies that research questions cannot be definitively established before a study begins; instead, they will evolve and change as the investigation progresses. A variety of perceptions from different types of respondents must be sought. It is also imperative for an interpretivist researcher to provide information about the backgrounds of the participants and the contexts in which they are being studied (Mertens, 2009).

4.2.1 Case study

According to Yin (2009: 18) case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.

Devi, (2020:4) discusses key characteristics of case study as follows:

a) **A descriptive study:**

The data collected constitute descriptions of psychological processes and events of the contexts in which they occurred. The main emphasis is always on the construction of verbal descriptions of behaviour or experience. Case study is more of qualitative method rather than quantitative method and high levels of detail are provided.

b) **Narrowly focused:**

Typically, a case study offers a complete and comprehensive description of all facets of a social unit, be it a single individual or may be a social group.

c) **Combines objective and subjective data**:

Researchers may combine objective and subjective data. Both the data are regarded as valid data for analysis. The case study method enables the researcher to explore and describe the nature of processes, which occur over time.

A case study was selected as a means of investigating and trying to understand how culture and cultural diversity are realised in ECCE daily activities. Case studies enable an interpretive approach as they allow researchers to understand complex issues or objects, by generally answering one or more questions which begin with "how" or "why". These questions are targeted at a limited number of participants and offer an in-depth investigation without generalising about a specific aspect/unit/programme, individual/school/classroom or group (Maheshwari, 2011; Gary, 2012). In this study the spotlight was on ECCE teachers. The case study results relate directly to the common reader's everyday experience, thus facilitating an understanding of a complex, real-life situation (Soy, 1997).

- Advantages of case studies

A variety of claims are made about the usefulness of case studies. Yin (2014) view that case study research is consistently described as a versatile form of qualitative inquiry most suitable for a comprehensive, holistic, and in-depth investigation of a complex issue (phenomena, event, situation, organization, program individual or group) in context, where the boundary between the context and issue is unclear and contains many variables. Case studies communicate directly with the implementers and initiators of education (Hayes et al 2007). Cohen, Manion and Morrison, (2011) support this statement, noting that case study findings may be directly interpreted and used for staff as well as individual development, institutional development, formative evaluation and educational policy making. In this study, the focus was on teachers' realisation of culture and culture diversity in ECCE daily practice. This relates

clearly to their daily experiences, which means the research takes on a "human face", which was strengthened by the fact that the researcher had the opportunity to interact with teachers face to face. As Cohen et al. (2011) assert, case studies are usually descriptive in nature, providing rich information about individuals or particular situations. As a form of naturalistic inquiry, researchers can ground their observations in natural settings. Case studies allow the researcher to "enter" the life worlds and experiences of others, but with having the privilege of then standing back and evaluating these (Hatch, 2006). The researcher in this study was able to experience the process of interacting with participants at the two ECCE centre and at the same time evaluate it, with minimal interference.

Another view is that case studies contribute both theoretically and pragmatically to educational research, given that they are practical and unfold in a natural setting (Harrison et al., 2017) In this study, the interviews conducted represented practical activities that occurred in the participants' natural settings, i.e., ECCE centres. Therefore, the findings can easily be applied to a similar setting, at another time, in another place (Mbelu, 2011).

- Disadvantages of case studies

Hayes et al (2007) contends that case study research is an intervention which can sometimes be uncontrolled and might intrude in the lives of others. As an example, he refers to the process of interviewing someone or observing someone teaching or talking to teachers about issues of concern – all of which can undermine existing institutional structures. The other limitation of case study research is that it provides a biased view and a distorted picture of the way things really are. For instance, if different groups of respondents (e.g., principal and teacher) have different views, whose opinion carries more weight? The principal's statement may be taken seriously, while that of the less influential teacher may be dismissed.

Case study research does not allow for generalisation; it is an in-depth study of a particular case. In this instance, the scope of the research was limited to the views of eight ECCE teachers in two ECCE centres in Polokwane in the Limpopo province.

4.3 Sample and its description (selection of participants)

The participants of this study were ECCE teachers chosen from two private ECCE centres in Polokwane. Initially, six teachers were from Centre A and three from Centre B, making the initial sample size for data collection to be nine participants. However, during the interviews one teacher at Centre B was absent due to health reasons, reducing the sample size to eight. Focus group interviews were conducted with eight teachers, six teachers from Centre A and two teachers from Centre B. One of the participants from Centre B was both a teacher and the principal. All participants were female. This is unsurprising as the bulk of the ECD workforce is made up of women (DoSD, 2015).

The eight teachers who were interviewed were identified using purposive sampling and were ECCE teachers (i.e., teaching children between birth to four years) at the two ECCE centres in Polokwane. Purposive sampling is a process which allows researchers to deliberately select respondents, and which specifies the characteristics of a population of interest, the settings and the events which will provide answers to the research questions. This type of sampling is widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest (Johnson & Christensen, 2008, Palinkas et al. 2015). Purposive sampling is also used if the number of individuals being studied is relatively small, and when the use of random sampling can prohibit the inclusion of the very participants whom the researcher is attempting to learn about (Maxwell, 1996).

Participants were purposively selected because they had the requisite characteristics, namely being currently an early childhood development teacher in their ECCE centre. An important criterion is that they were willing to participate in this study.

The researcher mailed a form to all selected participants requesting them to participate in this undertaking and asked if they would be interested in being contacted to learn more about the proposed study. It was made clear in the request that participation in the study was completely voluntary. Teachers who consented to be interviewed were asked to give back a signed consent form during the researcher's arrival at the centre prior the set interview date. Those who replied in the affirmative were sent a letter notifying them of the purpose, procedures, risks and benefits of the study. The principals of the two ECCE centres were subsequently contacted telephonically, to arrange times and dates for the interviews. In addition, participants were also informed of measures that would be taken to ensure confidentiality and their right to refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time. Pseudonyms were given to the interviewees, for example, T1, T2 referring to teachers 1 or teacher 2 etc.

4.4 DATA COLLECTION

This was a qualitative study and data collection instruments included questionnaires, focus groups, semi structured interviews**,** documents reviews, as well as observations. Thus, multiple data collection methods were used in this study, The researcher carried out observations in the classroom and the centres' terrain. Interviews were conducted, and documents such as admission registers at the two ECCE centres were reviewed. This is referred to in the present study in accordance with assumptions about the social construction of reality, i.e., that research can be conducted only through interaction between investigator and respondents (Guba & Lincoln, 2000).

4.5 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

4.5.1 The questionnaire

Questionnaires (see appendix 2) which asked for biographical as well as descriptive information were given to participants to complete. The descriptive component required in-depth answers therefore allowing for a more interpretative approach which supported the qualitative method of data collection. Participants in this study were teachers and one principal. They were requested to fill in the questionnaire handed to them personally at their centre. Participants were invited to complete the questionnaire and given two days to complete this request. They were told that there would be no victimisation and that the confidentiality of answers was assured. The questionnaire comprised two sections and required participants to complete fifteen questions about how they view their culture, the cultural identity of the children they teach and their "living inter-culturally" in the centres. Each section is briefly discussed.

Section A is more biographical and asks about gender, ethnic group, the age range of participants, experience of teachers in dealing with children of different cultures, years spent working in the ECCE centres, highest teaching qualifications and specific qualifications in ECD. The last question in this section was requesting if the participant lived in a multi- cultural community.

Section B is made up of questions that are based on interaction with different cultural groups with the aim of finding out how knowledgeable the participants were when coming in contact with different cultures. Question asked included, if they know songs or types of music from other cultures and they were asked to name some. Participants were also asked about what they

knew in relation to the types of food from other cultures and if they had experienced eaten any other foods from different cultures. They were asked to indicate their favourite dish. They were also requested to mention if they wore any clothes or jewellery influenced by other cultures. A further question probed whether they had friends from cultural backgrounds different to their own, and if they can speak any other languages from different ethnic groups or from different countries.

4.5.2 Conducting interviews

A focus group interview (refer to appendix 3) was used with the six teachers from Centre A. A further focus group interview was held with two teachers from Centre B. An additional semi-structured, one-on-one interview was used with the principal of centre B to allow her to comment extensively on certain topics. Written permission was given to record the interview proceedings through a cellular phone recording device and to take pictures where necessary. In line with the ethical considerations, teachers in both ECCE centres were assured in advance that whatever was discussed during the interview was only for the purpose of the study. They were further reminded that whatever was mentioned in these focus groups was confidential and should not be shared with anybody else outside of the group. COVID 19 protocol including social distancing and wearing of a mask when in a public space as required by the law were adhered to throughout. The participants were encouraged to express themselves freely during the interview process, so that they expressed their view without fear of intimidation. Data were collected using cell phone recording as well as manual note taking. By making use of two different recording methods, I was able to ensure that all data were as accurately captured as possible.

4.5.3 Participant observation

Participant observation is a process which enables researchers to learn about participants' activities in a natural setting, through observing and participating in those activities (DeWalt and Dewalt, 2002). The researcher used this method while on the premises of the two selected ECCDE centres, as a means of collecting more data on infrastructural development as well as the prevailing general atmosphere towards realisation of culture and cultural diversity in ECCE centres. McMillan and Schumacher (2001) and Sarkissian et al. (1986) support this method, stating that participant observation is a combination of particular data collection strategies (not recommended for use in isolation, but in conjunction with other tools and techniques, to offset any bias or inaccuracy in the observer's conclusions).

Participant observation helped the researcher to do what McMillan and Schumacher (2001, p. 437) refer to as observing and listening, where the researcher gleans information on participants' perceptions of events and processes, expressed in their actions as feelings, thoughts and beliefs. Being a participant observer gave the researcher an opportunity to listen to the participants and record relevant information as they spoke to one another. The researcher also looked for nonverbal cues such as facial expressions, gestures, tone of voice, body movements and other social interactions that are important clues as to how culture and cultural diversity are realised in ECCE daily practice. This method is discussed by Sarkissian and Ballard (1986) in their definition of participant observation: they state that it is a method of collecting information about the operation of, and attitudes existing in, a community through a researcher living in the area for an extended period. For this study, however, the participation level was low, with the researcher only seeking information and conducting research on ECCE centre premises, during working hours as a means of collecting additional data Participant observation also enabled me to see if there were any major discrepancies between what the participants said and how they acted in their classrooms. Participants were made aware that they were being observed for the purpose of this study, as required by ethical demands (Mbelu, 2011).

McLeod, (2015) discussed the advantages of participant observation as;

- The observer is personally involved in group activities and shares their feelings and prejudices.
- He participates himself and get insight into the behaviour of the group.
- It motivates and stimulates mutual relationship b/w the observer and observe.
- He can get more information's with accuracy and precision.
- The information's are recorded in front of the group people.

I made use of extensive note taking to record my observations. Observations also allowed me to view activities which were not addressed during the interviews. With permission, during my observations I was also able to take some pictures of the classrooms and children. To ensure the children's privacy all facial features have been obscured in the photographs. These photographs allowed me to capture the prevailing general atmosphere within the ECCE settings. This included moving around the premises and checking the physical and social

infrastructure. The pictures were taken only for descriptive purposes and were used in the data analysis to support other findings and to give the reader an indication of each setting.

4.5.4 Documentation

Document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents both printed and electronic material (Bowen,2009). Documents requested for review in the two ECCE centres were admission registers from the previous years (three years back). The admission register provided the previous statistics of children who were admitted at the centre and their different cultural group they belong to. Like other analytical methods in qualitative research, document analysis requires that data be examined and interpreted to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

4.5.5 Reflective journaling

Reflective journaling was used all the times throughout the study with the aim of eliminating bias and as a way of facilitating reflexivity, whereby the researcher used his journal to examine "personal assumptions and goals" and clarify "individual belief systems and subjectivities" as indicated by Ahern (cited in Russell & Kelly, 2002: 2). To make my experiences, thoughts, opinions, and feelings visible I used a reflective journal to show the process that I went through as part of the research process (refer to Appendix 8). The reflective journal was of particular importance during the data collection phase as I was able to capture my initial impressions and later reflect over these impressions. The journal became an important tool to help me minimise possible researcher bias.

4.6 Data analysis

Braun and Clarke's (2006) six steps of thematic analysis were used. Step 1 required that I familiarise myself with the data gathered from the questionnaires, interviews and observations and that I search for meanings and patterns. Through this process I was able to become acquainted with the data and create meaning (Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999). I read and reread my journal observations. I transcribed the data verbatim to ensure that the participants' actual utterances were accurately recorded. I listened carefully and then relistened to the recordings and aligned these findings with those gathered from my written recorded notes.

This lengthy process assisted me to verify and validate my interpretations of the data. The Standard English dictionary was used to search for the meaning of terms, where necessary, especially during the translation of data from, for example, Sepedi to English. In cases where dialogue was difficult to understand – especially if the speaker spoke with an accent- the researcher rewound and replayed the recording until he became familiar with what was being said. Coleman (2013) suggests that after the first draft, the entire recording should be listened to while re-reading the work. Where discrepancies in data collection were noted, corrections were made, and problems addressed. Where text was deemed less important it was deleted, but this was done with extreme caution, for the removal of one word can change the entire meaning of a sentence. Field notes were edited, and all data organised chronologically.

In step 2 initial codes were identified, and data were organised in meaningful groups. I drew on the research questions as well as the literature review to inform this step. Step 3 comprised searching for codes across all data sets and identifying probable themes. This required both a vertical as well as a horizontal reading of the data. In step 4, I reviewed the initial themes to establish if they make sense. I followed Delahunt and Maguire (2017) suggestion that it is useful at this point to gather together all the data that is relevant to each theme. Step 5 allowed for the consolidation of themes. The first two themes were predominately determined by the first two research questions, namely teachers' understandings of culture and their views on cultural diversity. The other theme was determined by the findings as well as by the research questions and the literature review.

Step 6 requires that the researcher decide on how to report on each theme. These decisions were made after the initial data analysis had begun and possible themes verified. Because this was an interpretive study exploring teachers' understandings of culture and cultural diversity, as well as how these aspects are addressed in the classroom, I decided that I would first present the findings (see Chapter 5) as two vignettes and then have a chapter on data analysis (Chapter 6). This allowed me to present each teacher's views of culture and cultural diversity and then to give an in-depth overview of each centre and show how their understandings of culture and cultural diversity are reflected in their classrooms and each respective. I finally decided on three themes, namely,

Theme 1: Culture: teachers' views

Theme 2: Teachers' understandings of cultural diversity

Theme 3: Culturally responsive teaching in a multicultural setting

The findings are therefore presented in the form of two vignettes. Each vignette presents the views on culture and cultural diversity of the participating principal and teachers and then an overview of how these understandings were realised in each ECCE centre.

4.7 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Lincoln and Guba (1985) developed the most widely used criteria for evaluating the qualitative research process, and they used the term *trustworthiness*. The aim of trustworthiness in qualitative research is to support the argument that the research findings are "worth paying attention to" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This is especially important when using inductive content analysis as categories are created from the raw data without a theory-based categorization matrix. Trustworthiness of data collection, analysis, and presentation of the results of content analysis was taken into consideration in this study.Trustworthiness comprises of four criteria: credibility, confirmability, dependability and transferability (Lincoln & Guba,1985). Each of these criteria are now briefly expanded upon.:

4.7.1 Credibility

Credibility is the replacement for internal validity and is rooted in the truth value, which asks whether the researcher has developed and articulated a certain level of confidence in the findings based on the phenomenon under investigation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The truth derived from the participant's lived experiences, does not necessarily lead to universal truths, but rather an in-depth understanding of that person's unique reality (Stahl & King, 2020). Merriam (2009 p. 11) asserts that the qualitative investigator's equivalent concept, that is credibility, deals with the question, "How congruent are the findings with reality?" Ensuring credibility is one of most important factors in establishing trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba 1985). The following provisions were made by researcher to promote confidence that they he has accurately recorded the phenomena under scrutiny as stated in Shenton (2004). These provisions include:

a) The adoption of research methods that are well established in qualitative investigation in general and in information science in particular. This meant that the line of questioning

pursued in the data gathering sessions and the methods of data analysis followed acceptable research design methods.

b) The development of an early familiarity with the culture of participating organisations or institutions, before the first data collection takes place is of paramount importance. I achieved this familiarity by visiting the Centres and consulting appropriate documents. I made contact with the ECCE centres chosen telephonically, and then set dates but prior to this explained to the principals the purpose of the study and what I expected from willing participants. I attempted to follow Lincoln and Guba's suggestion that prolonged engagement between the researcher and the participants is recommended in order for the researcher to gain an adequate understanding of an organisation/institution and to establish a relationship of trust between the parties. Shenton, (2004), however, warns of the danger that can emerge if too many demands are made on staff. If these demands are excessive gatekeepers responsible for allowing the researcher access to the organisation may be deterred from cooperating. Attention is also drawn to the way in which researchers may become so immersed in the culture under study that their professional judgements are influenced (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

c) Sampling of individuals to serve as informants. In qualitative research participants are selected using either random sampling or purposive sampling. The difference between the two methods as discussed in Shenton (2004) is that a random approach may neutralize possibilities of the researcher to be biased in the selection of participants. Random sampling also helps to ensure that any "unknown influences" are distributed evenly within the sample. However, in this study the participants were purposively selected because they had the requisite characteristics, namely being currently an early childhood development teacher in their ECCE centre.

By carefully adhering to these guidelines, I am confident that this study meets the demands of a credible study.

4.7.2 Confirmability

Confirmability is concerned with establishing that data and interpretations of the findings are not figments of the inquirer's imagination, but clearly derived from the data. It is also about the degree to which the findings of the research study could be confirmed by other researchers (Korstjens & Moser 2018). Lemon and Hayes, (2020) assert that confirmability gets to the

objectivity of the phenomenon under investigation and addresses whether the interpretations and findings are from the participants lived experiences and do not include the researcher's biases. In this study issues of confirmability as suggested in Lemon and Hayes, (2020) were taken into consideration as the findings were derived from the data collected, presented and interpreted without any conscious biasness from the researcher. This is part was ensured by the keeping of a reflective journal where I could reflect on the research processes that I followed.

4.7.3 Dependability

This involves the evaluations of the findings, interpretation and recommendations of the study such that all are supported by the data as received from the participants of the study. It also concerns the stability of findings over time. The researcher needed to check whether the analysis process was in line with the accepted standards for a particular design (Korstjens & Moser 2018). Dependability substitute's reliability and emphasises that findings are distinctive to a specific time and place, and the consistency of explanations are present across the data (Lemon & Hayes, 2020). The issues of dependability were taken into consideration in this study by ensuring that cross referencing to data analysis was done.

4.7.4 Transferability

Transferability replaces the concept of external validity and generalizability, and thus, is concerned with the extent to which the findings from the study could apply to other contexts and settings (Stahl & King, 2020). To establish the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be transferred to other contexts or settings with other respondents is essential. The responsibility of the researcher is to facilitates the transferability judgment by a potential user through 'thick description' of the participants and the research process, to enable the reader to assess whether the findings are transferable to their own setting; this is the so-called transferability judgement. This implies that the reader, not the researcher, makes the transferability judgment because the researcher does not know their specific settings (Korstjens & Moser 2018). To ensure this process, participants descriptions were provided by asking questions in the questionnaire that required their detailed information e.g. biography, qualifications, teaching experience in the ECCE centre.

4.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Pertinent ethical issues, which include informed consent; an indication to participants of the voluntary nature of their participation; assurances about the safety, privacy and confidentiality, of participants; as well as the establishment of a relationship of trust, were taken into consideration, as suggested by Lincoln and Guba (2000). It is the obligation of the researcher to protect the participants' rights in two ways. Firstly, by informing them of their role in the study and by guaranteeing their confidentiality during the research process. In this study, the necessary steps were taken, and pseudonyms were used. In addition, no individual was forced to take part in the study, and participants understood that the study was for educational purposes only.

An information letter outlining the purpose and type of research study was given to the participants (see Appendix 7. Consent forms (see Appendix 6) were given to potential participants to fill in, sign and return to the researcher by email before embarking on the research study. All participants signed and returned the completed forms to the researcher. Permission was given to record the proceedings through a cellular phone recording and to take pictures where necessary. The research participants were assured that they would not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way. They were told that they could withdraw from the research study at any time during this project without any penalty. There were no foreseeable risks in participating in this study. The participants were not paid for participating in this study. Issues of confidentiality in this study were addressed by assuring participants that no actual names would be used when working with the data or writing up the study. The identity of the research participants and the ECCE centres would remain confidential, and this principle would be also applied in all academic writing, as well as in all published and written data resulting from the study. They were informed that all research data will be destroyed 3-5 years after completion of the project and the findings of this study will be made available to all participants on request.

All University of Witwatersrand ethics requirements were adhered to and an application for ethics clearance was submitted and received. The ethics clearance certificate is attached (see Appendix 3) They were also informed that the observation transcripts, questionnaire responses, and audio recordings would only be used for this study and would only be seen by my supervisors and myself.

4.9 CONCLUSION

In this chapter the research process was outlined. I gave a detailed overview of the research design which was qualitative in nature. The chapter describes the case study research design that is used and presents the advantages as well as the disadvantages of the design. The sample and the description as well as the selection process of the participants was also discussed. Data collection instruments, which were interviews, questionnaire, observations, photographs and documentation review, were discussed and the thematic data analysis was unpacked following the six steps mentioned in Braun and Clarke (2006). This was followed by exploring issues of trustworthiness and brief expansion on the four criteria was provided. The chapter was concluded by given an outline of the ethical considerations that informed this study. In Chapter 5 that follows I present an outline of the findings.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the research findings are presented. Two important research questions centred on teachers' understandings of culture and their views on cultural diversity? These views are briefly mentioned in this section to give the reader a sense of context but will be unpacked in greater detail in chapter 6 on discussion of findings. The bulk of the findings are presented in the form of two case studies. Each vignette presents an overview of the ECCE centre and the views of the participating principal and teachers. The names of the principal, teachers and ECCE centres have been changed to ensure confidentiality. The presentation of these research findings has been ordered according to the centre first able to accommodate me. I present, in table form, a brief overview of each centre and participants' biographical details. This is followed by the teachers' understandings of culture and cultural diversity. I then provide a detailed outline of the findings pertaining to each centre with a specific focus on aspects of culture and cultural diversity specify to that centre.

5.2 A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE ECCE CENTRES

The visits to the two ECCE centres took place in 2020. The first visit was to Centre A Early Childhood Care and Education Centre on the 13-15 October followed by visiting Centre B Early Childhood Care and Education Centre on the 23-25 November. The collection of data was delayed because of the restrictions that were introduced by the government in an attempt to control the Covid-19 pandemic. I could only begin to collect data in October when the lockdown was eased from level five to level one, making it possible for people to move interprovincially, and for schools and ECCE centres to re-open. Since South Africa was coming out of a hard lockdown and the year was almost coming to an end not many parents were keen to send their children back to the ECCE centres. This impacted negatively on attendance at both centres. However, due to the nature of my investigation the smaller numbers did not adversely affect data collection. Centre A was the centre that could more readily accommodate my proposed dates for data collection. Hence, I began observations and interviews with this school.

Table 5.1 provides the reader with a brief overview of each centre, the geographical location, a short description of the surrounding neighbourhoods, the structure and layout of the centre and some policy details.

TABLE 5.1: AN OVERVIEW OF EACH ECCE CENTRE OBSERVED IN THIS STUDY

Name of ECCE centre, observation dates	**Geographical location**	**Feature of the surrounding community**	**Description of ECCE centre**	**Policy**	Dates of interviews and observation
Centre A	North of Polokwane. Hospital Park. Mixed population (mostly black and white).	Peri-urban residential area. Predominately Middle class area. Homes/ large plots. Green, leafy suburbs. Parents mainly professional and entrepreneurs.	House turned into an ECCE centre. Hours: 6am to 5pm. The children: mixed racial population, predominately Blacks, one Indian child and no white children. Indoors: Well looked after and well maintained. Two sick bays for children who get sick during the day. The centre is well resourced with playground equipped with jungle gyms, sand pits. Outdoors: The yard is well maintained with flowers	*Language:* Centre used English and Afrikaans as the LOT (language of learning and teaching). *Admission*: Children from all racial groups admitted in the centre. Centre fees include meals, snack, stationery and toiletries.	13 -15 October 2020

			and artificial lawn in some play areas. Learning through play. The centre is not fully equipped to support broad range of learning needs. (I will expand on this comment later.)		
Centre B	West of Polokwane Eduna Park Residential Are Predominantly White	Peri-urban residential area. Predominately Middle class area. Homes/ large plots. Green, leafy suburbs. Parents mainly professionals and entrepreneurs.	House turned into an ECCE centre. Hours: 6am to 5pm. The children: mixed racial population, predominately Blacks, one Indian child and no white children. Indoors: Well looked after and well maintained.	*Language:* Dual medium: Afrikaans and English. *Admission:* 18 months - Grade RR (5yrs). Children from all racial groups admitted at the	23-25 November 2020

			Two sick bays for children who get sick during the day. The centre is well resourced with playground equipped with jungle gyms, sand pits. Outdoors: The yard is well maintained with flowers and artificial lawn in some play areas. Learning through play. The centre is not fully equipped to support a broad range of learning needs. (I will expand on this comment later.	centre but majority of children are white. Centre fees include meals, snack, stationery and toiletries.	

Table 5.2 outlines the staffing profiles of each centre, the qualifications, age range and details about child staff allocation. Centre A allocated staff to a specific age group as shown in Table 5.2. Centre B adopted a different approach. The smaller number of children allowed for family grouping and team teaching. Though these were two very different models they added depth and richness to the findings. I was able to observe how teachers engaged with children's culture contexts and cultural diversity in two different contexts. Though the participants were given pseudonyms I also allocated to each one a code in order to easily identify each participant. These codes for example T1, T2 through to T8 are also indicated on Table 5.2.

TABLE 5.2: STAFFING PROFILE

Centre A				
Participants' position and age group taught	**Race**	**Age Range**	**Qualifications & age range**	**Languages spoken**
Principal: Betsie Administrative position.	White	50 -59	Matric and 20 years ECD experience	Afrikaans (mother tongue) (MT) English Understands Sepedi
Teacher: Selepo Owls (Grade R group) 5-6 (T6).	Black	40-49	Matric and 6 years ECD experience.	Sepedi (MT) English
Teacher: Mokgadi Caterpillars 4-5yrs (T2).	Black	30-39	Matric and 5 years ECD experience.	Sepedi (MT) English Afrikaans
Teacher: Johanna Busy Bees 3-4 yrs. (T4).	Black	40-49	Standard 8 and 5 years ECD experience	Sepedi (MT) English Afrikaans

Teacher: Raisebe Duckling 2-3 yrs. (T1).	Black	40-49	Matric and 3 years ECD experience.	Sepedi (MT) English Afrikaans
Teacher: Daisy Guppies 2: 1-2yrs (T5).	Black	30-39	Matric and 4years ECD experience	Sepedi (MT) English Afrikaans
Teacher Maria: Guppies 1 6-12 months (T3).	Black	30-39	Matric and 4years ECD experience	Sepedi (MT) English Afrikaans
Miscellaneous				
1 Administrative staff member 1 Cook 2 Cleaners	Black Black Black			
Centre B				
Principal: Anne	White	20-29	BEd in ECD	Afrikaans (MT) English

				Arabic
Teacher Lorna (T8).	White	40- 49	Matric with 5 years' experience.	Afrikaans English
Teacher Puleng Though Puleng agreed to take part in this study she was away on sick leave and was thus not able to participate. I have added her details for the sake of completeness.	Black	30-39	Matric with 3 years' experience	Sepedi (MT) Tsonga English Afrikaans
Miscellaneous staff				
1Music teacher (guest teacher) comes on Wednesdays to provide music therapy for those children with behavioural conditions. Gardener	White Black			

I now present a more detailed overview of each centre focusing on the layout of the centre and classrooms[2] as well as the outdoor environment, the available resources and activities offered. These findings are unpacked through a culturally orientated lens. Findings on how the teachers at each centre understand culture and cultural diversity are also presented.

5.3 CENTRE A

5.3.1 Teachers' understandings of culture

Teachers were much more comfortable answering this question in their mother tongue. I encouraged them to do this as I felt they would give richer answers and more insightful descriptions. However, this was not necessarily the case as many explanations were lacking in in depth insight. I present their responses in a table format. Where relevant I give the exact response in their home language and the English translation in italics. Teachers' understandings of culture for Centre A are presented in Table 5.3.

[2] Though the words class and classroom imply schoolification, and as such it is preferable to avoid using them in ECCE settings these are the terms that are used by the two centres. Hence, I have retained them as to change to playroom would be confusing as many of the posters and pictures used in this study have the words class or classroom in them and these words cannot be removed as they are the authentic representation of what was observed by me, the researcher.

TABLE 5.3: CENTRE A TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDINGS OF CULTURE

T1	Ke histori ya batho ba itseng. *History of a certain race is culture.*
T1	Nna nkare ke setšo sa batho/lapa se o belegwe ko go sona goba ka mo gare. *Something that you are born into, the traditions of the family that you are born into.*
T3	Ke kwišiša go re culture ke ka mokgwa o re phelang ka gona re le setshaba se seitseng, moaparo wa rona, tumelo tja rena. *My understanding of culture is that the way we live our lives, different ways of doing things, different believe systems, different clothing, just the way that we have sort of evolved over time to have a specific way of living.*
T4	Culture ke ka mokgwa wo re phelang ka gona re le setshaba e.g., sa Ma Pedi. Rena le meetlo le setšo sa rena re le batho ba Ma Pedi se se satswanego le sa e.g. Ma Venda, Ma Zulu, MaTsonga or Makgowa
T5	Culture ke setšo sa batho ka mokgwa yo ba phelang ka wona. *Culture is way people live.*
T6	*Culture is what defines people, and how we do things.*

Teachers acknowledged that there were different cultural groups making up the ECCE setting. According to most teachers the majority of children represented the *Pedi, Venda, Tsonga* cultures. They also mentioned that in the past there had previously been a few Indian children and "some years back 2 or 3 'white' kids did attend" (interview Ts 2 and 3). Ts 4 and 5 mentioned that concerts were the vehicle through which matters related to different cultural practices were addressed. T4 mentioned:

> Concert are used to address different cultures that are here at the centre during Heritage month. For example, we can plan a concert for this year based on Tsonga/Venda culture, and since this is done, yearly children are then exposed to different cultures, but this is done with the help of parents who help and guide us according to their culture.

And T5 said, *"*We have Pedi, Venda, Tsonga. Our concerts are not based on learning schoolwork but on learning different cultures within the centre.

Only one teacher, T4 could provide a more insightful understanding of culture. For the other teachers, culture was a road term related to how we live and do things. These understandings of culture are analysed in more detail in Chapter 6.

5.3.2 Teachers' understanding of Cultural diversity?

Table 5.4 gives an overview of the teachers' understandings of cultural diversity. Again, they were encouraged to respond in their preferred language. It was hoped that this would enable teachers to give more in-depth answers. However, this was not the case. Teachers found the concept difficult to describe and 'complained' that it was a very hard question to answer.

TABLE 5.4: CENTRE A – TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDINGS OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY

T1	Ye e bo ima (*This is the tough one*) Nkare ke ditšo tje di kopaneng. *Different cultures*
T2	Le nna ke nagana gore ke merafe ye fapaneng e kopana *I also think it is different culture coming together*
T3	*I can say it is different cultures.*
T4	*I also think it is different people from different countries/places coming together.*
T5	*It is different people with different culture together.*
T6	*I think it refers to different cultures living together.*

In response to the question 'Have you received any specific training (pre-service, in-service) on cultural diversity? If yes, what topics did the training cover?', all teachers replied that they had never had any input by anyone. This possibly explains the paucity of their answers and the difficulties they expressed when answering question related to cultural diversity. At times questions were rephrased using the example of the different food /snacks packed in the lunch box. For example, sometimes because of cultural choices items in the lunch box might differ. A Venda child might have a lunch box including Mopani worms /Mashonzha or locusts that could possibly traumatise another child who is not familiar with those cultural practices. T5 answered:

> Our activities are based on themes, like transport, animals and this is when we are be able to tell them that this particular animal or insect forms part of food for this culture/ or these people belonging to this culture. So that when they discover the said above example children will be already familiar with that.

Even though the teachers did not have a deep understanding of cultural diversity issues some acknowledged that they had a role to play in helping children gain insights into the different cultural groups who attended the centre. T1 for example stated, "Ke nagang gore ka mibino, le ge ba apara go ya ka setšo sa bona" [*When you play their CDs that they bring here at the centre, and the way they are dressed culturally*]. However, many teachers showed minimal insight into their role in the promotion of cultural diversity in the centre. T3 claimed that. "We treat them equally whether you're a Shangan or Venda / Pedi it doesn't matter the treatment is the same." This answer implies perhaps a lack of awareness when it comes to accommodating cultural differences in the centre. And T2's answer showed even less insight:

> Our role does not pose any problem since the parents brought their children here knowing that we use one language as a medium of instruction. This reply also highlights issues in relation to the importance of mother tongue learning in the early years.

The emphasis in teachers' answers was on ensuring that all children felt the same. Focusing on cultural differences as well as similarities was not seen as important to most teachers. In reply to a question on whether or not children were made aware of different cultural practices despite all of the children being black the Ts 2 and 3 replied, "No, we don't do that we make them feel all the same." Ts 5 and 6 gave a somewhat confusing response, "I put them together and teach

them that if you see the other person being like that it is because of their culture, but we are all human being despite that." Despite probing, she was not really able to elaborate on this response. T4 had a little bit more insight, "I swap them, a Venda child will be expected to play a role of a Pedi child, so that they both can know how it feels to be the other one."

The teachers' understandings of cultural diversity are also interrogated in more depth in Chapter 6.

5.3.3 Centre A: Evidence (or not) of cultural sensitivity

5.3.3 1 Overview of Centre A

This is a privately owned centre situated on the outskirts of Polokwane city. It is located in a quiet and peaceful suburb surrounded by trees. This provides a conducive early learning environment as children have many opportunities to interact with nature such as view birds or insects and trees within their surroundings. The grounds and buildings are neat, clean and orderly. Even though the buildings are not modern they portray a sense of tranquillity and restfulness. The centre aims at inclusion in the way it is organised with regards to policies, practice, and culture. However, the building is not designed to accommodate all children, because there are, for example, no ramps for wheelchairs. In an interview with the teacher (T2) on the 14 October she indicated that this was something that the owner was about to address but unfortunately when she [the owner] was diagnosed with a life-threatening illness the idea was put on the back burner.

The centre has two entrances. Both are protected by surveillance cameras and fitted with an intercom. These cameras also provide a visual picture of the outside area where vehicles are parked in the road. Entrance one appears to be the main entrance as it is linked to the reception area and is the one used by visitors including parents when they drop off their children in the morning or fetch them in the afternoon. Due to COVID-19, all persons who come into the centre (parents, children, staff and other visitors) have to sanitize their hands as well as the soles of shoes. Interview (14 October) with teacher(T4) stated that this is done in order to safeguard the children as well as all those who are in the centre from possible infections.

When children are dropped off in the morning the welcoming teacher/s stand near to entrance one to check and make sure that the children are well and have all the necessary items required

for the learning activity for that day. During this time teachers interact with parents. Parents can alert the teachers to specific things they [the teachers] might need to know about their specific child. Observations on 14 October confirmed these conversations between teachers and parents. Children were checked by the teachers to ensure that they were healthy and able to attend the centre, and parents shared special messages with the teachers. One parent during this observation (14 October) indicated to the teacher that she would fetch the child earlier (before lunch break) as the child had a doctor's appointment. Thus, despite the restrictions placed on easy access to the centre because of Covid-related regulations parents still had equitable opportunities to speak to a teacher about any possible concerns or problems.



FIGURE 5.1: ENTRANCE 2 - USED MAINLY FOR CHILDREN TO EXIT TO PLAYGROUND, SAND PITS, SWINGS

Observations (14-15) of the admission register revealed that prior to Covid-19 the centre was full, and parents actively sought to place their children in this centre. The admission records, dating back to 2019 - 2020 showed that there were 85 children attending the centre, and that this was the highest number admitted for the past 2-4 years. The interview with the principal (13 October) attested to that fact. In 2020 the numbers dropped to 41 due to COVID-19 and by the time this interview was conducted (13 October) less than 25 children had returned. In some classes, for example the Duckling class (interview 14 October T1), not even a single child showed up after the level five lockdown was eased the ECCE centre was reopened. The centre

management should be acknowledged for retaining all staff despite the drop in attendance and the concomitant reduced income.

The policies, pedagogical practice and culture veer towards being inclusive because children from all walks of life are welcomed and respectfully accommodated. All the teachers interviewed admitted that there was no policy on cultural diversity in this ECCE settings. They also admitted that it is important to have such a policy or documentation that talks about culture in the ECCE centre? T1 gave the most detailed response stating:

> Yes, the policy will be important since it will help to conscientize the teachers and staff as a whole and we all get along well. The policy will help us know what to do during the Heritage Day, because it will tell us, and we will follow what it says. It will help the site (ECCE) to implement culture issues correctly. We teachers and the principal will be able to agree and then tell the parents what is expected during the school hours activities. For example, on the Heritage month we agree as teachers that lets dress according to our culture and the centre also send the parents messages to inform them that they must dress children according to their culture for when we celebrate. If the policy was there maybe it was going to tell us what to do and will help us in not forget our cultural roots.

The other teachers gave similar but less detailed responses. For example, T2 answered, "Yes, according to me, I see it important because we had to know where we are coming from because culture is the roots of where we are from because some like these children might not know where they belong." In general, all the teachers felt a policy would help them understand and know what to say and do with the children about culture.

Despite the good intentions about promoting cultural awareness true inclusivity has not been realised. For example, from a structural perspective the centre is not inclusive; no ramps to accommodate children or parents who are on wheelchair are evident. The centre is well equipped, and staff supported to provide for a broad range of learning needs (see discussion that follows). Children with difficulties are generally supported and given extra assistance (interviews Principal, T3, T5 13- 14 October.

Planning is centrally controlled for all groups and is done by the principal. T1 said "We plan according to main plan" She was not able to expand on how issues pertaining to children and families from various cultural backgrounds were addressed. She and other teachers in this centre found it difficult to expand on how routines, spontaneous teaching situations and planned activities addressed different cultural practices of the children. T2 mentioned that:

> We do that in concert and Heritage Day. Every year we have a theme for our concert and the themes differ every year. During this themes child can also wear their cultural outfits depending on the theme. For this concert theme children will not be dressed like that of last year and T4 said, "Our activities are normal they do not take into considerations different cultures.

All teachers said they do not talk too much about culture. Seemingly the one time that different cultural practices are recognised and observed is during Heritage month. T1's comment aptly sums up the centre's approach to cultural issues:

> It is throughout the month that we acknowledge our cultures. Like I have said it is not an everyday thing that we celebrate culture. It might not be seen throughout the year but when the Heritage Day or month arrives, we then remember … we start thinking that it is time to celebrate culture (13 October).

I observed teacher support in action during a group outdoor play activity where staff supported a child with hand eye coordination difficulties. During the interviews (13-15 October) the principal and teachers alluded to the fact that they are aware of the importance of including children's cultural values and practices throughout the day, but all said they felt hampered because there was very little Departmental support and according to them no clear policy on how to address cultural issues in the teaching and learning environment.

The centre's approach to addressing language differences was to adopt English as the medium of instruction (T5 interview 13 October). T4 stated that teachers tried to collaborate and assist each other to better communicate with children whose mother tongue was different to theirs. She stated:

> Coming to that sometimes we try to work together between us teacher you find that maybe I understand a bit of Venda the other teacher understands a bit of Tsonga or Pedi, then we take upon ourselves to try and explain to the children what they want to say to each other. But I can say we are only guessing (T4).

And T6 responded by saying, "When they talk you can hear that these children are not communicating well, then we have to wait for the parents to help us.*"* All teachers agreed that if they could not between themselves understand and explain to children they then referred back to parents. "Re botšiša batswadi ge re sa kwišiši *(We ask the parents if we do not understand).*" But T1 was adamant that they always spoke to the children in English, "Even when they talk their language, we respond in English so that when they are home, they must always remember that at school it is always English and that helps them a lot."

5.3.3.2 The indoor facilities

The centre as shown in Table 5.1 comprises 6 classes and two sick bays each class with its own teacher. Classes names were neutral and depicted animal/pets like, Caterpillar 4-5years, Ducklings 2-3years, Guppies 1 & 2, 6 months -2 years, Busy Bees 3-4years, and Owls (Gr R) 5-6years. A brief description of each class some with picture is given.

The Guppies classes

The Guppies houses the babies and toddlers. Observations (13 October) revealed that there were two Guppies classes. Guppies 1 class is for children from 6 to 12 months. When children turn one, they are then moved to Guppies 2 class until they turn 2 years (interview 14 October with the principal and teachers 3 and 5). Social distancing measures were apparent. For example, the older children were allocated permanent seating at a specific table and this place was indicated by a name tag being placed on the table. Each child had his/her own box of utensils to use for creative arts activities. I observed 5 singing a song in English with the children. In fact, all communication with the children took place in English. As T3 said, [We speak] Strictly English, there is no time to mix because throughout the year our routine is the same there is no mixing. T5 also mentioned:

> We only do things in English as it is the medium of instruction. The only time we talk about culture is during Heritage Day, we only wear our cultural clothes but the school activities /routines just continue as normal. I heard no Sepedi [which was the home language of most of the children] being spoken to these children.

Both Ts3 and 5 acknowledged that it was problematic to teach a child who cannot speak in English. T3 admitted to talking some Pedi and said this was helpful for most children as they were the dominant cultural group (and the language that she spoke). She further said:

> it becomes a problem only when there is a child who is not Pedi maybe Tsonga, Venda and cannot use Pedi and English to communicate. Then I will be forced to go and look for a teacher who can help, and sometimes you find that teachers are busy and cannot leave their work and come and help, then I end up skipping that item, and wait for the parent when they come to fetch their children then I ask.

T5 confirmed that the children experience language difficulties, "they cannot communicate well."

Both the Guppies' teachers admitted that some of their beliefs and attitudes in relation to culture had shifted because of their working with children from different cultural groups. T 3 said, "You learn that we do things differently because of different cultures. We approach the same thing differently because of different cultures." She further commented, "Re kopana le batswadi bana, (*from different culture with different languages, the that makes you learn other people's languages and culture and you change*). Likewise, T 5 commented, "You learn that we are not the same and do things differently. Meeting different people from other places makes you learn, e.g., language, clothes etc." Yet despite these admissions not much in their practice reflected a deep understanding of cultural diversity.

These teachers did however agree that they need more input and knowledge. T3 for example said, "Le nna ke ya dumela, re kgona go kwišišana gape seo se re thusa go pela mmogo ka khutsho" *(Yes, I also agree as that helps us to live together peacefully ... even if we are from different cultures).* She also suggested that they receive more training in order to better use resources in order to promote cultural awareness and to improve understandings of cultural diversity amongst all stakeholders. T5 added, *"Ge ba ka re ruta go kwana ka polelo go sena*

go nyenyefatša omongwe" (If they can teach us to live in harmony without undermining one's culture or to be undermined because you belong to a certain culture.) Though they wanted to know more about other cultures and how to better accommodate children from different cultural groups they did not want to lose their own cultural identity.



FIGURE 5.2: GUPPIES 2 CLASS SHOWING SOCIAL DISTANCING

Duckling class

Children in the Duckling class were aged between 2-3 years. When lockdown level 5 was relaxed to level 1 not a single child returned parents felt that the year was already coming to an end and most of the parents were working from home. They felt that they could juggle between their paying jobs and looking after their children. In anticipation of children returning to this class the teacher (T1) had arranged the seating in such a way that she could position herself in the middle of the class. This, she said, would enable her to readily move between the children as she was centrally located and could engage more readily with the children. Tricycles were neatly packed in the corner. T1 acknowledged that language was also a frequently experienced challenge (interview 14 October). She mentioned that because children "come to the centre from different families [cultural groups] that's why we use English as a medium of instruction because it accommodates all, since even us teacher we are not familiar with all those languages,

like Venda, Tsonga.*"* Yet despite these challenges she had no solution on how to manage these language difficulties.

T1 also admitted to learning more about different cultures since she began working at this centre. She mentioned that initially she was not concerned about culture, Heritage Day and celebration of cultures. However, she commented:

> when they celebrate it started to affect me and I realized that it is also important to kids as they grow, they grow up understanding the importance and also has to bear in mind that no matter what culture we need to treat each other equally.

Seeing the different cultural artifacts such as clothing and listening to different music was what triggered the change in her.

This teacher also agreed that further training in cultural awareness was necessary. She stated:

> On better understanding of the children, so children are children, sometimes you can tell them not to do but they can continue doing the very same thing. So, they need tolerance and patience on the side of the teacher and know how to control yourself and your emotions.

One way to support teachers would be to give them "more resource to be added, to show different cultures because what we have now only shows one culture" (T1).



FIGURE 5.3: DUCKLING CLASS

Busy Bees

Children in this class were aged between 3-4 years. In this class it was also evidence that the seating arrangements had been altered to meet COVID 19 protocols. There were only two children seated at each table and in all there were twelve (12) children in this spacious class. The toilets were conveniently situated near to the classroom. Children's bags were neatly packed and placed in lockers marked with the children's names. The class comprised black/African children. These children came from different ethnic groups; there were Tsonga, Venda as well as Pedi speaking children in the class. I noticed this (observation 13 October) because of their names which were pasted on the tables. For example, Mulalo which means peace was a Venda child and Tsakani meaning happy was a Tsonga child. This observation was confirmed during the interview (14 October T3). T4 mentioned that:

> We want the child to at least talk to the teacher even when using their language then you can figure out [what the child wants], the problem is when they don't talk at all. Because you don't know if the child wants to go to the toilet or if he/s doesn't want the food or he/s is not feeling well because of the silence. but if he/s talks even when using their language, I can figure out and be able to help.

T4 was sympathetic to children's language barriers but again at a loss on how best to address these issues.

Observation (13 October) also revealed the class was well equipped and print rich. I observed an alphabet and number freeze. The birthday chart was appropriately in the shape of a beehive. There were posters of a tractor, bees and other images of nature. One poster depicted both a white and black family comprising each of mother, father and child washing hands. This was a poster from the Department of Health to reinforce Covid-19 health protocols not evidence of the teachers reinforcing cultural diversity in the classroom. There was also a poster on the wall displaying the Ten Commandments indicating that the centre follows a Christian ethos. I noticed no other religious artifacts in the classroom or in fact in the centre. The implicit message given to the children is thus the promotion of the Christian religion to the exclusion of other religious practices. I did not however, observe any implementation of religious practice such as the singing of hymns or praying before mealtime. These observations were confirmed during interviews with the principal and teacher. From a pedagogical perspective the poster was not big enough for easy viewing. This possibly points to a general lack of attention to specific detail that became evident during my observations (13-14 October).

Despite the classroom not showing any cultural diversity T4 did admit that "Ke nagana gore ke ithuthile something about other cultures that are here at the centre." (*I think I have learned something about different children coming from different places in the centre).* She said she had become more aware of cultural difference from different people. However, she expressed concerns when learning about other peoples' cultural practices. She asked, "How can we tolerate one another without fear of losing ourselves." For T4 this was a topic worth deliberating upon when exploring cultural diversity issues. As she said "I don't really know which /what resource can be used culturally."



FIGURE 5.4: THE BUSY BEES CLASS

Caterpillar class

There should have been 15 children aged between 4-5 years in the class according to interview (14 October T5). However, only10 children returned to the centre when the country was moved from level 5 to level 1 of the COVID-19 lockdown. This number was confirmed through observations done on 14 October. Again, social distancing of children was reinforced and sharing of equipment was minimised. In this neat, well organised class all children had access to their own stationery which was well packed in plastic containers placed on the table. The class was also print rich with numbers and alphabet freezes placed boldly in front on the board. The birthday chart was well placed and written with big letter for children to see. Children were offered a range of different activities, but I noticed little to reinforce the children's specific cultural values and practices. Children participated enthusiastically in songs and action rhymes such as 'Old Mac Donald'. No songs were sung in the children's mother tongue. T2 also remarked on the language challenge and the importance of being able to understand one another. "… if we don't understand one another, I sometimes cannot find the teacher who can help in talking to that child and find out what is it that I want to say to the child."

T2 also admitted to experiencing a shift in her awareness of different cultural practices. She claimed that cultural diversity, "… made us to have the knowledge of seeing all people the

same, we are the same, because mostly when we are at home(villages) we are of the same culture, but here it is different cultures.*"* She stated that this awareness came about "By learning different languages and looking at different culture with a positive way because they too are human beings." She also agreed that it was important to have training on cultural diversity issues because, "… yona e ka ba bothlokwa, gore re kwišišane" (… *it is important so that we can be able to understand one another.)* Like T3 she stated, "If we can be taught how do we live together even though we are from different cultures." She also agreed that they need more resources but insightfully added*,* "but we need to be shown how they relate to culture."



FIGURE 5.5: CATERPILLAR CLASS

The Owl class

The Grade R class is known as the Owl's class and children who attended were between 5-6 years old. Observation (13 October) revealed that the class is spacious and very neat and clean for to ensure the ongoing good health of children during the pandemic. COVID-19 protocols such as social distancing was adhered to as can be seen by the positioning of the tables.

This class was also well resourced, and it was a print rich environment suitable for stimulating the children's learning and development. Again, however, there was little in any acknowledgment of multiculturism. For example, the alphabet chart depicted very Eurocentric images – possibly the letters 'bB' could have been depicted by a picture of Tsonga beads or the letters 'mM' by a mopani worm and the Venda name written in brackets 'Mashonzha'. Likewise, all the books provided were in English. Given that all the children are black and speakers of Pedi, Tsonga and /or Venda it is pedagogically very unsound not to have any books in the mother tongue even if the LOLT is English. Dixon (2008) corroborate the above statement by stating that the hegemony of English is entrenched at the expense of other languages, leaving children in South African schools with little access to mother tongue education.

In fact, throughout my observation time in this centre I never once heard the teachers speak to the children in their mother tongue. AsT6 said, "[We speak] only English because it is used as the medium of instruction." Yet she did acknowledge that "Language is a big problem, maybe we need to be taught other languages here."

Like her colleagues T6 has also undergone a change in her beliefs and attitudes towards people from culturally diverse backgrounds. She admits to having learned about different cultural practices and behaviours and "then you understand that people are not the same even if we are all blacks." She too felt there was a need for more resources that were culturally appropriate but not sure of what these should be or how she would use them. When the idea of using playdough in different colours of black, brown etc to make 'people' of different colours was explained to her she said, "Now I understand, we make our own play dough of different colours, e.g., brown."



FIGURE 5.6: THE OWLS CLASS

Computer classes

There is large space known as the stimulus zone which accommodated all children from age two upwards. However, observations (13 and 15 October) revealed no activities that correlate with the name took place here. The principal explained that it was due to observing Covid 19 protocol that they had decided not to operate the stimulus zone.

Health issues were taken seriously, and COVID-19 protocols were observed in all the activities. Observations (14-15 October) revealed how children were given the drill of washing their hands every time they go to the bathroom, and the container and basin were placed strategically so that no child could claim to have forgotten or not seen the basin. The playground was marked to assist the children to be able to keep social distancing when they were outside.

5.3.3.3 The resources

As mentioned previously the classes are well equipped and print rich but the print images are not culturally diverse for example, alphabetic charts are based on Eurocentric ideas and images (observations 13 and 14 October). There are some posters showing nuclear black and white families but none of other family groupings such as a single family, extended family etc. Children 'read' books that are kept in the classes on tables. There are no bookshelves where

children are encouraged to choose a book for themselves due to a Covid-related health precautions. Books are distributed by the teachers. Books show people from all groups living their daily lives (working, being with family, solving issues relevant to young children, having celebrations) but are all written in English and Afrikaans. This despite the fact that the majority of children are black and have Sepedi as a home language.

Each child had his/her own stationery box. These boxes contained a variety of materials such as wax crayons, paint crayons and playdough (observations 13- 14 October). Children were also provided with crayons made from different shades of brown, tan and black. They then had a choice as to pick which colour they would colour in the people in their drawings.

In addition, children were allowed to play with different education toys and manipulative equipment such as puzzles, Lego, Play Mobil, and card games. However, these resources did not depict diversity in ethnicity/culture because all were standard 'Western type' toys based on Eurocentric images and ideas such as fitness balls and hola hoops. There was no attempt to introduce more culturally diverse toys and equipment. Toys and material used were relevant to Western culture. All teachers admitted in their interviews that they do not have different resources to promote cultural diversity. As T4 acknowledged, "Heritage Day is [the] only [time] when we put on our cultural clothes and play our cultural music" and T6 confirmed this when she said, "I don't think we have culture resources here."

As previously mentioned, teachers acknowledged the need for more culturally appropriate and responsive resources but could not identify many such resources and when they were present could not really see their relevance as indicated by the comment from T5. "We make play dough of different colour e.g. Red, Gray, Brown, but what is the relevance of that?" It seems apparent that teachers require in depth knowledge and support to enable them to consider and then to actually introduce more culturally responsive resources.

There was a well demarcated outdoor play area where once again social distancing was emphasised. In fact, due to the Covid pandemic children were not given access to this area. I observed (13 October) a jungle gym, swings, sand pit and opportunities to play certain games such as hopscotch. However, I noticed nothing in this area that specifically promoted other cultural games, and in the interviews, teachers made no reference to such games or equipment.



FIGURE 5.7 OUTSIDE PLAY AREA SHOWING DEMARCATIONS FOR SOCIAL DISTANCING

5.3.3.4 Activities offered to children

There were opportunities for dramatic play and resources on offer included cooking utensils, eating utensils, work tools and clothes. Again, these items did not reflect cultural diversity because only western pots, plates etc were seen in the play areas.

There was some singing, but as already mentioned only English songs and rhymes were taught. Children were not exposed to other music experiences. It was only during the Heritage month (September) that children, parents and teachers were allowed to dress, play music, dance according to their particular cultures (interviews with teachers13-14 October). Planned activities did not integrate any cultural themes and there were no culturally relevant materials/toys used.

The LOLT was English, and this was strictly adhered to. During my time at the centre, I heard none of the children's home languages being spoken. Despite teachers being able to speak Tsonga, Venda and Sepedi they never greeted or spoke to children in one of these languages. As T4 mentioned, "We normally use one language, which is English." The only opportunities for children to see and hear various languages other than English and Afrikaans was limited to Heritage Day celebrations. Only when particular difficulties arose would an attempt be made

to address a language issue. When challenges were experienced with a particularly difficult child a note was sent to the mother to come and interpret the message for the child (interview 13 October, T2).

Underachieving and children with diverse needs were taken into consideration. T2 (interview 13 October) confirmed that children who were having difficulties in engaging in and completing daily activities were accommodated and helped to achieve success. The observation (14 October) showed teachers attending to children showing sign of confusion that might emanate from the lack of understanding from the activity that does not relate to their cultural backgrounds. To further address concerns teachers wrote in the parents' notebook and asked parents to consult with them when they came to fetch their children. Teachers address issues and help children understand that no matter what culture, they need to treat each other equally and with respect (Observations 14 October.

No activities (e.g., planned activities, routines, spontaneous situations, 'teachable moments', etc) in the everyday life of the setting were used for addressing different issues pertaining to children and families from various cultural backgrounds because all activities were conducted in English. No meaningful consideration of different cultures was taken into consideration. However, there was a good relationship between the staff members as well as the children and their families. Parents responded well when called to attend meetings as well as issues pertaining to the centre and their children such as attending the Heritage Day activities at the centre (parents, staff, children together).

In sum this was a well-run and resourced centre. It was a respectful environment where all children were made to feel welcome. The staff however appeared to have little insight into the importance of acknowledging children's cultural heritage and practices. They appeared to have a somewhat superficial understanding of the complexities related to culture including the importance of acknowledging and teaching young children through their mother tongue. These findings will be interrogated in greater depth in Chapter 6.

5.4 CENTRE B EVIDENCE (OR NOT) OF CULTURAL SENSITIVITY

Centre B was the second centre where I collected data. This was a smaller centre having only 3 staff members. Unfortunately, on the days allocated for data gathering teacher 9 was absent. Therefore, I only present data from two of the teachers working in this centre.

5.4.1 Teachers' understandings of culture

Both these participants were proficient in the English language and thus able to respond in English. They seemed to have a clear understanding of the meaning of culture and were able to relate it to attitudes and beliefs as well as to specific cultural practices. Their responses are noted in Table 5.5.

TABLE 5.5: TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDINGS OF CULTURE

T 7	I think culture is about who you are and what you do with your people, for example as an Afrikaans speaking person, I do things differently from maybe a Zulu person
T 8	I think culture is a set of belief, what defines people, how we do things. At the end each and every culture has something to offer.

5.4.2 Teachers' understanding of Cultural diversity?

Table 5.6 gives an overview of the teachers in Centre B understandings of cultural diversity. Again, they were able to respond in English and so no translation was necessary. These teachers gave limited responses to the question which probed their understandings of cultural diversity. The responses are presented in Table 5.6.

TABLE 5.6: CENTRE B TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDINGS OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY

T7	I think it is all people, black and white living in one place.
T8	I think it is about different people from different cultures living together.

Both teachers acknowledged that the children in the centre came from culturally diverse backgrounds. T7 stated that these backgrounds were very diverse. Most children were either Pedi, Tsonga or Venda speaking. She further added, "I have seen parents removing a lot of culture from their backgrounds as well language culture. They don't speak their mother tongue at home only English". T8 gave a less detailed response saying, "They [the children] are mixed, blacks, white Indian." Both participants agreed that it was important to address issues pertaining to cultural diversity in ECCE. T7 said:

> I think it is important because culture does bring identity to a person of knowing where they come from it makes them unique, if they are traveling overseas especially that's when you notice that your culture actually is important and interesting to other people. In South Africa sometimes is rigid like I don't want my culture I don't have a culture.

T8 answered, "It is important because it helps children as well as teachers to understand one another better, and we avoid hating each other because we lack the knowledge [about each other's culture]. Ts7 and 8 both said they have a very mixed group of children, Zulu, Pedi, Tsonga and Venda, Afrikaans, and English. As T7 commented, "It will be good to know each culture that we have here in school so that we can incorporate learning about it".

Both teachers also acknowledged that their beliefs and attitude towards groups/individuals with culturally diverse backgrounds had shifted over the years as a result of working with children from culturally diverse backgrounds. T7 commented:

> I think over the years it has change. I have multicultural background I moved a lot around in South Africa, I lived in India for 2 years and so during those times it changed, and I think will still continue to change as I learn more." Likewise, T9 answered, "Yes, I think it has changed over the years, because now I understand other people's culture, and I realized that we are all people and the same.

They also acknowledge that the teacher has an important role in addressing cultural diversity issues in ECCE. T7 claims they do not have any cultural issues but believe it is important to teach children acceptance of each other. "We don't really have issues, but we do teach children to always be accepting of each other, because we do have children with special needs, for example, so they have learnt to have compassion for one another". Though they acknowledged the importance of managing cultural diversity there is, I sensed, a greater emphasis of managing children with special needs. T8 said, "Children are taught to accept one another, and there are no issues on that point".

T7 also mentioned that she had not experienced many challenges or difficulties in relation to a culturally diverse ECCE community. The main challenge was language, "… usually when children come here, they sometimes don't know how to speak English at all." When asked how these language challenges were addressed, she replied, "We talk slowly and show them by action if for example, when you are sitting down you show them, this is colour white, we talk slowly and explain to them." She further went on to say that she involves the children's families when trying to resolve language issues. She mentioned that she encourages parents to tell the children stories in their mother tongue and then to read the story the story in English to them. She recommended "one book a week. Let them [children] tell it back to you [parent] so they will learn a book try to involve them in that way. This they can when they are home."

Teachers however expressed the need for more in-depth input to help them manage the culturally diverse ECCE environment more responsively and appropriately. T9 admitted that she had had no specific input in relation to managing cultural issues and cultural diversity in the ECCE centre. T7 responded that she had had some input on different cultural practices during her training but not specifically on cultural diversity. When asked if she was satisfied

with that training, she replied "I would like to learn more, because the little bit that I know is when doing Proudly South Africa research on my own." She further commented:

> I have found that many teachers are not open to the different cultures, they get frustrated, or they are upset in the ways, they might be border line rude to the parent because they don't understand where they[parents] are coming from. So, I do think they need further training, and it will be on how they speak with people in an understanding way and not make assumptions.

These comments were made specifically in relation to language challenges. In her opinion, specifically in relation to mathematics certain indigenous languages do not have the equivalent English words. Therefore, children find it difficult to learn certain concepts because, "the concept doesn't exist in their language (the word). I think it was when they did more than and fewer than, It was not there in Sepedi." She also expressed that children have difficulty in naming different body parts. She gave an example that in English children identify a hand and an arm – the two body parts are separate. She stated that in their mother tongue they were using one word for both arm and hand. In her words, "If it doesn't exist in your mother tongue how are you going to teach to the children a word that is new and a concept that is new, then you have to adjust." However, I would argue that this demonstrates a limited understanding of T7 in regard to indigenous languages and highlights the necessity of all teachers having in-depth knowledge about the children's home languages as well as their specific cultural practices.

5.4.3 An overview of Centre B

Centre B is a privately owned, dual medium ECCE centre for children between the ages of 18 months to 4/5 years (Gr RR).[3] The languages of teaching and learning are Afrikaans and English, and the children attending are predominately white English and Afrikaans speaking. There are some African children from local communities whose mother tongues are Sepedi, Zulu, Tsonga.

[3] In South Africa Grade RR children are children who are aged 4 turning 5. It is the year before Grade R.

This is a newly established early childhood care and education centre which opened in 2016. There are 3 teaching staff members including the principal. It is situated in a on the outskirts of Polokwane City in Eduna Park which is one of the Western suburbs. This is a very tranquil area that is conducive to learning. The centre is an old house which has been partially converted to accommodate the children. However, these renovations have not been completed therefore it is not an ideal building to house an ECCE centre.

Security is taken seriously and at the gate there is a security guard. The gate is controlled by an intercom system and only opened once visitors have identify themselves. Observations (23-25 November) revealed that parents walk their children to the classroom door where all children assemble before being led by their teachers to their respective classes. The gate is opened for parents to drop their children from 6:45 am until 7:30 am and thereafter that the intercom is used to gain access to the centre.

During the interview on 24 November, Anne the principal stated that they offered high quality pre-school education. This is, she said, because of her being well qualified. She showed me her BEd degree certificate that she obtained in 2017.

According to the centre policy (T7 interview, November) policies, practise and culture are inclusive because children from all walks of life and all racial groups are welcome. However, there is no specific policy on cultural diversity. According to T7 they are still in the process of creating such a policy. According to T7 the centre is well positioned through its everyday practices to practice and accommodate cultural diversity within the centre. She mentioned that she was very fortunate in that, "I grew up multi-cultural so my relationship with all my staff and parents is very good, I don't have any barriers between anybody". However, like Centre A language remains problematic as the other staff members do not always understand clearly so they speak a mixture of Afrikaans and English; the result being:

> broken communication … but a lot of patience because I understand that she doesn't understand me, sometimes she will misunderstand me and will not do what I told her to, and I will physically show her what I want her to do (T7).

Despite the leanings towards inclusive education the building itself is not inclusive. For example, there are no ramps to accommodate children or parents who are in a wheelchair. The centre is equipped and supported to provide for a broad range of learning needs. In fact, it has a special focus on children who experience learning difficulties. All children are admitted despite their challenges. e.g. a child who is suffering from cerebral palsy and another suffering from anxiety. To assist these children there is a specially equipped music therapy room (T7 interview 23 November).

Observations (23-25 November) revealed that parents and their children who were attending CB) looked very happy and confident. According to the principal (T7 interview 24 November) one of the reasons for this feeling of contentment is because of the good interaction between centre, children and parents. Parents were especially appreciative of the small number of children admitted. The principal stated that during a meeting with the parents, an agreement was reached to keep the number of children small so that they can get individual attention; especially those with behavioural problem.

The centre, as mentioned, has a small intake of children. There were 25 names on the register observations (23-25 November). However, during my observations (only 15 children were present). The principal mentioned that some children had not return due COVID-19, as parents thought the year was coming to an end and many of the parents were working from home.

The gardens and outdoor play areas were also in good condition and well looked after. The outdoor play area was spacious and provided enough space for children to play. It was equipped with jungle gyms and swings. Observation (24 November) confirmed the maintenance of the playground as the sand pit was covered with the net. The sand pit was covered with a net as part of the maintenance and Covid-19 control programme.

The teachers observed children when they are playing outdoors. During an interview with the teacher T3 (23 November) she stated it was important to be there when children play so that order was maintained to prevent unnecessary accidents, and “those that fall and or get injured can be attended immeadiately” to ensure good ECD practice. Figures 5.8 and 5.9 illustrate a tidy well maintained outdoor play area but not an area that is culturally reponsive to the children’s diverse backgrounds.



FIGURE 5.8: THE OUTDOOR PLAY AREA



FIGURE 5.9: PLAY AREA WITHOUT ANY TOY OR MATERIAL REFLECTING CULTURAL DIVERSITY

5.4.3.2 The indoor facilities

Even though the buildings and garden were neatly kept and the playground spacious, the classrooms were not so spacious (Observations 23-24 November). In the interview with the principal (23 November) she stated that the classrooms were previously rooms of the converted

house; none of the planned adjustment or renovation had been done so far. As previously mentioned, this centre adopted a team-teaching approach. There was however classroom space for individual groups of children.

The Grade RR class

The seating arrangements had been adjusted to ensure social distancing. Children were seated two to a table.

The daily programme was well placed in the front on the wall so that it was easily seen by the children. It was boldly written boldly and pictorially designs allowed the children to 'read' the programme.

Classes are well equipped and print-rich but the print images were not culturally diverse and posters only depicted white families (people) busy with their daily activities, even though the class is made of different children from different ethnic/culture groups. Likewise, the alphabetic chart was based on Eurocentric images. The days of the week were pasted on the board and also written in bold coloured letters. As mentioned before the centre was based on dual medium instruction; the LOLTs being Afrikaans and English. In an attempt to accommodate children who spoke other home languages next to the English and Afrikaans words one could see some other official languages specifically Sepedi and IsiZulu (observation 24 November – see Figure 5.10). The principal (interview 23 November) stated that the centre is trying to introduce different languages to equip the children with the skill and abilities to speak different languages not only English and Afrikaans. However, these words were not clearly written and were not given the same emphasis or status as the LOLT's.



FIGURE 5.10: DAYS OF THE WEEK WRITTEN IN FOUR SOUTH AFRICAN OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

The music therapy room

Music is offered as a therapy for children with behavioural challenges and for those who were having cognitive challenges. This is a spacious room with a wooden floor to allow the children to move with ease and safety. It was well equipped with different music instruments as well as a piano in one corner (see Figure 5.11). The children could both move and listen to piano music which was played by the music teacher who came once a week on a Wednesday. In an attempt to promote the children's cultural heritage, the music teacher played the National Anthem (observation 23 November) followed by well know South African tunes (e.g. Phata Phata a Zulu song meaning touch touch). Children also listened to Western classical music. Music was also offered to provide leisure time as part of the extra mural activity, and it formed an important part of the daily activities (interview with principal, 23 November).



FIGURE 5.11: PIANO IN THE MUSIC CLASSROOM

According to the principal (interview 24 November) there are five children with behavioural challenges and three of those children were displaying aggressiveness towards other children. They were all benefitting from music therapy. There was, for example, a three year India boy who was suffering from cerebral palsy and the music teacher used musical instruments such as rumba shaker, as part of his therapy. This was an instrument that he could handle/manage and thus play. The teacher then gave instructions, and the child was invited to copy what other children were doing. The music teacher said (interview 24 November) by offering this gentle encouragement the boy has begun participating. He is moving (following how the other children are moving) and playing the musical instruments. She also stated that he had also started interacting with hola hoops and the medicine ball.



FIGURE 5.12: THE MUSIC CLASS (THE FACES OF CHILDREN HAVE BEEN COVERED TO PROTECT THEIR IDENTITY)

Another child, who was from Zimbabwe, and was 2 years 6 months old, was according to the teacher (interview 24 November) emotionally unstable. This little girl did not want to associate with other children, but only with the teacher if her mother was not present. The music teacher's assistant would put the child who would be crying on her lap and sang a lullaby in Zulu and after the teacher would play some soothing music from a stereo countering the crying and which helped to sooth the child until she would fall asleep. In an interview (24 November) with the principal and music teacher they stated that it had been 6 months since they started music intervention therapy with this little girl. They thought that they are now seeing some positive result coming out from the music therapy.

The principal stated that the parents of those children with behavioural challenges were paying an extra fee that was used to pay the music teacher. The rest of children attend music classes as part of their extra mural activity with no extra cost.

5.4.3.3 Resources

The centre did not have its own library books. The principal had an arrangement with the local library. Parents were given book titles and then went to the library to loan a book. This was a weekly excursion. I probed for more clarity during the interview with the principal T7 (23 November) to determine if the recommended books reflected the diversity of cultural backgrounds, and she mentioned that they are written in English and Afrikaans and do not

show people from all groups. This was a lost opportunity to promote meaningful recognition of the diverse cultural groups attending the centre.

The art materials used comprised paint, crayons and playdough. Here children were given crayon colours that could be used to draw figures representing the different racial groups (observations 24 November). However, I did not get the sense that the staff were giving any conscious thought to acknowledging people from different cultural groups.

Likewise, the manipulative materials used did not depict diversity in ethnicity/culture because all were based on the traditional western games and toys such as puzzles, Lego, Play Mobil, and card games. There were no toys or other resources from different cultural groups. T7 admitted that there was a need for these types of resources.

> I would like resources like in Pre-school we need to know the body parts and the functions of the body parts and if they exist in the language [African languages]. I know that in some African languages the vocabulary is few, and I have to bring in English words to fill up the language. I wish somebody will just invent the words. Afrikaans people are inventing the word and putting them in the dictionary every year, with African language I don't think that is happening. Books in few different languages written by South Africans, I was happy to find in a website, books that were written in different languages (same book) by South Africans (T7).

T8 gave a much more succinct answer. "I think different resource that addresses other cultures can be of great help since all children will be able to learn in their own cultural language." However, neither teacher gave any clear idea of the different type of resources they would like.

5.4.3.4 Activities

From a pedagogical perspective, activities were sound but again little if any consideration was given to ensuring children's cultural ethos and practices were represented. Planned activities did not integrate any cultural themes. For instance, dramatic play materials were very uniform. The various resources such as eating utensils, crockery etc were Eurocentric. Opportunities to

introduce, for example, Pedi cooking pots were missed. A similar opportunity was lost with the choice of dressing up clothes. They were all in traditional western style. The materials used at the centre (e.g. objects, work tools and clothes do not reflect cultural diversity because only western pots, plates are used.

The opportunities for children to see and hear various languages other than English and Afrikaans was possible but limited because there was only a chart of days of the week written in Sepedi and English e.g., Tuesday/ Labobedi. However, during the observation on the 24 November I never heard teachers speak or even greet children in different languages possibly because teachers can't speak all official languages' e.g., Sepedi or isiZulu. The principal said she made an attempt to learn an alternative "I try to learn but Aunt Marie doesn't understand me, so we end up talking between Afrikaans and English" *(*T7 interview 23 November)

Music was perhaps the one area where far greater emphasis could have been placed on cultural songs, use of cultural instruments and even to introduce cultural dance. However, apart from hearing the National Anthem (Nkosi sikelele Africa) and Phata Phata all other songs such as lullabies and naptime were of Western origins. Sadly, no other music or songs reflected other cultural styles.

In brief this well-resourced and run centre focused on the acceptance of all children especially children with possible learning difficulties. Despite the lack of cultural awareness on the part of the teachers they do make and attempt to support children and help them to understand what it is they should be doing regardless of their language or culture. There was an ethos of respect all persons had to be treated equally and with respect. Those children who were not coping were helped so that they were not left behind (interview with the principal T3, 23 November). Underachieving and children with diverse needs were taken into consideration. The principal further indicated that a child with anxiety and the other child with cerebral palsy were supported in all activities, together with those children who are said to be underachieving. This was confirmed during the observation, 24 November. As in Centre A different cultural ideas and activities were only introduced in relation to Heritage Day. T7 commented, "Our activities are in English, sometimes we have fancy dress and let them model different clothes if that is Heritage Day or braai day and T8 said, "Almost all of the activities in the centre are conducted in English …"

5.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter the findings have been presented. I first outlined teachers' understandings of culture and cultural diversity. Teachers had mixed understandings of culture and admitted that the concept cultural diversity was a difficult one to grasp.

I then presented an overview of the two centres where data were collected. Centre A is a large centre employing six members of the teaching staff. It is well positioned and well run. There are ample resources but despite the children being black and coming from different ethnic groups the LOLT was English, and the resources and activities were almost entirely representative of a white middle class traditional ECCE centre. This despite the fact that all the teachers except the principal were black.

Likewise, Centre B even though it had a greater focus on inclusivity from a learning perspective did not take the cultural practices or home languages of the children into account. Again, the programme was modelled on a traditionally white western ECCE approach. There was a superficial understanding of culture and the importance of promoting children's cultural heritage.

These findings are analysed in greater depth in the following chapter, Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter findings are analysed according to three themes which have been identified from the literature review, the research questions and the initial data analysis. The research findings which were described in two case studies were presented in the previous chapter. In this chapter I present a thematic analysis of these findings.

In theme one I explore teachers' perceptions of culture. This theme answers the queries posed in research question 1 and data informing this theme will also add richness to research question three. In theme two I examine the participants' understanding of cultural diversity, the analysis of which will also inform the answers to research question three. Research question three, 'How are ECCE teachers' understanding and beliefs of culture and cultural diversity reflected in their daily practice?' will be interrogated through theme three.

The three themes are:

- Culture: teachers' views
- Teachers' understandings of cultural diversity
- Culturally responsive teaching in a multicultural setting

Frequently when reading data there is a discrepancy between what teachers say they do in the classroom and what they actually do. I briefly also interrogate the findings by comparing teachers' espoused theories with their theories-in-use (Argyris & Schön, 1974)

6.2 CULTURE: TEACHERS' VIEWS

It was evident from participants' responses from both centres A and B that each person had their own understanding of the concept culture. The participants generally felt that defining culture was difficult, something that was beyond their scope and capabilities. This was not surprising as findings revealed that culture was not a term with which they have had to engage during their teaching careers. However, they all attempted to respond to this question according to their understanding. At times their responses revealed a limited understanding of the concept.

In Centre A, T1, for example, viewed culture as something historical. In this understanding culture is not seen as a complex, dynamic concept (see 2.2). Culture is not viewed as something that is evolving, it has happened. She (T1) was also not able to consider some of the more superficial elements that depict cultural practices that are in part represented by symbolic artifacts (Udechukwu, 2019). I would argue that this participant was not even aware of the dilemmas and debates that are opened up when talking about culture. As she said, "This is a tough one." For this teacher there was no connection between the cultural influences informing the constructions of children and childhood. As Clark (2016) notes culture is a slippery concept. Therefor it becomes difficult for teachers who have little awareness of cultural influences on children and childhood to considers how these understandings might influence their ECE practices.

The other teachers from Centre A were able to give more substantial responses. For T2 culture was an identity marker, something you are born into, and it prescribes or informs who you are and group interactions, "what you do with your people." This view of culture hints that certain people might be the 'the keepers of particular cultural practices'; for example, that the elders are responsible for ensuring cultural practices (Alubafi & Kaunda, 2019). T3 saw culture as, "how you live your life." She acknowledged that a group's culture has evolved over time and like T2 commented that culture influences the way group members live. This view of culture reminds us of Schein's (2009) comment that deep roots of the 'culture plant' are the belief systems; judgements of what is good and bad. T3 also referred to the more superficial elements of culture such as artefacts and made mention of specific cultural types of clothing. She seemed at ease with different groups, with different belief systems and artefacts being in the same space. This view is in keeping with Idang's (2015) statement which notes that culture specific traits go on to include the people's language, dressing, music, work, arts, religion, dancing, a people's social norms, taboos and values. Both T3 and T4 viewed culture as a social or community phenomenon and recognised that different groups of people have different cultural practices. This view aligns with Spencer-Oatey's (2012) claim that culture is treated as a complex whole of social traditions and is a prerequisite for one to be a member of a particular society.

T4's understandings were similar to TS3 and 4. She also viewed it as a social or community phenomenon where specific cultural groups have their own ways of doing things; for example, the Pedi or Venda people. She further connects place with culture – the place where that culture exists and can see a coming together-ness of different cultures, people and places. This understanding builds on that of Rathje's (2009:35) who claims that "the most common understanding of culture is one that imagines a high level of internal uniformity within a social system". Ts 5 and 6 expressed understandings similar to those of Ts 3 and 4. There responses however were less detailed, but they did concur that culture is the way of life, and it is also what defines people and how they do things.

In centre B, T8 gave a similar response to that of T4 and Ts 4 and 6. She too viewed culture as something that indicates "who you are and what you do with your people." She agreed with T2 that it was indeed a cultural marker, and it informs how you relate to your specific culture group and as such it also highlights different cultural practices, for example she stated that, "as a Afrikaans speaking person I do things differently from maybe a Zulu person." "T8's understanding of culture relates strongly to the socio-cultural premise that social interaction is important for learning and cultural practices are reinforced through social interactions within one's cultural group (Vygotsky, 1978).

The most detailed response came from T7, who was also the principal of Centre B. She acknowledged that culture was a complex and multifaceted concept; that it was very difficult to define, and that different people had different understandings of this concept. Wuketits, (2002) is also of the view that culture has been defined in many ways by different people. This participant was the only one to acknowledge that each and every culture is unique and that every culture has in her words "something to offer." Though this understanding recognised the richness and complexity of the term, like the views of the other participants it also failed to capture how closely the term is aligned to beliefs, norms and attitudes that shape people's behaviours (Rong, 2013) and how cultural practices inform human activity.

In sum, participants had a simplistic almost one-dimensional view of culture; one that recognised the social dimension but in essence their views failed to capture the dynamic nature of culture, the importance of cultural practices and the extent to which culture underpins human activity. Though participants recognised specific cultural practices as being part of a specific

group they failed to comment of cultural differences and how different communities could be strengthened by acknowledging these differences. In this regard most participants showed a naivety that was affirmed by their responses and understandings of the concept of cultural diversity which is explored theme two.

6.3 TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDINGS OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY

It is evident that teachers from Centre A found the concept of cultural diversity difficult to describe as is highlighted by the different answers that are given by the teachers. They openly acknowledged that for them this was a very hard question to answer. Ts1 and 3 gave a very simplistic answer, "different cultures" and they were not able to expand further. T2 and T5 added that it referred to different cultures coming together but could also not elaborate further on this response. T4 added that it was about different people from different places or countries coming together. But none of these respondents could say exactly what was meant by "coming together." T6 was able to allude to diversity when she mentioned different people with different cultures together.

It was evidence that none of these participants were able to unpack the meaning of the term diversity in any detail and were unable to supply any meaningful insights into how this term was realised in their daily practice. They were able to acknowledge the examples that the researcher presented to them but found it extremely difficult to identify, for example, other types of cultural artifacts used by different ethnic groups. As discussed in more detail in theme three, despite teachers being aware of some cultural differences the emphasis at the centre was on uniformity. Teachers felt it was much more important to ensure that all children felt the same. MacNaughton (2005) claims that these factors are all driven by 'societies' understandings of children and childhood and often this understanding does not consider the children's contexts, experiences and cultural practices. Furthermore, as Woodhead (1990) argues cultural values can be readily overlooked in a homogeneous society as it becomes easier to share a normative framework of cultural practices and values. The complexities of working in a diverse community are marginalised.

There was therefore a very superficial understanding of the term cultural diversity. Through this paucity of knowledge, I was able to identify a gap in teachers' insights. It also became apparent that it would be beneficial for them to have some understandings of cultural diversity

and of the importance of acknowledging as well as addressing issues of diversity in the teaching and learning environment. In fact, based on T1's comment, it was only when children attended the centre dressed in their cultural clothing, that they [the teachers] were aware of the child's cultural heritage "If a child come dress in a particular way culturally then you can understand which culture the child belongs to."

These comments are, I would argue, indicative of how little importance is placed on issues relating to culture and cultural diversity in this centre. For example, the *macro-system*, which is the third circle in *Bronfenbrenner's theory* consists of the values, laws and resources of a culture and include broad cultural influences or ideologies that have long-ranging consequences for the focal individuals who in this study are young children The theory posits that children develop within a complex system of relationships affected by multiple levels of environment, which in this instance was negated. In addition, this lack of awareness of each child's specific cultural heritage speaks to a uniform way of constructing children where their unique needs and interests are marginalised (DECS, 2008).

Focusing on cultural differences as well as similarities was not seen as important to the teachers. Though current thinking would be in opposition to these thoughts the teachers were, I suggest, genuinely under the impression that their teaching and learning approach was inclusive and considerate of all children. Given that they freely admitted that they had had little if no training in this area of managing cultural diversity their approach could not really be faulted – for them being inclusive was being aware of children's specific needs and interests – which is a hallmark of good ECD practice (Gordon and Browne, 2014). To do this they treated all children in the same way.

Parents (perhaps unwittingly) were seen by some teachers as supporting this 'inclusive' approach as they freely sent their children to a centre where the LOLT was not the child's mother tongue. Sadly, in these situations addressing aspects related to cultural diversity was marginalised and even ignored because of misconceptions by teachers and parents of what informs good teaching and learning practices (Britto et al., 2011). In addition, this lack of insight into the importance of mother tongue teaching in the early years further exacerbated the challenges of ensuring a multicultural, multilingual learning environment (Sechele,2002).

Only one teacher in this centre, T4, admitted to providing children with some insight (albeit minimal) into different cultures. She encouraged Pedi and Venda children to role play each other's cultures. To be a really worthwhile learning experience for the children, this type of activity should be extended. But in order for teachers to do this they themselves require much more insight into the complexities and demands of implementing a culturally responsive curriculum (Dahlberg et al, 2013; Norozi, 2016).

The two participants from Centre B also admitted to having a limited understanding of this term cultural diversity. T8 described it in terms of racial differences. She was not able to distinguish between, for example, different ethnic groups. T7 gave a more comprehensive reply and admitted that it was about different people from different cultures living together. She alluded to some of the recognised challenges of promoting cultural diversity as noted by Higgs, 2008 and Gwanfogbe, 2011. For many it is easier to marginalise specific cultural practices including the use of the mother tongue in favour of the dominant culture. These teachers both agreed that it was important to acknowledge the different cultural groups in the centre because this acknowledgement promoted increased understandings between the different groups. However, as the discussion in theme three shows, this was not an aspect of the daily programme that received too much attention.

As mentioned in Chapter 5 both teachers also acknowledged that their beliefs and attitude towards groups/individuals with culturally diverse backgrounds had shifted over the years as a result of working with children from culturally diverse backgrounds. T7 mentioned that living in another country started her on the journey of cultural awareness and she admitted that she was still learning. T8 alluded to the fact that this concept of cultural diversity is a complex one; it demands that people recognise cultural differences but also that "we are all people and the same." Bennett, (2015) attest to that when mentioning that we are different even as we are all human and share more similarities than differences.

Both these teachers gave a more nuanced understanding of this complex term. They also acknowledged that as teachers they have an important role in addressing issues related to cultural diversity. However, their emphasis was more on inclusion of children with special learning needs rather than addressing issues pertinent to teaching in a culturally responsive way including issues related to the teaching of language and literacy. In terms of Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory (1994) where teachers have little understanding and recognition

of the macro factors that influence children's lives they will tend to focus on special needs as inclusion rather than being informed by the broader understandings of cultural diversity.

Both these teachers admitted that they had not had any formal training in relation to teaching in a culturally responsive way. They agreed that they needed more in-depth input to help them manage the culturally diverse ECCE environment more responsively and appropriately. T7 mentioned that what knowledge she had gained was through self-study.

In sum, the teachers from both centres had a limited understanding of culture and cultural diversity. For the majority this understanding could be said to be naïve and unsophisticated. Culture and cultural diversity were terms about which they had heard but to which they had paid little attention. In most instances they had had no formal input in relation to these terms. They were terms that did not featured strongly in guiding the teachers planning and implementation of the daily programme. There was a vague awareness of them, but specific thought was not given to how these concepts could be included in the daily programme.

On the other hand, however, the teachers in no way belittled or denigrated these terms. There was no animosity shown towards other cultural groups and in no way did any of the teachers show a disrespect for any other culture or cultural practice. Teachers wanted to provide the very best service for the children and their families and were doing this the only way they knew how. They had already made countless adjustments to accommodate the necessary required changes to reopen their centres during the Covid-19 pandemic. They were thoughtful about social distancing, the appropriate use of resources and the implementation of activities. I would argue that it was the participants' lack of awareness of the importance of knowing about different cultures, of implanting relevant cultural practices and on how to embrace cultural diversity in the early learning spaces that prevented them from promoting a culturally responsive early learning programme. And given the other demands made upon them due to the Covid-19 pandemic, there was little room for considering how to implement culturally responsive practices. This claim is supported by the discussion which informs theme three.

6.4 THEME 3: CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING IN A MULTICULTURAL SETTING

In this theme I first explore the extent to which multiculturism is realised (or not) in the daily programme. Secondly, I then examine the relationship between language and promotion of diversity and finally I investigate what it is that teachers think they could do to better support and implement multiculturism in their centres.

6.4.1 Promotion of cultural awareness and diversity within the ECCE centre

Though teachers admitted to acknowledging children's cultural heritage on special days, they did not exhibit deep insight into the promotion of cultural awareness and diversity within the ECCE centre through the daily routines or activities. The ECCE centres were multicultural in that they admitted children from different racial and ethnic groups. All children were welcomed and respectfully accommodated. Yet, despite agreeing that a centre's policy should include a section on how to support multiculturalism in the centre, neither centre had a policy that expressly addressed how to manage issues related to diversity. It could therefore be argued that the dimensions comprising cultural diversity have been marginalised (Mazur, 2010); in fact I would claim that in most instances have been ignored. As Rijamampinina and Carmichael (2005, cited in Mazura, 2010) assert these dimensions interact with and influence one another, therefore emerging differently in different contexts, environments, and circumstances. As suggested in 2.4 this results in a dynamic interaction of these dimensions which makes the concept of diversity more complex, not easier to grasp and manage.

In fact, in Centre A the planning was done for all groups from a central office. Individual teachers were then expected to adapt the 'master' plan to suit the ages and stages of development of their group of children. No mention was made of addressing the children's particular home contexts, environments or specific learning interests. Teachers openly acknowledged that unless it was a 'special day' such as Heritage Day no particular consideration was given to considering issues relating to specific cultural practices of the children or to accommodating cultural difference. Seemingly, no provision was made for adapting the programme to suit children's different cultural contexts during routines (for example a snack routine), the choice of resources and in the planning of activities - both teacher-guided and child- initiated. No thought was given to including different cultural norms or practices informed by indigenous knowledge systems (Gwanfogbe, 2011) which would be

recognised by family and community members (Nsamenang, 2008). The emphasis was on inclusion which was understood as doing everything 'the same' for all the children, whereas inclusion in the true sense entails that all children should learn together, wherever possible, regardless of any difficulties or differences they may have (DoE, 2001b). The infrastructure (school/ECCE centre) should recognize and respond to the diverse needs of their children accommodating both different styles and rates of learning and ensuring quality education to all (Britto et al, 2011. Through culturally appropriate curricula, organizational arrangements, teaching strategies, resources use and partnership with their communities learning becomes a socio-cultural endeavour as proposed by Vygotsky (1978).

The staff were not indifferent or disrespectful towards the children or their family. They offered children who were struggling additional support, they conferred, if necessary, with parents. It was, I would suggest, a case of not knowing. Not knowing the importance of addressing cultural issues and differences in a disparate context like South Africa. Not knowing how to adapt the teaching and learning environment to accommodate and positively support cultural diversity amongst the children in the centre. One reason given by staff was the acknowledged lack of training and that there was very little Departmental support. According to staff there was no clear departmental policy on how to promote multiculturalism in the centres. In the light of these findings the call to Africanise the ECCE curriculum should be strengthened (Mbembe, 2016). Unless there is an improved understanding of what diversity, within a South African context means for ECCE practice, there will be little incentive to shift the understandings of multicultural ECCE practice (Okwamy & Ebrahim, 2019).

Centre A was a reasonably well-resourced centre. There were posters on the walls, child appropriate toys were available in all classrooms and the outdoor play area was adequately resourced. Yet none of the posters nor any of the toys were of a multicultural nature. They could have been classified as being the typically standard western stereotypical resources found in many ECCE centres. There was no sense of either adapting resources or introducing resources that would have been more culturally appropriate.

The poster on the wall displaying the Ten Commandments in the Busy Bees class only supported a Christian ethos. There was no attempt to address aspects of any other religious group either through an alternative poster, conversation, songs, stories or a prayer before

mealtimes. This was a somewhat exclusionary practice given that this is a multicultural centre and that education in South Africa is secular (DOE, 2003). Furthermore, alphabetic charts were also based on Eurocentric ideas and images (observations 13 and 14 October). No attempt was made to replace some of the words with appropriate images that would be more contextually relevant to the children. For example, Bb stood for bear; in a culturally appropriate chart it could have stood for bucket which is an everyday item in these children's lives. There were some posters showing nuclear black and white families but none of the other common family groupings such as a single family, extended family etc. In the South African context few children come from nuclear families; the majority came from single parent families or extended families (DSD, 2021) so again this was a lost learning opportunity. Though it could be argued that these are superficial gestures, as artifacts and symbols by themselves do not constitute a multicultural learning environment (Darder, 2021) the addition of locally sourced materials could promote an increased awareness of a multicultural learning environment. These practices resonate with the notion of TCKs (see 2.4). The children are exposed to varying cultural practices that are influenced amongst other things by political views, educational resources as well as economic status. Often the language of teaching and learning is also different from their mother tongue. Thus the children spend a significant part of their developmental years in a culture other than the parents' culture, develop a sense of relationship to all the cultures while not having full ownership in any (Pollock & Van Reken, 2001).

The availability of books further reinforced the notion of a print rich early learning environment. A variety of children's books were on hand and to comply with Covid-19 regulations were distributed by the teachers. Books show people from all groups living their daily lives (working, being with family, solving issues relevant to young children, having celebrations) but were all written in English and Afrikaans and depicted aspects of a more Western culture. Teachers acknowledged that there were no books available in the children's home languages. Again, given the importance of relevant sociocultural learning (Vygotsky, 1987) and of learning in the home language (Sechele, 2002) a huge learning opportunity has been lost. This is especially so as books in many of the indigenous languages are readily available online for teachers to access and use, for example Read to Rise and the African Storybook project which are both non-profit organisations committed to promoting child and youth literacy in ECCE centres and schools in *South Africa's* under-resourced communities.

In addition, as mentioned previously children could play with a variety of educational toys and manipulative equipment such as puzzles, Lego, Play Mobil, and card games. There was no attempt to adapt these Western type toys. For example, teachers could have made a matching game using images that are familiar to the children and these games could be used to reinforce children's particular environmental contexts. Sadly, there was also no attempt to introduce more culturally diverse toys and equipment. For instance, dolls of different skin colour could have been provided; the toy car collection could also have included taxis. This would have been one way to address the teachers' claims that they do not have different resources to promote cultural diversity and that all toys and material used were only relevant to a Western culture. This situation reinforces Okwamy & Ebrahim's (2019) call for the introduction of indigenous knowledge systems and for appropriate decolonising of the ECCE curriculum to ensure that children are emersed in a culturally relevant and responsive learning environment.

All children had access to their own stationery which was neatly contained in plastic containers placed on the tables which contained a variety of different drawing materials (observations 13-14 October). Children were also provided with coloured crayons ranging from different shades of brown, tan and black. This could have been a good opportunity to mediate learning in relation to similarities and differences in relation to skin colour. Through, for example, suggestion and questioning teachers could have extended the children's understandings of diversity. Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory asserts that learning is an essentially social process in which the support of parents, caregivers, peers and the wider society and culture plays a crucial role in the development of higher psychological functions; however, it too was a lost opportunity.

Children participated enthusiastically in songs and action rhymes such as 'Old Mac Donald' and other traditionally 'English songs.' No songs were sung in the children's mother tongue. Again, a rich opportunity to strengthen intercultural understandings amongst the children was lost especially as many of the different ethnic groups have a strong musical heritage and that it is well known that music, especially song and dance, is an excellent way to promote early literacy (Kay, 2022).

A similar situation was found in Centre B. All children are welcomed but the policy did not make specific provision for how the centre will accommodate cultural diversity. According to the principal (T7) they were still in the process of creating such a policy. However, the principal claimed that because she grew up in a multicultural environment the centre has no challenges with multiculturalism and all children and staff are accommodated.

But perhaps this statement is indicative of the fact that she did not recognise the complexities involved in implementing a relevant, culturally responsive curriculum. Hunter (2015) asserts that to implement culturally relevant pedagogy in the classroom that will meet the academic and social needs of all children, regardless of cultural identity is not an easy task for teachers, but it is necessary if teachers wish to address society's demand for equitable education. For example, there were communication challenges between staff and children (Ts7 and 8) and the programme is based on the stereotypically western ECCE approach.

The staff in this centre have adopted an inclusive learning and teaching approach. But this approach is specifically in relation to accommodating children with special learning needs and not to adapting the programme to ensure that it is fully multicultural. There appeared to be a disjuncture between their understandings of inclusivity, multiculturalism and diversity practices. Again, as with Centre A this omission is not, I would argue, because staff are disdainful or dismissive of issues related to multiculturalism. Rather, it stems from staff ignorance. Staff believe that they have made sufficient adjustments and that all children regardless of their contexts have been adequately accommodated. Their espoused theory is one of multicultural teaching, but their theory-in-use is a teaching and learning approach adopted from traditional western early childhood programmes (Gordon & Browne, 2017*;* Argyris & Schön, 1974).

Attention is given to guaranteeing a safe and healthy learning environment, provision of adequate resources, implementing a well-structured, play-based learning programme and ensuring a caring and loving relationship with the children and their families. This type of programme meets many of the criteria for ensuring a successful early learning experience for children. However, the teachers have not made the shift to a more culturally responsive programme (Britto et al., 2011; Dahlberg et al., 2013) that has become the hallmark of quality ECCE provisioning. In addition, teachers do not appear to have embraced the notions of the being, belonging and becoming child (DECS, 2008). Children are viewed in a more deficit

light where inclusion is recognised rather than diversity and the demands made if diversity issues are to be addressed.

Perhaps one reason for these teachers from Centre B to believe their centre is multicultural in nature is because they have made some attempts to be more culturally inclusive. For example, the wall chart where the days of the week are printed in both Afrikaans and English has been extended to a handwritten addition of the names of these days in Sepedi. The end result is a messy wall chart, which is pedagogically confusing for the children (to see four different languages) and the implicit message is that the indigenous languages are less important as pointed out in Sotashe (2016) as they are handwritten in a significantly smaller print. In addition, no attempt was made to sound out or speak these words to the children which would have negated to some extent the somewhat superficial understandings of teaching in multicultural contexts. As with Centre A, books offered to the children were only written in English and Afrikaans negating the opportunity for children to enjoy culturally contextually relevant children's literature. Again, this implies a tension between the teachers' understandings of appropriate multicultural practices and their implementation of a culturally relevant developmentally appropriate programme (Gordon and Browne, 2017). Children are not constructed as active agents in their own right who can actively participate in the learning activities. Their cultural heritage is marginalised (Dahlberg et al. 2013).

From a pedagogical perspective, resources, equipment and activities were sound but again little if any consideration was given to ensuring that children's cultural ethos and practices were represented. As mentioned in Chapter 5 resources and activities did not take aspects related to cultural diversity into account. The emphasis was again on Eurocentric materials. Opportunities to introduce, for example, Pedi cooking pots or puzzles of contextually relevant contexts were missed. A similar opportunity was lost with the choice of dressing up clothes. They were all in traditional western style. The materials used at the centre for example objects, work tools and clothes did not reflect cultural diversity despite T7 admitting there was a need for such resources in the centre.

Music was perhaps the one area where far greater emphasis could have been placed on cultural songs, use of cultural instruments and even to introduce cultural dance, especially as the centre had the services of a music teacher. To limited extent different musical genres were introduced to acknowledge multiculturalism. As it was Heritage month children listened to the National Anthem (observation 23 November), to a Zulu song as well as to western classical music.

However, there was no specific input to promote the specific cultural heritage of the children in the centre. Again, I would suggest a lost opportunity to promote insights into cultural diversity as these remain superficial endeavours at promoting understandings of diversity (.

In summing up, both centres offered children sound learning experiences. But these experiences were limited to teachers' limited understandings of what constitutes quality ECCE programmes. These understandings have been informed by traditional western early learning programmes that have for a long while been criticised by more progressive early learning educationists who have espoused the necessity of ensuring a culturally responsive and contextually relevant early learning programme (Pence & Nsamenang, 2008, Pianta et al., 2016).

The question to ask is: What can be done to better inform teachers and to support them to become more culturally relevant teachers? This is especially so in a province like Limpopo where many of the teachers share the same cultural heritage and speak the same home language as the children, yet the learning and teaching emphasis is on western ways of knowing and doing and on teaching through the medium of English. This is a topic that is frequently probed by African philosophers such as Kwasi Wiredu (Eze, & Metz 2015).

6.4.2 Language: a vehicle in advancing cultural diversity

Language is an important transmitter of a persons' cultural heritage and by extension language, to a large extent, shapes early learning (Roberts, 2010*).* Language thus becomes an important vehicle for accommodating and responding to cultural diversity in ECCE settings. It is also widely accepted that for children to learn successfully and to master additional languages they need to be proficient in their home language (Madriñan, 2014). Therefore, because of its impact on learning how language issues are addressed in ECCE centres is of crucial importance, especially in multicultural centres.

Both centres have adopted English as the medium of instruction despite Sepedi being the home language of the majority of children and teachers. In South Africa however, because of historical and educational concerns many parents choose to send their children to an English medium centre *(*Gordon and Harvey 2019*),* despite the fact that they themselves, their children and often the teacher are not fluent in English. In these contexts, children often struggle to

master learning content as much of the content is contextually irrelevant for the children and they of course cannot communicate adequately through the LOLT.

Both centres admitted to language challenges, and it became apparent that they had limited insight into how to address these language challenges, especially as both centres taught through the medium of English. As T6 acknowledged, language was a "big problem." She suggested that possibly other languages should be used in the centre but had no idea of how to take this suggestion forward. T4 was sympathetic to children's language barriers, but again, at a loss on how best to address these challenges. The teachers themselves did not appear to be confident enough to challenge existing practices even though at times they could not understand what it was that children were wanting.

They acknowledged using a number of different strategies such as collaborating with each other to better communicate with children who did not speak their mother tongue and to asking parents to explain certain concepts to children. Occasionally some teachers admitted to talking to the children in their mother tongue, but most were adamant that they only spoke to the children in English. This strict, uniform policy of only speaking to children in English was detrimental to their learning as well as undermining any multicultural approach that might have been adopted in the centre. It could be argued that such an environment does not enable teachers to take the best interests of the child into account. In such an environment the image is of a child who is needy and not competent (Dahlberg et al., 2013). The contemporary constructions of child as being and belonging (DECS, 2008) are negated. The child's rights to equitable education are disregarded and the child is unable to develop a deep sense of belonging as the home language which is an important identity marker is marginalised (Fleer, 2018).

This unimaginative approach to language and multiculturism was further complicated by the centres' choices in relation to resources and materials (see chapter 5). Within early learning contexts, relevant posters, storybooks and educational toys and resources are recognised as being essential for the promotion of early literacy and by extension giving children insights into their specific contexts and cultural heritage (Nsamenang, 2008). As these were all drawn from traditional western sources much of this essential learning has been negated.

T7 realised that languages barriers adversely influenced children's learning, specifically she said, in relation learning certain mathematical concepts and to the naming of certain body parts.

She suggested that certain indigenous languages do not have the equivalent English words. Therefore, children find it difficult to learn certain concepts because, "the concept doesn't exist in their language (the word). I think it was when they did more than and fewer than, it was not there in Sepedi." Another example related to names for body parts. In English or Afrikaans there are specific names for individual body parts. An arm and a hand for example. She stated that in their mother tongue they were using one word for both arm and hand. In her words, "If it doesn't exist in your mother tongue how are you going to teach to the children a word that is new and a concept that is new, then you have to adjust." However, I would argue that this demonstrates T7's limited understanding of indigenous languages and highlights the necessity of all teachers having in-depth knowledge about the children's home languages as well as their specific cultural practices.

6.4.3 Suggestions of how to promote cultural heritage and diversity in the centres

Before issues relating to cultural practices, heritage and diversity can be addressed in the centres, teaching staff have to have appropriate knowledge and insight into different cultural groups, understand different cultural practices and have deep insights into how to support and promote cultural diversity within their classrooms as well as the centre. Molina (2013) is of the view that teacher-preparation programmes are essential to emphasize the importance of understanding and valuing student cultures to inform teaching practice.

All the teachers agreed that they had a limited insight into aspects related to cultural differences and that they did little to address each child's specific cultural heritage. They tended to address issues related to cultural diversity by treating all children 'equally', highlighting the fact that they had very little insight into how to respond in culturally appropriate ways during the learning day. This uniform approach, I suggest, was actually reinforced by the fact that most teachers claimed that they did not experience many challenges or difficulties in relation to a culturally diversity. This lack of challenge was in turn fuelled by their limited insights in the importance of managing these issues in a culturally responsive way.

The one challenge most teachers admitted to was related to language and communication difficulties. However, as mentioned in 6.4.2 teachers displayed little awareness of the important

role of mother tongue in emergent literacy and also did not have many suggestions of how to effectively manage these language difficulties. They mentioned 'solutions' like talking slowly, and at times role modelling the desired behaviours like sitting down, and another mentioned that she would ask another teacher who spoke the home language for assistance. One teacher mentioned that she involved the child's family if the situation became very challenging. Another teacher commented that she encouraged parents to tell the children stories in their mother tongue and then to read the story in English to them. But these ideas were not mentioned as possibilities that could be used more widely in the centre. Accepted and reasonably well know approaches such as code switching were not mentioned.

Despite teachers' minimal acknowledgement of experiencing cultural challenges in the centres, when asked, most mentioned that they would like to know more about other cultures and how to better accommodate children from different cultural groups in their classrooms. However, with some there was a sense that they did not want to lose their own cultural identity (T5). Again, this is a realistic concern given that they had so little real understanding of these issues and how to address them for example, Ntuli (2012) opines that lack of understanding of other people's culture and nonverbal behaviours can cause misunderstandings and even conflict

All participant from both Centre A and Centre B suggested that teachers needed more training in cultural awareness by the Departments of Social Development or Education. This would enable them to have a better understanding of the children they teach and thus enable teachers to have more patience and tolerance. It was also suggested that through education different groups of people could be taught to live together (Kampen, 2020). These suggestions are in keeping with numerous calls from African scholars to Africanise the early learning curriculum (Nsamaneng, 2008; Mbembe, 2016, Okwwamy & Ebrahim, 2019).

Teachers also mentioned they need for more diverse resources in order to promote cultural awareness and to improve understandings of cultural diversity amongst all stakeholders. They were not really able to come up with any meaningful ways of how they could be given these insights or mention the type of resources that they thought would support a more culturally relevant learning and teaching. But one teacher added that they would need to be taught how they relate to culture. This remark affirms once again the urgent need for appropriate teacher education. It seems apparent that teachers require in depth knowledge and support to enable them to consider and then to actually introduce more culturally responsive resources.

It was interesting to note that during the interviews some teachers stated that, through their exposure to different cultural groups, they have become more aware of different cultural practices and that some of their beliefs and attitudes in relation to culture had shifted. Triggers for teachers to start recognising cultural differences were the different cultural artifacts such as clothing and listening to different music. T2 observed that when she is at home (in her village) everyone acts in a similar way but that in her culturally diverse ECCE centre she has noted differences in languages. Importantly, she has noticed that these differences are these are not necessarily bad; she has come to realise we are all human beings. For these teachers this has been a positive learning curve and led to some positive behavioural changes as well as to giving them some additional insights about other cultural groups.

To successfully navigate these changes and to deepen their understandings, teachers require specialised skills (tools) to ensure that they can communicate adequately with the children. Without these tools, it would be impossible to ensure that they can make the content meaningful and so support the learning and development of all the children in a culturally responsive way.

6.5 CONCLUSION

Several important issues can be drawn from this analysis. Teachers are generally comfortable in their multicultural settings. I suggest that this sense of comfort comes from the fact that they follow good enough traditional early learning programmes and, up until this study, had not had their understandings of good ECCE practice questioned. Issues related to the children's cultural heritage and to the management of diversity had not been considered. Difference was negated and dealt with in a uniform way. This approach to cultural diversity was not done with malicious intent. There was no attempt to exclude children from different cultural groups or to marginalise children who were not competent in the LOLT. Teachers, because of a lack of knowledge about how to manage diversity successfully, genuinely felt they were doing their best for all the children.

In the next chapter, Chapter 7 I present the conclusion to this study. I provide a brief overview of the research process, answer the research questions and outline the limitations of this study. I explore a possible way forward for the improved inclusion of multicultural practices in ECCE settings.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I present the conclusion to this study. I provide a brief overview of the study and research process. I then answer the research questions, and recommend a way forward based on the discussion of the findings in Chapter 6. I outline the limitations of the study before concluding this chapter.

7.2 A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THIS STUDY

The study seeks to understand the impact of culture and cultural diversity in a day- to—day activities in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) centres and how these are attended by practitioners in their teachings /activities. The study is thus underpinned by the Bioecological Systems Theory of Bronfenbrenner (1994) as well as Vygotsky's Socio- cultural lens where both the child and the teacher actively co- construct knowledge. Qualitative research design and a Case study approach were employed as modes of enquiry in this study, while constructivism /interpretivism was used as a philosophical paradigm. Data was collected using the following qualitative methods; interviews (focus group with the teachers, semi structured one-to one with the principal), questionnaire and observations. These interviews and observations were conducted at two ECCE centers that were chosen for the research purpose.

7.3 QUESTIONS ANSWERED

The following research questions are answered:

1. What are teachers' understandings of culture?
2. What are their views of cultural diversity?
3. How are ECCE teachers' understanding and beliefs of culture and cultural diversity reflected in their daily practice?

7.3.1. What are teachers' understandings of culture?

This question was answered from participant's responses from both Centres A and B. Teachers showed that they understood culture differently. Findings also revealed that teachers found it difficult to define the concept culture. This was because each participant understood the concept differently and their knowledge differs significantly. Most teachers could be said to have had a very superficial understanding of the term – it referred to how people live and do things. Generally, the understanding was simplistic. Only two teachers could be said to have a somewhat deeper understanding of the term culture. The findings in Chapter 5 conclude that the term culture is a difficult one and participants found it difficult to really engage with this concept. Therefore, they could not answer the question with the expected fluidity.

7.3.2 What are teachers' views of cultural diversity?

The discussion on the findings in Chapter 6 showed that participants were unable to unpack and elaborate on the concept of cultural diversity, even when probing questions were asked by the researcher in trying to explain and give them more clarity about the issues under discussion. It is clear that this concept needs to be unpacked to them more clearly so that they do not confuse cultural diversity with inclusion. Participants in both Centres A and B thought that by being inclusive in admission it meant they were practising cultural diversity. Comments in Chapter 6 showed that less emphasis was placed in issues relating to cultural diversity in both centers and teachers never thought that it is through cultural diverse practices that the education provided can become more meaningful. Young children are exposed to different racial group, and they grow up being able to distinguish between different ethnic groups and know that different cultures can live together in harmony and respect. Even though findings revealed that teachers were not well versed with the concept, at the end of the data collection process their comments noted in Chapter 5 acknowledged that their diverse backgrounds had shifted over the years as a result of working with children from culturally diverse backgrounds.

7.3.3. How are ECCE teachers' understanding and beliefs of culture and cultural diversity reflected in their daily practice?

Again, it was evident in both Centres A and B that the concept of cultural diversity was foreign to most of the participants. They found it a hard concept with which to wrestle. In fact, they misinterpreted the issues of culture and cultural diversity and confused them with the centres' admission policy. Simply because the admission policies accommodated all races, they thought they were automatically addressing cultural issues and cultural diversity.

However, as findings showed this was not because of ignorance but rather because they lacked proper in-depth knowledge about the two concepts. This is evident in Chapters 5 and also 6 when findings and discussion of the findings are interrogated. Almost all the teachers from both Centres A and B made mention of the fact that they did not know much about the two concept and alluded to the fact that the daily activities were conducted in English which is the LOLT of both centres. This even though both centres have children from different races, for example in centre A the majority of children were Africans and Pedi speaking. Teachers commented further that cultural issues were only entertained during the special day such as Heritage Day. Other than on these special occasions everything was conducted in English with no consideration of addressing children's home contexts, or environment. There seemed to be no provision to adapt the daily programme for example to consider the way the resources were chosen, and activities planned to suit children's different cultural contexts. No indoor resources, from posters on the wall, to toys in the playroom, were cultural responsive, addressing different cultural groups. Neither were outdoor play areas culturally sensitive. Everything was Eurocentric in nature with no consideration of children from different cultural contexts. es.

7.3.4 How do teachers in ECCE centres in Polokwane realise culture and cultural diversity in their daily practice?

These three questions together provide the answer for the main research question. In brief teachers have little insight and understanding of the concepts related to culture and cultural diversity. They therefore find it difficult to implement a culturally responsive programme in their early learning centres. They follow many of the acknowledged principles of good ECCE practice. They provide a warm, caring and loving space in which children are free to engage with a variety of activities. However, these are not adapted to meet the individual child's specific cultural context. The centres have adopted a western approach with little adaptation to meet the diverse cultural needs and interests of the children attending the centre. They themselves are aware of their own shortfall and have come to realise the necessity of gaining more information on how to implement a learning programme that will meet the needs of a culturally diverse group of children.

7.4 LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

The first limitation of this study was the time constraints encountered during data collection due to COVID-19 pandemic. The data collection was meant to take about 2 weeks; I planned

to spend one week per centre but the first ECCE centre was able to accommodate me only when the country was placed on alert level one, and interprovincial movement allowed. I could only visit the first centre for three days because they were busy trying to catch up the lost academic time which happened when the country was shut down during alert level five. I was allowed to visit the second centre during the last term of the academic year and again because of COVID-19 ramifications, I could only observe for three days as the centre was busy with their end of the year activities. This necessitated that I had to collect data more quickly than initially planned. Observations that were planned to go on for a week had to be conducted simultaneously with the interviews over a three-day period. Therefore, the data collection process did not follow the original plan. However, as stated in Chapter 4 I do not believe that the study was compromised in any way. I made sure prior to arriving at the centre that the participants knew what the study entailed and were open to participating in the research process.

The second limitation was the attendance of children in both Centres A and B which was poor due to COVID-19 protocol of social distancing. In addition, not all parents were willing to send their children to the centres due to fear of COVID-19, and some parents decided that as the year was almost coming to an end not to send their children to the centres. Furthermore, most parents were working from home, so this was another reason not to send their children to the centre. Because of the low number of children coupled with the shortened observation time I was possibly missed observing certain activities or aspects of the daily routine. However, based on data collected I am confident that the findings trustworthy. However, I would suggest that for future studies of this type the researcher to spend enough time at the centre as to allow sufficient time for observation to take place under acceptable circumstances. The keeping of a reflective journal and the use of varied data collection tools helped to mitigate any possible consequences that might have resulted from the compromised time given for observation.

A third limitation relates to generalising this study. The findings of this study cannot automatically be generalised to other ECCE teachers and centres. Further studies following a similar research process are required before findings could be transferred to other settings.

7.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

This section presents the recommendations which were made based on the findings of the study and the answers to the research questions posed in this study.

7.5.1 A coordinated and integrated approach to ECCE teacher education

The study highlighted that all ECCE teachers complained about inadequate knowledge on issues of culture and cultural diversity. The researcher's recommendations are discussed hereunder according to particular topics.

- Policy on culture for ECCE centres

The Department of Basic Education must take upon itself to provide all ECCE centres with an appropriate policy on how culture and cultural diversity issues should be addressed and implemented in the day-to-day activities and running of the centres. Firstly, staff must realise that an inclusive admission policy is not the same as implementing an early learning programme that addresses issues related culturally diversity. In addition, teachers as well as the management of the ECCE centre must know that the centres cater for children from different races, and ethnic groups, and that these children are from different cultural groups. Therefore, the daily activities must be considerate of that fact. Teachers then need to be guided by the policy on how to go about engaging with these children from different cultures without marginalising their cultural activities, for example, language etc. The vacuum created by lack of policy on culture and cultural diversity can result in denying the child the most valuable knowledge of their society (growing without knowing and acknowledging their culture) to which can have a negative impact on the child's learning potential. According to NECCE (2014, p.2) to "ensure optimal development for all children, there is a need to create a planned curriculum framework, encompassing developmentally appropriate knowledge and skills, with flexibility for contextualization and diverse needs of young children".

- Language use

Language becomes a big challenge in a setting that is culturally diverse like the ECCE community. Even though English can be used as LOLT other languages especially of those children who are admitted in that ECCE centre should also be given consideration alongside the LOLT. Dixon and Peake, (2008 p. 70) support the above statement when they mention that "the hegemony of English is entrenched at the expense of other languages and a multilingual constituency". Their article considers the failure of the National Language in Education Policy

in its calls for mother tongue instruction and a multilingual approach, which is clearly evident in the ECCE centres that participated in this study. Therefore, it is recommended that relevant views on language and language teaching should be understood and be entrenched in ECCE centres. It will also be important to support ECCE centres in the construction and implementation of language policies. By addressing the identified language challenges teachers will be better supported to teach in a multilingual context and also to address issues that concern children in more appropriate ways. Children, on the other hand, will also benefit, as they will be able to communicate in their own as well as in an additional language. Daily activities can then be conducted using other languages as well alongside the LOLT(English). This will enable the addressing of different cultural issues within that ECCE centre.

- Cultural Responsive daily routine/activities.

In ECCE, daily activities are important learning opportunities for children. In particular, they offer opportunities for health education and to promote social and emotional development. In addition, cognitive skills and concepts are reinforced. It is during daily routines that phonics is promoted for example, playing with language, sharing jokes, reinforcing number concepts etc. Therefore, failure to address and incorporate issues of culture and cultural diversity in daily activities is tantamount to stifling the child's cognitive development especially in a multicultural setting. In support Muñiz (2019) discusses five ways that cultural responsive teaching benefits the child namely; facilitates brain processing; motivates and help children engage with their peers from different cultures; cultivates critical thinking and problem-solving skills; strengthen children's racial and ethnic identities; and lastly, promotes a sense of safety and belonging. It is then highly recommended that daily activities in ECCE centers be considerate and inclusive of other existing cultures in the centre and that these practices are written into the policy of the centre.

- ECD Qualifications to be formalized

The findings in Chapter Five and their discussion in Chapter 6 clearly shows that almost all of the teachers interviewed in the two ECCE centre were not in possession of any formal qualification in the field. They were only operating based on experience that they have in working in the ECCE centre. Hence, a possible reason for the confusion between cultural diversity and inclusion that was mentioned in Chapter 6. Only one participant (T7), who was also the principal had a Bachelor degree in Early Childhood Development. Therefore, it is also

recommended that the Department of Basic Education speed up the process of formalizing early childhood qualification as this will provide a means for formal recognition of those who are already practising in the field but without qualifications, as well as for those who wish to enter the field. Secondly the qualification will provide a basis for further professional development in the higher education and training band for many experienced practitioners in the field, who have limited or difficult access to further career development opportunities (NIECD, 2015). Improved qualifications will allow the practitioners to gain recognition at an entry level, increasing their employment prospects, and making them more suitably qualified practitioners.

7.6 IMPLICATION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In this thesis, a qualitative approach was employed to look into the realisation of culture and cultural diversity in early childhood care and education centres (ECCE) by teachers in Polokwane. Much as the results of this study cannot be generalised for other ECCE centres in other provinces in South Africa, there are lessons to learn and extrapolations to make. The findings of this study show that teachers at those two ECCE centres did not see focusing on cultural differences as well as similarities to be of importance. Apparently teachers were, genuinely under the impression that their teaching and learning approach was inclusive and considerate of all children. This lack of insight into the importance of mother tongue teaching in the early years further worsened the challenges of ensuring a multicultural, multilingual learning environment. Issues related to the children's cultural heritage and to the management of diversity had not been considered. This approach to cultural diversity was not done with malicious intent and there was no attempt to exclude children from different cultural groups or to socially exclude children who were not competent in the LOLT. Absence of any policy documents and lack of any training on issues of culture and cultural diversity exacerbated the challenge teachers in the two ECCE centres were facing. Further research is needed on the realisation of culture and cultural diversity in early childhood care and education daily practice.

7.7 CONCLUSION

It was evident that teachers in both Centres A and B did not see focusing on cultural differences as well as similarities to be of importance. Seemingly the teachers were, genuinely under the impression that their teaching and learning approach was inclusive and considerate of all children. Given that they freely admitted that they had little if no training in this area of managing cultural diversity their approach could not really be faulted – for them being inclusive was being aware of children's specific needs and interests – which is a hallmark of good ECD practice (Gordon & Browne, 2014). To do this they treated all children in the same way. Parents (perhaps unwittingly) were seen by some teachers as supporting this 'inclusive' approach as they freely sent their children to a centre where the LOLT was not the child's mother tongue. Sadly, in these situations addressing aspects related to cultural diversity was marginalised and even ignored because of misconceptions by teachers and parents of what informs good teaching and learning practices. In addition, this lack of insight into the importance of mother tongue teaching in the early years further exacerbated the challenges of ensuring a multicultural, multilingual learning environment. Issues related to the children's cultural heritage and to the management of diversity had not been considered. This approach to cultural diversity was not done with malicious intent and there was no attempt to exclude children from different cultural groups or to marginalise children who were not competent in the LOLT. Due to lack of knowledge about how to manage diversity successfully, teachers felt that they were genuinely doing their best for all children. They were unaware that their theory -in -use was not the same as their espoused theory. Their espoused theory (Argyris & Schön, 1974) is one of inclusion and multicultural teaching, but their theory-in-use is a teaching and learning approach adopted from traditional western early childhood programmes.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Teachers Focus interview schedule

1. Questions on teacher's background in early childhood education, including qualifications, work experience and education

:

1.1 How long have you worked in ECCE field?

1.2 In what positions?

1.3 Have your received training relevant to ECCE? Pre-service or in-service?

1.4 How long was the training program(s)?

1.5 Have you received any specific training (pre-service, in-service) on cultural diversity? If yes, what topics did the training cover?

1.6 Overall, how satisfied are you with the training that you have undergone?

2. Questions on teacher's understanding of 'cultural diversity' in early childhood in general

2.1 How would you describe the cultural backgrounds of the children in your class?

2.2 How important is it to address issues pertaining to cultural diversity in ECCE? Why?

2.3 Which cultures are relevant for addressing in your ECCE setting?

2.4 What is the role of the teacher when addressing cultural diversity issues in ECCE?

3. Questions on policy and practice on cultural diversity in that ECCE centre.

3.1 Is there any policy on cultural diversity in this ECCE centre? If yes,then:

3.2 What are some of the major issues in the policy?

3.3 Who has participated in the development of the policy?

3.4 Do you think the policy addresses all issues that are important regarding cultural diversity?

3.5 Do you like how the policy is implemented?

3.6 Are there other documents/ guidelines that you use to inform your practice in culturally diverse setting?

3.7 Areas for improvement in the policy?

3.8 How does the culture/everyday practice in the setting positions itself towards diversity? (e.g., relationships among staff members, staff member and children and families).

4. Questions to establish if the activities indulge on in that ECCE are sensitive to cultural diversity.

4.1 Can you describe the activities (e.g., planned activities, routines, spontaneous situations, 'teachable moments', etc) in everyday life of the setting which you have used for addressing different issues pertaining to children and families from various cultural backgrounds?

4.2 What aspects of cultural diversity have you addressed?

4.3 What resources have you used to promote cultural diversity?

5. Questions to establish challenges or difficulties experienced as a practitioner/teacher in a culturally diverse ECCE community?

5.1What are the challenges or difficulties that you experience?

5.2 How did you address them?

5.3 How were other stakeholders (children, families, other practitioners, community members) involved in resolving those challenges?

6. Questions to establish if there is any PI (Parental involvement) and the teacher experience of working with families of diverse cultural backgrounds in that ECCE?

6.1 How frequently do you communicate with families of all children?

6.2 Are there any differences in the communication patterns (e.g., frequency, reciprocity, feedback on child's well-being and development) between you and families with different cultural backgrounds?

7. Questions on the teacher's beliefs and attitude towards groups/individuals with culturally diverse backgrounds before having experience with working with them and now?

7.1 Have your ideas changed or stayed the same?

7.2 If they have changed, in what way?

8. Question to find out if the teacher/practitioner thinks of some of the things that can be done to ensure better opportunities for children from diverse cultural backgrounds in his/her ECCE setting?

8.1 Do you think there is a need for further training for practitioners? If yes, on what topics?

8.2 Is there a need for more resources?

8.3 Do you think there is enough collaboration on relevant issues within or between ECCE centres?

9. Question to find out if the teacher/practitioner is inclusive in conducting their day to day activities within the ECCE centres.

9.1 Do you apply multilevel approach: principle of individualisation, flexibility and inclusion of all children, regardless of personal skill level?

10.What have you learned from working with diverse families and their children?

APPENDIX 2

Questionnaire (Teachers)

The information obtained from this questionnaire will be treated confidentially. The data will be used for research purposes only.

Instructions:

1. Kindly respond to all questions in black or blue ink.
2. The questionnaire consists of two sections. Please answer all sections.
3. Please indicate all responses by placing an **X** in the appropriate tick box.
4. Please select only one option per question unless otherwise specified.

The questionnaire covers the following aspects:
Section A: Biographical and demographical characteristics of Teachers.
Section B: Intrapersonal, Interpersonal, Epistemological characteristics of Teachers

SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Please indicate your choice by placing an X the appropriate box

1.Gender

Male	Female

2. Age

21-26	27-32	33-38	39-44	45 and over

3. Do you have any experience of dealing with children of different cultures

Yes	No

1

4. How many years have you worked in an ECCE with children of different cultures

Less than 5 years	5-10 years	11-15 years	16- 20 years	More than 20 years

5. Please indicate your highest teaching qualifications

Primary Teaching Certificate(PTC) Any 2 Years Teaching Qualification	Senior Teaching Diploma (STD)	ACE/HED/BACHELOR'S DEGREE	HONOURS DEGREE	MASTER'S DEGREE

6. Do you have any qualifications in Early Childhood development studies?

Yes	No

7. Do you live in a multi-cultural community?

Yes	No

Section B: Intrapersonal, Interpersonal, Epistemological

	YES	NO
1. Do you know a song or a type of music from another culture?		
2. Have you ever eaten food from other cultures? Describe them		
3. Do you have a favourite food from other cultures?		
4. Do you wear clothes or jewellery influenced by other cultures? If so, describe the material, colours.		
5. Do you have friends with backgrounds different from your own?		
6. Can you speak other languages from different countries?		
7. If you are afforded the opportunity to learn to speak, and write a foreign language can you do that?		
8. Have you travelled to any country outside the boarders of South Africa?		
9. If so, what was the experience of being outside the boarders of South Africa?		
10. Do you prefer your learners to know about different cultures?		
11. Are you willing to let your learners dress in clothes from different cultures?		
12. Do you know any specific traditions from other culture? If the answer is Yes Describe them.		

APPENDIX 3

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

Research Office

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)
R14/49 Lebopa

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	PROTOCOL NUMBER: H19/09/20
PROJECT TITLE	Parents and teachers' understanding of how children interact in diverse intercultural spaces: A case study of two early childhood care and education centres in Polokwane
INVESTIGATOR(S)	Dr N Lebopa
SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT	Education/
DATE CONSIDERED	13 September 2019
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE	Approved Permission letters are required before data collection can commence
EXPIRY DATE	04 February 2023

DATE 05 February 2020 CHAIRPERSON J Knight
(Professor J Knight)

cc: Supervisor : Drs A Van As and Dr L Excell

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR(S)

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Secretary at Room 10004, 10th Floor, Senate House, University. Unreported changes to the application may invalidate the clearance given by the HREC (Non-Medical)

I/We fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee. **I agree to completion of a yearly progress report.**

Signature

06,02,20
Date

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES

APPENDIX 4

LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL **DATE:**

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is Nicholas Lebopa. I am a part time Masters of Education student at the School of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand, also holding a Doctoral degree in Inclusive Education. I am doing research on, **Realisation of culture and cultural diversity in ECCE daily practice: A Case Study of teachers in two Polokwane Early Childhood Care and Education Centres .**

My research is to explore parents' and teachers' views on the intercultural interactions of their children and how these interactions influence the children's development. In order to achieve this, I will interview teachers and parents to hear their views, and administer a questionnaire, as well as observations in classes.

Please note that the observation transcripts, questionnaire responses and audio recordings will only be used for this study and will only be seen by my supervisor and myself.
The reason why I have chosen your Early Childhood Care and Education centre is because of the composition of your learners/children that is diverse and multicultural and fits well with the aims and purpose of this study. I am inviting your school to participate in this research as your participation will be very valuable to my research and possibly contribute to creating an in-depth understanding of children interaction in a multicultural space.

The research participants will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way. They will be reassured that they can withdraw their permission at any time during this project without any penalty. There are no foreseeable risks in participating in this study. The participants will not be paid for this study. The research participants and the Early Childhood Care and Education centre identity will remain anonymous. The anonymity principle will also be applied in all academic writing, as well as in all published and written data resulting from the study. All research data will be destroyed between 3-5 years after completion of the project.

APPENDIX 5

[redacted]

EARLY LEARNING CENTRE

[redacted]

Tel: 015 2973821
Fax: 0866844039
Email: steppingstones.polokwane@gmail.com
Enquiries: [redacted]

128 Magasyn Street
Hospital Park
POLOKWANE 0699

20/09/2019

Dr. Nicholas Lebopa
WITS University
27St. Andrews Road
Parktown

Contact number: 0648148289

This serves to confirm that Nicholas Lebopa has been granted permission to do research at our premises regarding Parents' and Teachers' Understandings of how children interact in diverse intercultural space: A case study of two early childhood care and education centres in Polokwane.

Nicholas will be observing and interviewing at the school.

Dates will be confirmed.

Kind regards

[redacted]

PRINCIPAL

[redacted]

APPENDIX 5

[redacted]**Early Childhood Development Centre**
Polokwane

Tel: 015 280 0158
Enquiries: [redacted] Principal)

121 Snyman street
Polokwane
0699
20/09/2019

Dr Nicholas Lebopa
University of Witwatersrand
27 St Andrews Road
Parktown
2193

Contact number: 0648148289

Permission to conduct Research at [redacted] Early Childhood Development Centre

Permission is hereby granted t Dr Nicholas Lebopa to conduct the research on :Parents and Teacher's Understanding of how children interact in diverse intercultural space: A case study of two early childhood care and education centres(ECCE)in Polokwane, for his Med study at the University of Witwatersrand.

Dates will be confirmed

Kinds Regards

[redacted]
Principal

APPENDIX 6

Teacher's Consent Form

Please fill in and return the reply slip below indicating your willingness to be a participant in my voluntary research project called: **REALISATION OF CULTURE AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN ECCE DAILY PRACTICE: A CASE STUDY OF TEACHERS IN TWO POLOKWANE EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION CENTRES**

I..... give my consent for the following

	Circle one
Permission to be audiotaped	
I agree to be audiotaped during the interview.	YES/NO
I know that the audiotapes will be used for this project only.	YES/NO
Permission to be interviewed	
I would like to be interviewed for this study.	YES/NO
I know that I can stop the interview at any time and don't have to answer all the question asked.	YES/NO
Permission for questionnaire	
I agree to fill in a question sheet for this study	YES/NO

Informed Consent

I understand that:

APPENDIX 7

Participant Information Sheet (Teachers)

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is Nicholas Lebopa and I am a Masters student in Early Childhood Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. As part of my studies, I have to undertake a research project, and Iam investigating how do teachers in ECCE centres realise culture and cultural diversity in their daily practice. The main aim of the study is to explore how ECCE teachers' views and understanding of culture and cultural diversity are realised in their daily practice.

As part of this project, I would like to invite you to take part in a focus group interview at the ECCE center that you are teaching and answering a questionnaire. This activity will take around an hour (60) minutes. With your permission, I would also like to record the interview using digital voice recorder device, and the interview will be conducted in English.

You will not receive any direct benefits from participating in this research, and there are no disadvantages or penalties for not participating. You may withdraw at any time or not answer any question if you do not want to. The information you give to me will be held securely and not disclosed to anyone else. I will be using pseudonyms (false name) to represent your participation in my final research report. If you experience any distress or discomfort at any point in this process, we will stop the interview or resume another time. If you have any questions anytime about this research, feel free to contact me on the details listed below or my supervisor Dr Aletta Van As, telephone +27(0)117173291/3, email Aletta.VanAs@wits.ac.za

This study will be written up as a research report which will be available online through the university library website. If you wish to receive a summary of this report, I will be happy to send it to you. If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the ethical procedures of this study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone +27(0)117171408, email Shaun.Schoeman@wits.ac.za

Yours faithfully

APPENDIX 8

Day 1 : 13 October 2020

CENTER A

• Cultural Activities

This reflection is centered on my personal opinion about cultural activities within the ECCE centre that I am visiting to conduct my research. I arrived at the centre at 7h: 45am; on my arrival I found that all teaching staff were already there with the children. I went to the principal's office to introduce myself formally, and to explain what the research study is all about. I was warmly welcomed, and the principal was very friendly. She was an Afrikaans speaking lady. She wanted to know the reason for the study; and I could pick that she was a bit ~~cool~~ uncomfortable when I mention culture. She was quick to mention that she is not a racist and she is even trying to learn how to speak Sepedi. It was only when I mentioned that the study has got nothing to do with the politics of the county (South Africa) but only children in the ECCE centres from 0 – 5yrs, thats when I could see that she was relieved. What I realized is that talking about culture is not easy, it is a sensitive topic especially in South Africa given ~~cour~~ the history of the county.

APPENDIX 9

Themes	Questions Asked	Teacher's Responses
Culture: teachers' views	What is your understanding of culture?	T1: Answer: Ke histori ya batho ba itseng(*History of a certain race is culture).* T2 : Answer: Nna nkare ke setšo sa batho/lapa se o belegwe ko go sona goba ka mo gare (*Something that you are born into, the traditions of the family that you are born into* T3: Answer: Ke kwišiša go re culture ke ka mokgwa o re phelang ka gona re le setshaba se seitseng, moaparo wa rona, tumelo tja rena.(My understanding of culture is that the way we live our lives, different ways of doing things, different believe systems , different clothing, just the way that we have sort of evolved over time to have a specific way of living.) T4: Answer: *Culture ke ka mokgwa wo re phelang ka gona re le setshaba e.g., sa Ma Pedi. Rena le meetlo le setšo sa rena re le batho ba Ma Pedi se se sa tswanego le sa e.g., Ma Venda , Ma Zulu, MaTsonga or Makgowa.(Culture is the way we live as a nation, e.g. Pedi people who have their traditions and beliefs that are different from e.g. Vendas, Zulus, Tsongas or White people).* T5: Answer: *Culture ke setšo sa batho ka mokgwa yo ba phelang ka wona(Culture is the way people live).* T6:Answer: *I think culture is a set of belief, what defines people, how we do things. At the end each and every culture has something to offer.*
Teachers 'understandings of cultural diversity	How would you describe the cultural backgrounds of the children in your class?	T1: Answer: *They are mixed, in my class I have Pedi but I don't known that one (referring to the other child) Venda, Tsonga* **. And the researcher probed by asking what language the mother speaks when she interacts with her.**

		T1 responded by saying, *Iam not sure about the language* she was just guessing, *It seem is Nigeria , or Venda, or Tsonga those tones* T2 : Answer: *They are mixed , we have Shangans(Tsonga) Pedi, Venda and is not balanced. Most are Pedi speaking Shangans two and Venda's maybe two.* T3: Answer: *Even on my side is like that*. T4: Answer: *We have children from different cultures, Venda , Pedi, Tsonga and we can describe them sometimes by their language.* T5: Answer: *They are mixed, rena le(we have) MaPedi, Ma Venda , MaTsonga(We do have MaPedi, MaVenda , MaTsonga)* T6 :Answer: *Is very diverse but I have seen parents removing a lot of culture from their backgrounds as well language culture. They don't speak their mother tongue at home only English.*
	How important is it to address issues pertaining to cultural diversity in ECCE? Why?	T1: Answer: *Yes, it is important , because these are still young, and they still not understand.* T2 : Answer: *Yes , I think it is important because children must grow with the ability can accept other cultures to avoid discrimination in them*. T3: Answer: *Yes , it is important so that children must know that we are different in cultures* . **The researcher asked further that , By them knowing that we are different in cultures how is that going to benefit them(children).** seems as if culture is equated with mother tongue T2&T3: Answer: *If they know and understand that cultures are different then they will know that we are all human beings and must live together in harmony , even though you can be a Shangan , Venda when they grow up they will know that we are one.* T4: Answer: *We normally use one language , which is Englis*h. **The Research has to rephrase the question again seeing that the teachers did not get it, using the example of different food /snacks packed in the lunch box , that sometimes**

		differs because of different cultures e.g. A Venda child with a lunch box including Mopani worms /Mashonzha or locusts that can traumatise another child who is not familiar because of his/er culture. T5: Answer: *Our activities are based on themes, like transport , animals and this is when we are be able to tell them that this particular animal or insect forms part of food for this culture/ or these people belonging to this culture. So that when they discover the said above example children will be already familiar with that.* T6: Answer: *I think it is important because culture does bring identity to a person of knowing where they come from it makes them unique, if they are traveling overseas especially that's when you notice that your culture actually is important and interesting to other people. In South Africa sometimes is rigid like I don't want my culture I don't have a culture.*
	Which cultures are relevant for addressing in your ECCE setting?	T1: Answer: *We have Pedi, Venda, Tsonga(***The researcher probed by asking if there *are* any Zulus**) T1 answered by saying *No Zulus.* T2 : Answer: *Tsonga, Venda and Sepedi sometimes ago we had one Indian.***Researcher probing further. For the 6 years that you have worked here how many Indians or any other children besides Tsonga , Venda ,Pedi did attend**? T2: Answer: *Maybe 3 or 4 but some years back 2 or 3 white' kids did attend.* T3: Answer**:** *I remember some years there were 2 or 3 whites mixed with some Indians.* The Research asked how did they live together at the centre by then ,is there any difference in the way they relate to each other by then as compared to now*?* T3: Answer**:** *Nothing has changed we are still working and relating the same way as by then.* T4: Answer: *Concert are used to address different cultures that are here at the centre For example, we can plan a concert for this year based on*

		Tsonga/Venda culture, and since this is done, yearly children are then exposed to different cultures. T5: Answer: *We have Pedi, Venda, Tsonga. Our concerts are not based on learning schoolwork but on learning different cultures within the centre.* T6: Answer: *We have Zulu Pedi, Tsonga and Venda, Afrikaans, and English backgrounds children. It will be good to know each culture that we have here in school so that we can incorporate learning about it.*
	What is the role of the teacher when addressing cultural diversity issues in ECCE?	T1: Answer: *Ke nagang gore ka mibino, lege ba apara go ya ka setšo sa bona .If a child come dress in a particular war culturally then you can understand which culture the child belongs to. And when you play their CDs that they bring here at the centre, you can see by the way they dance and then you can tell which culture they belong to.* T2 : Answer*: Our role does not pose any problem since the parents brought their children here knowing that we use one language as a medium of instruction.* The Researcher felt that the respondent(T2) did not understand the question well. T3: Answer: *We treat them equally whether you're a Shangan or Venda / Pedi it doesn't matter the treatment is the same.* **Researcher made a follow up question: That do you make them aware despite our skin colour(Black) we are different culturally***?* T3&T2 Answer*: No, we don't do that we make them feel all the same.* T4: Answer: *I swap them a Venda child will be expected to play a role of a Pedi child, so that they both can know how it feels to be the other one.*

		T5: *Answer: I put them together and teach them that if you see the other person being like that it is because of their culture , but we are all human being despite that.* Ke dumelana le se ba se boleleng , kagore ditšo tse di a fapana, ene oka se di tsebe kamoka, ge ba sago botsa.(I agree with what they are saying because if you are not told you won't know all the cultural attires T6: Answer: *We don't really have issues, but we do teach children to always be accepting of each other, because we do have children with special needs for example, so they have learnt to have compassion for one another*
	Is there any policy on cultural diversity in this ECCE settings?	T1: Answer: *No, with that one I don't know because we do that on the Heritage month. We agree as teachers that lets dress according to our culture and the centre also send the parents messages to inform them that they must dress children according to their culture. when we celebrate. If it was there it will help us in not forgetting our cultural roots/ where we come from.* T2 : Answer: *: No, we don't have. .* T3: Answer: *: No, we don't have.* **Researcher asking further**: **Would you like to have the policy or any documentation that talks about culture in the ECCE activities ?** T2 & T3: Answer: *Yes, we would like to have that.* T4: Answer: *: If it was there, it will help us in not forgetting our cultural roots/ where we come from.* T5: Answer: *: I think it was going to help us not to forget where we come from, our cultural roots.* T6: *Answer: NO , still in the process of creating one.*

	Do you think the policy addresses all issues that are important regarding cultural diversity?	T6: Answer: *Yes, I think it will be preparing you as much as you can just to be able to address any issues that will come up.* T1: Answer: *Yes, according to me , I see it important because we had to know where we are coming from because culture is the roots of where we are from because some like these children might not know where they belong.* T1: Answer: *The policy is important since it will help to conscientize the teachers and staff as a whole and we all get along well. The policy will help us know what to do during the Heritage Day, because it will tell us, and we will follow what it says.* : *It will help the site (ECE) to implement culture issues correctly. We teachers and the principal will be able to agree and then tell the parents what is expected during the school hours.*
	Are there other documents/ guidelines that you use to inform your practice in culturally diverse setting?	T1: Answer: *We have nothing.* T2 : Answer: *Not anything that I know of* T3: Answer: *I haven't seen any paper talking about culture.* T4: Answer: *There is nothing that I have seen since I have been here.* T5: Answer: *There is nothing*
	How does the culture/everyday practice in the setting positions itself towards diversity? (e.g., relationships among staff members, staff member and children and families).	T2 : Answer: *We use language to guide as in determining if the child is Pedi , Venda or Shangan. Because when they come to the center most of them doesn't know how to speak English , they are familiar with their languages. Then that makes it more difficult because I as the teacher does not understand his/her language neither do them.* **Researchers follow up question:** How do you make them feel recognized in this instance? T3: Answer**:** *We treat the same by using English language as a medium. Try to use some words that we know , either Venda , Pedi, Tsonga to make the child feel acknowledge and welcomed.* T4: Answer: *We relate well especially during the Heritage month and Heritage Day , people come to the centre dressed in their culture and we share the experiences about our culture.*

		T5: Answer: *We get along well, and we come to work with our cultural attire and you can see that people are proud of their culture and want to show off.* T6: *Answer: I think Iam very fortunate because I grew* up *multi-cultural so my relationship with all my staff and parents is very good, I don't have any barriers between anybody.* **The researcher probed**: *Do you sometimes talk differently using their language?* T6:Answer: *I try to learn but Aunt Marie(African lady who works in the center) doesn't understand me, so when answering her we end up talking between Afrikaans and English. I try to learn which words she understand between me and her is very much the broken communication. but a lot of patience because I understand that she doesn't understand me , sometimes she will misunderstand me and will not do what I told her to and I will physically show her what I want her to do.*
	Have your ideas changed or stayed the same?	T1: Answer: *Haven't observed.* The researcher probed further, *T1 mentioned that when started she was not concerned about culture, Heritage Day and celebration of cultures but when they celebrate it started to affect me and I realized that it is also important to kids as they grow they grow up understanding the importance and also has to bear in mind that no matter what culture we need to treat each other equally.* T2 : Answer: *It made us to have the knowledge of seeing all people the same , we are the same, because mostly when we are at home(villages) we are of the same culture , but here it is different cultures.* T3: Answer*: Re kopana le batswadi banna, from different culture with different languages, the that*

		makes you learn other people's languages and culture and you change T6: Answer: *I think over the years it has changed ,I have multicultural background I moved a lot around in South Africa , I lived in India for 2 years and so during those times it changed, and I think will still continue to change as I learn more.*
	If they have changed, in what way?	T1: Answer: *No* **T2 : Answer:** *By learning different languages and looking at different culture with a positive way because they too are human beings* T3: Answer*: You learn that we do things differently because of different cultures. We approach the same thing differently because of different cultures.* T4: Answer: *I have learned from different people.* T5: Answer: *You learn that we are not the same and do things differently.* T6: Answer: *Answered in 7.1*
	Do you think there is a need for further training for practitioners? If yes, on what topics?	T1: Answer: *Yes,* **The researcher probed further by asking the teacher to specify what they would like to be trained about**. T1: Answer: *on better understanding of the children, so children are children ,sometimes you can tell them not to do but they can continue doing the very same thing. So, they need tolerance and patience on the side of the teacher and know how to control yourself and your emotions.* T2 : Answer: *Yes , yona e ka ba bothlokwa , gore re kwisisane(Yes , it is important so that we can be able to understand on another.)* T3: Answer: *Le nna ke ya dumela , re kgona go kwišišana, gape seo se re thuša go phela mogo ka khutšo.(Yes, I also agree as that helps us to live together peacefully.)* **The Researcher ask a follow up question wanting to know which topic they think can be deliberated on regarding culture**. T2& T3*: Answer: If we can be taught how do we live together even though we are from different cultures.*

		T4: Answer: *How can we tolerate one another without fear of losing ourselves.* T5: Answer: *Ge ba ka re ruta go kwana ka polelo go sena go nyenyefatša omongwe (If they can teach us to live in harmony without undermining one's culture or to be undermined because you belong to a certain culture.)* T6: Answer*: Yes I do think so , I have found that many teachers are not open to the different cultures , they get frustrated or they are upset in the ways, they might be border line rude to the parent because they don't understand where they are coming from So I do think they need further training and it will be on how they speak with people in an understanding way and not make assumptions, and also something that I noticed was in maths, I learned that the language in a mother tongue doesn't have the word we do in English. Children find the concept difficult because the concept doesn't exist in their language (the word). I think it was when they did more than and fewer than, It was not there in Sepedi, and also body parts, This is hand were in English is arm, hand separate. So, the children if you say what this hand so this child would be marked don't know what is arm but in their mother tongue this is hand. So, you need to know that so that you can emphasise this thing. In his mother tongue he is correct. If it doesn't exist in your mother tongue, how are you going to teach to the children a word that is new and a concept that is new, then you have to adjust.*
	Do you think there is enough collaboration on	T1: Answer: *No, since I started working here, I have never seen any collaboration with other*

	relevant issues within or between ECCE centres?	*centres. Its only us even during Heritage Day no other centres.* T2 : Answer: *No , there is no collaboration.* T3: Answer: *No collaboration that I have seen since I was here.* T4: Answer: *Not that I know or has experience*. T5: Answer: *We do not collaborate*. T6: Answer: *No, the Pre-schools don't want to collaborate, we tried but they are very much secretive, or they are scared you somehow going to take their idea, they in competition with each other, whereas if you are collaborating you can really help each other grow. I collaborated with the few who are my friends and helped each other a lot. And during this COVID times she phoned me, and I phoned her and so we helped each other she come looks for stuff that she doesn't have, and I do likewise. But other places will just close their door or ignore your message. Not talk to you. I can't understand because the school are full and there are long waiting list Me being a new teacher I want to collaborate because I learnt from my teacher that it is good to collaborate. because what you don't*
		know another teacher will know and help you and you can also share resources. So you don't have to work harder but smarter but they don't want to.
Culturally responsive teaching in a multicultural setting	Can you describe the activities (e.g., planned activities, routines, spontaneous situations, 'teachable moments', etc) in everyday life of the setting which you have used for addressing different issues pertaining	T1: Answer: *We plan according to main plan(The teacher was not so sure as to how to answer since planning was done by the office of the principal)* **T2 : Answer**: *We do that in concert and Heritage Day. Every year we have a theme for our concert and the themes differ every year. During this themes child can also wear their cultural outfits depending on the theme .For this concert theme children will not be dressed like that of last year*.

	to children and families from various cultural backgrounds?	**Researcher probe further**: In your activities with children do you sometimes mix languages or strictly English as it is the medium of instruction? T3: Answer: *Strictly English , there is no time to mix because throughout the year our routine is the same there is no mixing.* T4: Answer: *Our activities are normal they do not take into considerations different cultures.* T5: Answer: *We only do things in English as it is the medium of instruction. The only time we talk about culture is during Heritage Day , we only wear our cultural clothes, but the school activities /routines just continue normal.* T6: Answer*: Well sometimes we have fancy dress and let them model different clothes if that is Heritage Day or braai day, we try to incorporate that and sometimes we have it twice a year. Routines are very set because routines make children feel safe, so we have our routine. Iam not sure how routine makes the centre culturally diverse. But we eat we wash our hands. Spontaneous situation would be if somebody or the children would say teacher this is how you say this in Zulu or Sepedi and practice it together, sometimes will be in the sand pit and I ask them "what do you call a sweety and they will come and teach me if they know. Some of them are very good with their language. and they ask us how we say this in Afrikaans, how do we count in Afrikaans we are always asking each other how we say we are teaching each other.*
	What aspects of cultural diversity have you addressed?	T1: Answer: *Is not like we celebrate culture every time , the celebration or cultural events might not be throughout the year but like I have said before, it is during the Heritage moth/day*

		that we start thinking that this is the time to celebrate culture. The researcher asked if the celebration last for the whole Heritage month or a day thing. T1 Respond: *It is throughout the month that we acknowledge our cultures Like I have said it is not an everyday thing that we celebrate culture*. *It might not be seen throughout the year but when the Heritage Day or month arrives, we then remember.* T2 : Answer: *No, we have not done that.* **Researcher probed further trying to make them understand by giving examples of those aspects, e.g., food, clothes , etc that they can talk about with children to show different cultures.** T3: Answer: *We do talk to them, but we don't talk much about culture.* T4: Answer: *Do not talk much about culture.* T5: Answer*: We don't talk too much about culture.* T6: Answer*: Talked about the Heritage month/day*
	What resources have you used to promote cultural diversity?	T1: Answer. *We don't have.* T2 : Answer: *As we have said before that it is Heritage celebrations.* T3: Answer: Heritage Day is the only time when culture is talked about. T4: Answer: Heritage Day only when we put on our cultural clothes. T5: Answer: I can say it is only during the Heritage Day. T6*:* Answer*: I would like to have more guidance on resources. I do feel the resources are few, on the internet we sometimes don't get much*

		information. We usually ask the parents to guide us if they know, to teach us.
	Is there a need for more resources?	T1: Answer: *Yes, we need more resource to be added, to show different cultures because what we have now only shows one culture.* T2 : Answer: *Yes, we do need the resources, but we need to be shown how they relate to culture.* T3: Answer: *I also think we need to be trained on how to use the resources to address culture.* T4: Answer: *I don't really know which /what resource can be used culturally.* **The researcher gave an example of themes that are used in planning the activities e.g Baker man, Doctor, Winter etc, to make the participants understand. But still they did not understand** **Then the researcher gave an example of a play dough that they use and ask what colour is it , do they use different colours ?** T5: Answer: *We make play dough of different colour e.g. Red, Gray , Brown, but what is the relevance of that* T6: Answer*: Yes, I do think so, I would like resources like in Pre-school we need to know the body parts and the functions of the body parts and if they exist in the language. I know that in some African languages the vocabulary is few and I have to bring in English words to fill up the language. I wish somebody will jus invent the words in Afrikaans people are inventing the word and putting them in the dictionary every year, with African language I don't think that is happening. Books in few different languages written by South Africans, I was happy to find in a website books that were written in different languages (same book) by South Africans.*
	Do you apply multilevel approach: principle of individualisation, flexibility and inclusion of	T1: Answer: *Is difficult, because some children do not follow the instruction for example if they are given a task to trace from top to bottom or left to right. Some children find it very hard to move*

	all children, regardless of personal skill level?	*their pencil along the dotted lines, they just scratch, then I have to hold their hands and help them move correctly while explaining to them that you must draw on those dotted lines, you are not allowed to scratch everywhere on the paper. Some do understand and you only explain once, but others are totally different, and you have to be patient with them.* Follow up question from the researcher: If you realize that you cannot help the child meaningfully what do you do? T1: Answer*: In that case we communicate with office and explain the problem, and sometimes they communicate with the parent so that we can together tackle the problem.* T2 : Answer: *Yes, those who are not coping we do help them.* T3: Answer: *We do help those who fall behind.* **Researcher asked how they help as a follow up question.** **T**2: Answer**:** *Sometimes the parents bring their children here not yet being sure if the child is fast in grasping or slow , then because I spent most of the day with them then I can tell. Like if I give colouring , or read a story, then I can tell that on the side of the story the child is fast, if given the work sheet maybe he/s is slow then I can be able to pick it up if is colouring then I try to understand what the problem is, maybe laziness or lack of interest then I can encourage so that he/s pick up and be like other children.* T4: Answer: *Even when doing activities outside, if the child struggles, we first check if it has something to do with the physical ability and if we cannot help , then we take the child to the office who will then call the parents and talk about that.* T5: Answer: *Yes, we do help by encouraging them to try and participate, and do according to their abilities , then I will help them improve but steadily until they get there.* T6: Answer: *Yes, we do.*
