

**THE PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF RELATED PROFESSIONALS
ON THE ROLE OF THE SOCIAL WORKER IN EARLY CHILDHOOD
DEVELOPMENT**

A dissertation on a research study presented to

**The Department of Social Work
School of Human and Community Development
Faculty of Humanities
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**In partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree Master of Arts in Social Work**

by

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DECLARATION

I declare that this is my own unaided work. It has not been submitted previously for any degree or examination at any other university.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Jade Valentina Trueman', written in a cursive style. The signature is positioned above a horizontal line.

Jade Valentina Trueman

April 2021

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ABSTRACT

Development and transformation for every child includes the gradual and systematic change in functionality within each individual child. Early Childhood Development has been a growing area of focus, a priority and developmental goal in South Africa. The democratic South Africa plans on enabling all children between birth and six years of age in the country to achieve long-term sustainability in terms of the National Development Plan 2030. This study aimed to identify phenomena and comprehensive descriptions of the role of the Early Childhood Development Social Worker in South Africa. The qualitative approach and phenomenological design were used as the research methodology to explore the roles of this particular social worker. The research process included the purposive sampling method, where a population group of 17 Early Childhood Development related professionals were identified. The related professionals included: Early Childhood Development Practitioners, Social Workers, Academics and Social Policy Writers. The research instrument used was an in-depth semi-structured interview schedule, which enabled the successive data collection and analysis process. The six-phased thematic analysis method effectively exposed the understanding of the perceptual and experiential roles of the social worker in the Early Childhood Development sector. The overall presentation and discussion of the findings provided an investigation into the identification and reality of the perceptions on the role of the social worker. It was found that while social workers are responsible for informing and guiding human rights processes regarding the child, that this is often lost in the ambiguity of the role and the sector. The key findings, conclusion and recommendations suggest the crucial need to document, critique and formalise the perceptions on the role of the Early Childhood Development Social Worker in South Africa.

Keywords: Early Childhood Development (ECD), Early Childhood Development Social Worker, Education, Social Policy, Social Work, South Africa -post Apartheid

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The role of the social worker within the Early Childhood Development (hereinafter referred to as ECD) sector is not well understood and needs to be clarified. Despite ECD being a continuously growing sector in South Africa, like many other sectors, it has room for further integration and development. The thought behind the title of the study stems from my question on the role of social work in ECD. A further question looks at what the profession of social work aims to achieve through its presence, in the sector of ECD. Studies often conflate or saturate the intention of the intended research. This research study has as far as possible, attempted to minimise the conflation or saturation of the findings.

The profession of social work, which is human development focused, is often unseen and its intention is often lost in the technicalities of preventive and promotive work. The technicalities of the work could be described as the bureaucratic structures which often stifle the intended proactivity; and often replace it with reactionary intervention strategies. The profession of social work often faces adverse reception from the people who may be direct beneficiaries of the social work services. Creating more opportunities for explicit and complementary forms of practice, is in constant practice and development (Sheafor & Horejsi, 2010). The exploration and unpacking of contemporary discourse, often experienced by social workers and related professionals, are ways which can contribute to the clarification of the roles and methods which may aid the facilitation of proactive social work practice (Sheafor & Horejsi, 2010; Ife, 2008).

This study is framed in a way to display the interdisciplinary work required in ECD settings. The inclusion of interdisciplinary teams should not be confused with the fact that the intention of this research is to focus on the social work profession. Specifically the perceptions and experiences of the role of the interdisciplinary teams, related to the role of the ECD social worker. This research intended to explore and unpack what the perceptions and experiences are of cognate disciplines as well as social workers (Berry et al., 2013; Cunningham & Cunningham, 2014).

Collaborative models of practice aim to ensure that there are little to no shortfalls in achieving the objectives set out for the sector (Graham & Barter, 1999). Collaborative models of practice in ECD are set out to ensure that the best interests of the child are met. Collaborative models in this study refer to the interdependent and multi-disciplined practice of intervention strategies used in child development. Lived experiences of the related professionals may prove to be disconnected from the aims and objectives of ECD. It is therefore essential that the lived experiences of the related professionals are understood, in order to strengthen and inform the collaborative model of practice.

Interdisciplinary teams like ECD practitioners, social policy writers, social workers and academics, inform the practice of ECD. The best interest of the child, as well as their holistic development are primary objectives for the professionals mentioned above (Sheafor & Horejsi, 2010). Whilst the ECD sector, with its interdisciplinary teams should be responsive to current and past events within the sector, it simultaneously has to be proactive in its operations. Clarifying the specific roles fulfilled by the ECD social worker, is a key outcome of exploring the perceptions and experiences of the related professionals and social workers.

The related professionals identified in this study were specifically limited to the Gauteng, Johannesburg region. The geographical area identified for the collection of the data was informed through the research question itself.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

The role of the social worker in the ECD sector is unclear. This has resulted in confusion within the sector which may adversely be affecting the proactive intentions set out for the ECD sector. Social workers are significant key holders to the fulfilment, advocacy and representation of children's rights. Contemporary discourse concerning the social work profession implies that social work is a "human rights profession" and that social dilemmas ought to be understood in order to effectively create proactive intervention strategies for the fulfilment of human rights (Ife, 2008, p. 1).

South Africa is riddled with conundrums and illusions of a postulated democracy and a transformative rainbow nation. It has been described in various ways over the past two decades of a democratic South Africa, but do these descriptions truly represent the current state of the nation? It is said that a lot can be assumed about a nation based on how it treats

its youngest and oldest citizens. Social workers are mandated to enable the protection of the rights of the most vulnerable members of society; this particularly reflects the state of how the children and elders are treated (Smith, 2015; Berry et al., 2013).

The very nature of exposure to adversity and risk is that an individual will be exposed to multiple risk factors at any given time, especially children. The South African Child Gauge makes note of the accumulative, shared and compounding impact which adversity and risk factors have on children (Berry et al., 2013). It is with this premise that the researcher based the furthering of this study's intent: amidst all of the adversity and risk factors faced by the children in South Africa; what is the role of an ECD social worker in the democratic South Africa and what does the role of this specific social worker intend to achieve through its presence?

Jane Aldgate (2006) discusses the idea that children, and particularly vulnerable children need to be identified. Their developmental requirements need to be understood sufficiently by different professionals in order for change and optimal development to be achieved not only by the welfare system, but in the long term lives of each child.

Child development is both a basic and an applied science. It is the study of how and why children develop perception, thought processes, emotional reactions, and patterns of social behaviour. It also provides knowledge that is important for advising parents, forming educational programmes, creating and defending Government programmes for children, making legal policies affecting children, and devising treatments for problem behaviour (Mussen et al., 1990, p. 2 as cited in Aldgate, 2006, p. 18).

Aldgate (2006) further emphasises that understanding child development is not enough; but that understanding together with the promotion and practice of child development are imperative if policy, curriculum and other systems which include children are to be developed. Social work practice is at the forefront of promoting and implementing child development and children's rights (Ife, 2008). Social workers in the sector of ECD form a specialised field within the sector, one which should not be overlooked in the process of understanding the development and rights of children in the country.

The ECD sector consists of varying professions, like the related professionals in this study, which directly affect the child, their rights and development (National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015). ECD affects children and their human rights, and in turn affects the professional, in an interdependent way. The exploration of the relationship and knowledge gap between the ECD social work professional, the child within the ECD sector and the ECD sector itself, is imperative in the enhancement of knowledge production (Orme & Briar-Lawson, 2010; Ife, 2008). Understanding the influence that these components may have on one another may provide greater insight into the effectiveness and identification of the role of the ECD social worker. This identification additionally provides an opportunity to generate knowledge to the profession of social work and the beneficiaries that access the professional service. A further opportunity would be to utilise the documented data to explore and inform policy (Orme & Briar-Lawson, 2010). “A distinctive feature of social work research is that its focus is, or at least should be, on both policy and practice; the structural and the individual” (Orme & Briar-Lawson, 2010, p. 49).

The ECD sector lacks insight related to the ECD social worker. Evidence of the lack of insight is present in the scarcity of discourse regarding the ECD sector and specifically the ECD social worker. “Democratizing knowledge production”, is an essential component in enhancing policy development and producing knowledge related to experienced social phenomena (Orme & Briar-Lawson, 2010, p. 49). Although additionally limited, there has only been evidence of research conducted on the profession of school social work. This further poses a concern, as school social work theory limits its considerations to primary and secondary schooling and not ECD; and even more so in South Africa (Jarolmen, 2014).

It is critical that the current knowledge in the ECD sector be made as accessible and as transparent as possible. Although findings from the research conducted cannot be generalised, the findings intend to contribute to the ‘social work’ body of knowledge and practice thereof. While ECD has been a developing sector, for a while in South Africa, ECD has not always been a priority on the National Agenda, but now that it is, what does it mean for the country and what does it mean for the sector and for the social work profession? The current transition of the ECD mandate from the Department of Social Development to the Department of Basic Education, has highlighted the already existing confusion in the sector (Motshekga, 2019).

Despite South Africa being known for many inequalities and inequities, South Africa is also known for its progressive policy and legislative work (Ludlum, 2015). The legislative and policy work around the rights for children are commendable, much like many other policies targeted at human development and transformation. The implementation of the legislative and policy work, has however, continued to be critiqued for its lack of translation into lived actuality. The outcome of this critique continues to be a source for fuelled dismay and disdain. It additionally translates into constantly measuring quality of intention versus the quality of lived transformation (Ludlum, 2015; Ife, 2008). This comparison directly affects how society relates to their immediate environment and how they relate to the legal structures which shape it (Ife, 2008).

There are articles, theories and legislative policies published by UNICEF and the South African Child Gauge. In addition; there has been the formation of the National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy and National White Papers on education. These documents collectively speak to the unending importance of ECD. There are well defined key outcomes, like the “Government’s recognition of early childhood development as a universal right and public good”, which are expected, however the researcher questions whether these outcomes through policy are being met (National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015, p. 21). The intention is to seek and determine whether these outcomes are in line with the expected roles which need to be fulfilled by the varying interdisciplinary teams within the sector, especially the ECD social worker (Berry et al., 2013; Cunningham & Cunningham, 2014).

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The questions developed for this study are the result of the ambiguous observations of the role of the ECD social worker within the sector. The purpose of the study was to investigate and identify phenomena which had not yet been explored in order to reflect and contribute knowledge to academia and the sector, regarding the perceptions of the role, perceived influence and function of the ECD social worker in a democratic South Africa.

The research question(s) presented in the latter part of this dissertation, determinedly provide a lens where the role of the ECD social worker requires to be *identified, determined, measured and clarified*, in order to establish a coherent understanding of the ECD social work professional, in South Africa. Some of the contextual considerations that have been

factored in this study to try and determine the perceived roles of the ECD social worker include: navigating the education sector, social policies, legislation and the lived experiences of professionals that influence or relate to the ECD social worker. While attempting to most accurately present the perceptions of the related professionals interviewed for this study “the challenge is to write a narrative that accurately reflects the core of the research undertaken” (Fouche & Delport, 2011, p. 76).

Sarantakos (2005 as cited in De Vos et al., 2011) suggests that there are a number of reasons for conducting social research; which include educational, institutional, political and ethical rationale. Purposefully inquiring about the link between ECD, the child and the role ECD social worker summarise the purpose of this study.

1.4 AN OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research approach utilised was qualitative, explorative and descriptive in nature. The research design was phenomenological. The design was selected to ascertain the most accurate reflection and description of the lived experiences of the participants (Charmaz, 2006). The research process was inductive and intended to focus on unearthing, exploring and understanding socially specific roles, socio-historical, socio-political systems, interdisciplinary interaction and its impact within a specific context (Giddens, 2006).

The sample population was purposively identified; and although a small sample size was identified, the sample population included related professionals in the ECD sector within the Johannesburg region. To ensure reliability, trustworthiness and ethical considerations, the use of a pre-test and a researcher’s documentation journal were used together with the in-depth semi-structured interview schedule (Babbie & Mouton, 2011). Although a sample size of 20 professionals was the intended sample size for the study, saturation occurred once the 17th audio-recorded telephonic in-depth semi-structured interview was conducted (Babbie & Mouton, 2011). Data was then initially transcribed followed by using the six phase thematic analysis method developed by Clarke and Braun (2013) to analyse the data collected.

1.5 DEFINITIONS OF KEY CONCEPTS

This study focused on a number of key concepts related to the ECD sector. The definitions in this study are contextually significant to the subject matter. With this premise, the varying concepts are discussed specifically to clarify and contextualise the major key concepts, in an attempt to limit confusion, saturation and conflation.

1.5.1 *EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT (ECD)*: A broad term that encapsulates the varying period and processes of development in children from birth to six years of age. This may further be described as the age group that includes the period from birth to school going age (National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015; Berry et al., 2013). The focus of development in ECD includes the development of an individual's emotional, sensory, cognitive, spiritual, moral, physical, social and communication capacity (Hall et al., 2017).

A further deliberation of this key concept includes the transference of holistic development, not only being limited to other age groups, but rather to ensure that there is the evident inclusion of the youngest citizens of the country, while identifying any factors that may result in stunted development (Hall et al., 2017; National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015).

1.5.2 *EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT SOCIAL WORKER*: Social service professionals registered with the South African Council for Social Service Professionals (hereinafter referred to as SACSSP), that practice as trained social workers that work specifically within the sector of child care and support services. The social worker within the ECD sector has been mandated to ensure that the varying ECD programmes within South Africa carry out various practices and intervention strategies to protect and promote the holistic development of children between the ages of birth to six years of age.

ECD social workers oversee the assessment and registration of ECD centres in South Africa, which is considered a vital process in the unlocking of resources for children in ECD, but it is also a protective mechanism that ensures quality service delivery

for children and their families (Hall et al., 2017; National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015).

- 1.5.3 EDUCATION:** A teaching philosophy, action and practice of *educating* individuals. An action of teaching with the aim of furthering the emotional, sensory, cognitive, moral, social, spiritual, physical and communicative development of individuals. The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy written by Simon Blackburn (2008, p. 109) states that education is the “enquiry into the ideas that dominate educational theory and policy. The central questions are what is worthwhile or necessary to teach, and what are the best ways of doing it”. Education in this study suggests that there is a method and programme developed for the ECD sector, aimed specifically at the shaping of, the development of and stimulation which is most age-appropriate for children between birth to six years of age (National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015).
- 1.5.4 SOCIAL POLICY:** A system of regulating ECD norms and standards in South Africa, which is legislatively mandated to be implemented in practice. The National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy (2015) is the policy that has been developed to guide and facilitate the ECD sector in South Africa. This policy aims to address not only the risk factors faced in the ECD sector, but it additionally aims to address all of the developmental goals directed at holistic child development (National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015). Furthermore the policy aims to ensure that there is adequate and appropriate quality, monitoring, assurance, access and secure systems in place for the implementation and realisation of ECD services to the youngest population group in South Africa (The Children’s Act 38. of 2005).
- 1.5.5 SOCIAL WORK:** A formalised and organised profession, dedicated to a formal approach when addressing personal and social issues faced by individuals, groups and communities (Rautenbach & Chiba, 2010). The subsequent global definition of the social work profession was approved by the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) General Meeting and the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) General Assembly in July 2014:

“Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing. The above definition may be amplified at national and/or regional levels.”

The social worker as the professional is required to have a holistic understanding of child development, family functionality, institutional organisation and overall systematic function. This approach is used within the South African context. Promotive and preventive methods aim to achieve equality, so meticulously set out in the country's constitution (Matli, 2008; Midgley & Livermore, 2005).

1.5.6 SOUTH AFRICA - POST APARTHEID: A period of time after apartheid and the political state of democratic operation, since the year 1994 being practiced in South Africa. Democracy is a state operation aimed at achieving equity and equality for all who find themselves in the country (Patel, 2005). Short of a total of 27 years of democracy in South Africa, there is evidently an abundance of positive outcomes for the country, but, it is not short of limitations as there is still an evidential amount of inequity and lived marginalisation.

The inquiry of post-apartheid in South Africa in this study aims to highlight the transitional and systematic changes that amends the operations of state function and the impact that it has had on South African citizens. Moving away from systematic exclusion and separatist functions, to a more inclusive and accessible democratic country (Patel, 2005; Southall, 2000).

1.6 STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

Chapter One provides an overview and outline of the research problem, rationale and purpose of the study; followed by outlining the overview of the research methodology, definitions of key concepts and an overview of the dissertation chapters which follow. This

research study was explicitly aimed at furthering the identification and understanding of the role of an ECD social worker in the democratic South Africa.

The foundation of constructed knowledge is outlined in Chapter Two of this dissertation. This chapter demonstrates and explains the theories that underpin the study, forming the theoretical framework; which additionally informs the development of the Literature Review.

In Chapter Three, the Literature Review focuses on the development of the child, the ECD sector, the landscape for the social work profession in the ECD sector and how the ECD sector has transformed during the democracy in South Africa. A further focus in the Literature Review includes the overview of the collaborations in the sector and the policies related to the sector.

The implemented Research Methodology is discussed in Chapter Four. The methodology of phenomenology is discussed together with the outlining of the key concepts of associated phenomenology. The study aimed to investigate the phenomena which has not yet been explored in an attempt to capture comprehensive descriptions of the role of ECD social workers in a democratic South Africa.

The qualitative approach is a continued part of this chapter together with the collection, thematic organisation, analysis, integration and collation of data. Ethical procedures and conduct employed closes off the chapter.

The presentation of data and the discussion of findings are explicitly described in Chapter Five of the dissertation. Evidence is provided through verbatim, which thematically surfaced during the data analysis process. Finally Chapter Six provides the conclusive findings, the limitations of the study and the recommendations which surfaced as an outcome of the reflected phenomena, analysis and process. The reflection of the recommendations additionally aid the concepts which emerged as themes for potential research.

1.7 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

The problem statement together with the rationale and purpose of the study have been discussed through-out this introductory chapter. I argue that there is little to no research being conducted on the role of an ECD social worker and with the current growth and prioritisation of the effective pursuit of ECD sector development in South Africa, it is imperative that research continue to interrogate the role of the ECD social worker. The value of this study resides in identifying the link between the development of the child and the role of the interdisciplinary team, specifically the ECD social worker.

The further creation and contributions to knowledge systems inform the kinds of practice, roles and experiences encountered and lived (Adom et al., 2018). The deliberate identification of roles and the impact that the roles of ECD social workers have in South Africa, is important to the progression and addition to the social work professionals knowledge base. A significant consideration in this dissertation is ensuring that the rights of each child are being met. The Theoretical Framework in the chapter which ensues, reflects that the accumulation of knowledge and the importance of knowledge systems through research, is central to this dissertation.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION OF THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The underbelly of any robust research may be found through the critique and analysis of the theoretical framework identified and connect most accurately to the related phenomena. A sustained space for the reinforcement of the underpinning of the study is further developed in the theoretical framework chapter (Tseng, 2018). The foundation of constructed knowledge exists in knowledge systems and philosophies established by many theorists and scholars over time. Through the process of research, observation, documentation and the presentation of analysed findings; new forms of thinking and processing of information can occur (Adom et al., 2018).

The foundation of constructed knowledge is outlined through-out this chapter, with the intention to connect the contextual variants of phenomena found through the research process. The theoretical framework chapter is viewed as the underpinning response and a build-on the introductory chapter (Tseng, 2018). This chapter focuses on revealing the research process, the theories used as well as the various conceptual framework(s) identified through the research process (Adom et al., 2018).

The objective of this chapter demonstrates the link between the ways in which ECD social workers are perceived and the understanding that these professionals need to effectively and most appropriately execute their assigned role within the sector of ECD (Berry et al., 2013; Cunningham & Cunningham, 2014). There is a necessity to outline the roles of the ECD social worker and connect these roles to relevant theories, which demonstrate their alignment to 'the best interest of the child', the ECD framework, the ECD sector and how this influences the current South African socio-political and historical climate (Berry et al., 2013; Cunningham & Cunningham, 2014). Theory is brought to the forefront of analysis and critique, in order to reveal its relevance and applicability in lived epistemological experiences (Adom, et al., 2018).

Through honing in on the question and identified key concepts in this study, it is undeniable that there will be a relation to the theories, ECD, social workers, ECD policy and a conceptual focus on the best interests of children in South Africa (Sheafor & Horesji, 2010).

The underpinning theories of this study include the Ecological Perspective and the Strengths-Based Perspective. With the overarching assumption that these theories are intersectional, it may additionally be noted that the purpose of the theoretical framework is to showcase the systematic mapping out of occurrences and interceptions in knowledge and lived experiences (Love, 2000; Adom et al., 2018; Hook, 2009). Mapping out the combination of all of these factors mentioned above, facilitates the exposition and achievement of good research.

The outline of this chapter will be broken down in the following order: The theoretical framework introduction of this chapter has been delineated above, this is followed by the discussion of the theoretical background which addresses the contextual inferences of the theoretical framework. The discussion of the theoretical foundation will then be focused on and this is subsequently followed by the theoretical identification and theorising of them. The latter part of this chapter forms the apex and the closing of the chapter.

2. 2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

“The theoretical framework guides and should resonate with every aspect of the research process from the definition of the problem, literature survey, methodology, presentation and discussion of the findings as well as the conclusions that are drawn” (Adom et al., 2018, p. 438). The most reliable and accurate form of research may be derived from the use of history, social phenomena, research techniques and theories used to carefully analyse, assess, critique and draw a parallel to existing theories (Love, 2000). The more theories that the social phenomena are compared to and analysed, the more accurate the research tends to be. The use of two theories in this study adds to the credibility of the theoretical framework through the enhancement of the empiricism and meticulousness of the research (Adom et al., 2018).

Situating the context of the research question and its key variants is essential to the continued development and completion of the theoretical framework (Adom et al., 2018). The explanation of assumptions and expectations which have guided this study may be broken down into the following major categories: The child, the child’s environmental context, the system in which the child develops and all of the contributing systems, relationships and factors which either aid, facilitate or debilitate the development of the child (Macleod, 2009; Hook, 2009). Some developmental theories in South Africa form the overarching umbrella

which aid the further analysis, critique and presentation of findings (Macleod, 2009; Love, 2000). The ECD system in South Africa has historically been linked to social work developmental theory, which is linked to child development and social work developmental practice (Jarolmen, 2014).

There is difficulty in trying to hone in on one theoretical approach within the South African context as there are varying developmental approaches which influence and overlap one another (Macleod, 2009). The difficulty may be situated in trying to decipher the historical development of developmental theory and philosophy. Developmental social work denotes understanding the role of the social worker and the domain of social work within the operational and systematic context of the helping profession (Rautenbach & Chiba, 2010; Sheafor & Horesji, 2010).

The advantages of using developmental theories as a lens include seeing the child as autonomous, but also within a developmental space of pre-determined conditioning and influence (Macleod, 2009; Jarolmen, 2014). The National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy (2015) centres the child as a capable individual with potential and the capacity to continuously develop within their environment, while considering the child as an individual with a plethora of autonomy and impending existence. Developmental theories additionally consider the maladaptive outcomes of cognitive, environmental and systematic barriers which may affect the lived experiences of the individual child (Long, 2009; Hook, 2009; Macleod, 2009).

Development as a construct is broad and the premise of unpacking development as a theory should not neglect the discussion of the seminal philosophy of development (Potgieter, 1998). The considerations above are necessary when holistically considering the developmental outcomes of any individual and especially when considering any system that suggests the prioritisation of children within its objective plan (Hook, 2009; Duncan, 2009; National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015). Development in social work in the researcher's opinion may be rephrased as preventative, promotive, welfare and developmental focused social work practice, as implied by Macleod (2009). While considering the developmental psychology of the child and the integrative overlapping between child development, it suggests that developmental social work practice cannot be overlooked (Macleod, 2009; Zastrow, 2010).

Developmental psychology demonstrates the nuanced ways in which development may be viewed (Macleod, 2009). While the philosophy of developmental psychology demonstrates this extensive lens of operation; it is necessary to concentrate on developmental social work theory for the purpose of this study (Zastrow, 2010).

The succeeding guiding concepts in this research study look specifically at the role of the ECD social worker in relation to the life of the child, the ECD social worker's role in the developmental system as well as the ECD social worker's role within the holistic socio-political and historical framework of a democratic South Africa (Zastrow, 2010). The social constructivist approach is the closest overarching theory when considering the chosen developmental theories in this study (Macleod, 2009). The difficulty in unpacking this developmental approach comes into play when comparing the varying ways in which developmental theories overlap and when trying to unpack the difference between *developmental theory* and *developmental approaches* (Macleod, 2009). Theoretical frameworks as an umbrella in developmental psychology are broken down into the following concepts: mechanistic approach, organismic approach, developmental-contextual approaches, cultural approaches, public health approach, narrative approach and social constructionist approaches (Macleod, 2009).

The following question by Macleod (2009, p. 621): “are children active in determining the outcome of their development or are they passive recipients of environmental and genetic influences?” raises an awareness around the controversy within the field of developmental psychology. While the mechanistic approach views the child as passive recipients of collected experiences and behaviours; the organismic approach sees the individual as a total accumulation of experiences rather than an acquired sum of parts comparatively. Contextual theories and social constructionist theories view the individual child within an interactive system of integrative accumulated and assimilated experiences, which are case specific, unique and therefore vastly dependent on a myriad of interdependent factors that are not limited to the environment or genetics (Jarolmen, 2014; Macleod, 2009).

Developmental social work theory and practice is centred because it relies on identifying challenges faced in individual, environmental, social, historical, political and systemic client systems (Zastrow, 2010). ECD social work practice can be viewed through the lens of developmental social work practice because there is a requirement to identify the

developmental needs, interests and contextual factors of children; while creating developmental intervention strategies for the implementation of ECD social work (Buckley, 2007; Shardlow, 2007). Social development or community development are two key variable concepts which need consideration when assessing development in social work theory and practice, as client system needs continually change their form (Zastrow, 2010; Jarolmen, 2014). There exists an interdependent relationship between identifying needs, challenges and sustainable intervention strategies within the practice of developmental theory and practice in social work. ECD social work practice is not exempted from this recurrent form of thought or practice (Zastrow, 2010).

The importance of identifying the variables between child development, ECD practice and systems, ECD social work theory and practice must be observed because theories available related to the interdependent nature of these concepts are not readily accessible in research papers (National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015; Sheafor & Horesji, 2010). It is therefore imperative that a language be created for this integrative system which exists as a reality. The documentation process of this research is therefore of utmost importance for the progression and exposure of this professional intersection (National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015).

2.3 THEORETICAL FOUNDATION AND FRAMEWORK(S) UNDERPINNING

THE STUDY

The reasoning for the choice of theoretical framework(s) emerged from taking into account the collaborative perspectives of professional practice; as well as the impact of the practice, policy, legislature and systems which have and still directly affect the individual child (National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015; Shardlow, 2007).

The ecological perspective together with a strengths-based perspective have been used as the foundation of this study. When considering the varying needs of children, or the varying changes in development we cannot neglect the consideration of different developmental theories (Jarolmen, 2014; Gibson, 2007). The ecological perspective and the strengths-based perspective are perspectives which may be denoted under the umbrella of developmental social work theory (Hook, 2009; Jarolmen, 2014). These perspectives form part of the specific theories used in unpacking the most applicable and appropriate analysis for this

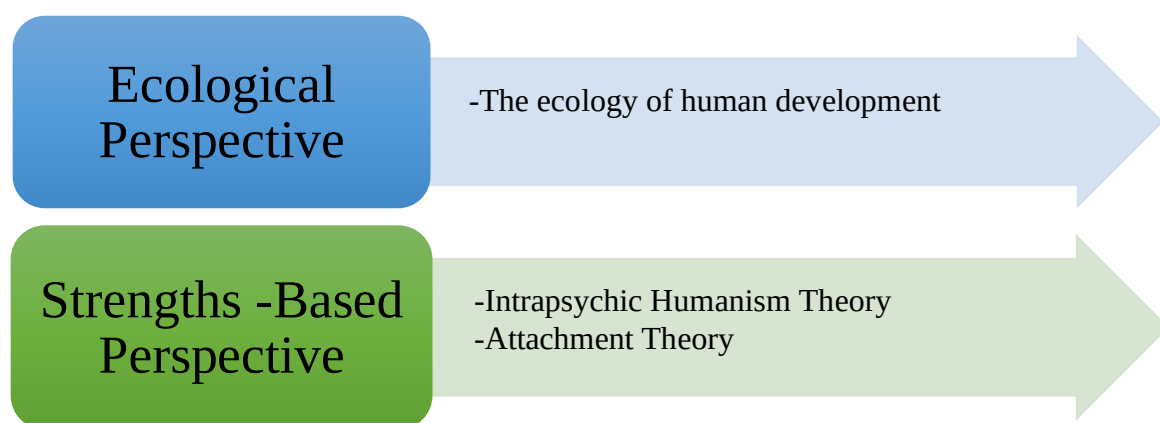
research study. In addition, these perspectives are discussed in order to reveal the applicability of the analysis to contemporary discourse; to collaborative models of discourse and its relatability to understanding how discourse can affect the interdisciplinary professionals that influence children and ECD (Tseng, 2018).

The ecological perspective, which alludes to the ecology of human development, centralises the ecological theory of development by Bronfenbrenner and critiques associated cognitive development theories by Sigmund and Anna Freud, Erik Erikson, Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky (Duncan, 2009; Cockcroft, 2009; Mooney, 2009). Furthermore; this research has directed a specific attentiveness on the strengths-based perspectives: intrapsychic humanism theory and attachment theory (John Bowlby, 1969). Professional practice conducted by the interdisciplinary professions are highly influenced by the above mentioned perspectives (Sheafor & Horesji, 2010).

With the understanding that the common aim of related professionals in the ECD sector is: best practice, for the best interest of the child, the researcher has intentionally linked the practice and outcome of the above mentioned perspectives through this visual representation below:

Figure 1

Theoretical Perspectives, Approach and the Connected Theories Applied in the Study



Note. This figure demonstrates the researcher's outline of theoretical perspectives used in the study. The theoretical perspectives are further linked to the theoretical approach and the specific theories used.

2.4 IDENTIFYING THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK(S) AND THEORISING THE FRAMEWORK(S) SPECIFIED

The Theoretical Frameworks above have been identified as frameworks most appropriately connected to the phenomenology associated with the research question and objectives for the study. The ecological and strengths-based perspectives have specifically been chosen because they explore development in contemporary discourse, child development theories, collaborative models of social work practice and in addition they inform interdisciplinary professionals on their holistic clinical, sociological and human-centred practice (Jarolmen, 2014). Providing an assessment model as a tool to measure effectiveness of applied social work practice will further aid the realisation of reliable and relatable research (Daniel, 2007; Sheppard, 2007).

The assessment tool by Brigid Daniel (2007), provides insight to understanding holistic social work practice and in effect provides a strong purpose to review the link between the client system (the child) and the interdisciplinary professionals that provide services within the ECD sector. The ECD social worker being the professional whose role is being assessed for its effectiveness or relevance, especially comes under scrutiny through assessment. Assessment provides an opportunity to acknowledge how client systems are identified, the factors which affect assessment and the knowledge necessary to ensure that holistic intervention and strengths-based intervention strategies are applied in response to the needs based assessment of the client system (Daniel, 2007).

The needs of the child and the systems within the ECD sector are identified and assessed through conducting a needs analysis; where the advantages and disadvantages, factors and realities are brought to the fore. The assessment of these considerations simply serve to enhance the outcome of effectiveness in practice of holistic ECD services (Daniel, 2007).

2.4.1 THE ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

The Ecological Perspective theorised and presented by Bronfenbrenner (1977; 1979 as cited in Hook, 2009) has been critiqued and objectively analysed. It is essential to note that although it is a fairly new addition to the understanding of developmental psychology, that its contribution does not come without weighty complexities (Hook, 2009). While Bronfenbrenner positively added dimensions to the ways in which complex reciprocal

relations happen between the individual and their environment; the challenges ought to be stated and set the tone for the critical discussion of the perspective (Hook, 2009).

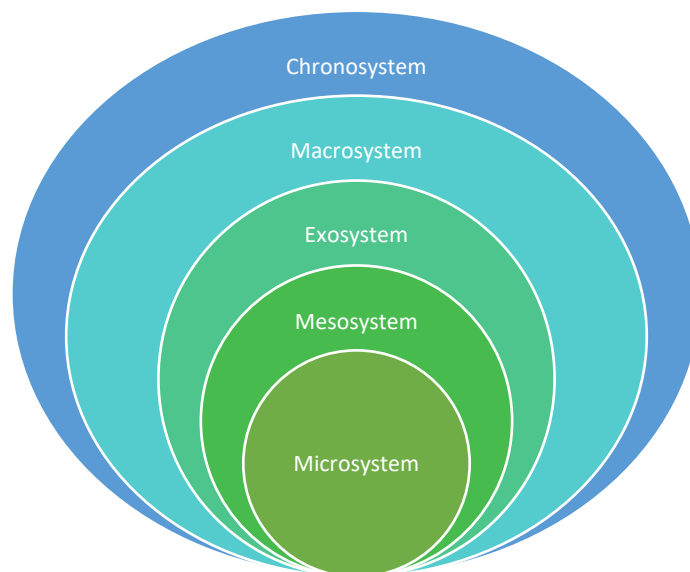
Bronfenbrenner theorises the ecological theory of development as an interaction between the individual and their environment (Rosa & Tudge, 2013). The ecology of human development has been a concept that has been debated, refined and expanded on and “the consequences for ecological research is that researchers must consider the interaction of systems in which people participate not only the influence of (and their influence on) the immediate setting in which the developing individuals of interest are situated” (Rosa & Tudge, 2013, p. 247). The ecological perspective focuses on the individual amidst a myriad of interrelated systems which affect the functioning of an individual child (Sheafor & Horesji, 2010; Brearley, 2007).

The ecological theory of development is an expansive theory as it seeks to demonstrate the individual operating in a number of systems, with enough scope to identify the varying isolated states of functioning as well (Hook, 2009). The critique of this theory exists in the interval where the complexity of the theory itself is its leading advantage and disadvantage. This theory knows no bounds, which may make it extraordinarily difficult to apply or analyse some of the findings related to the varying reciprocal relations which happen at the many points of intersection (Hook, 2009). Relations are also limited to understanding that there is a “need to conceptualise developmental influences only in systems terms, then the smallest factor of influence needs to be understood only as a part component of a complex multifaceted system of influence” (Hook, 2009, p. 511). Variables of any kind need to be taken into account, which may be an impossible task to achieve. This theory is both refined as it is complicated (Hook, 2009; Gibson, 2007).

Hook (2009, p. 505) describes Bronfenbrenner’s theory through concentric spheres which make up “five environmental systems” known as: Microsystem, Mesosystem, Exosystem, Macrosystem and Chronosystem. Below is an example of the model of the “five environmental systems”:

Figure 2

A Model of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory of Development



Note. Bronfenbrenner (1977; 1979), a psychosocial developmental theorist, developed the ecological theory of development. This figure demonstrates Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory of development, which shows the concentric spheres of the five environmental systems (microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem) (Recreated from *Developmental Psychology* (2nd ed., p.505), by D. Hook, 2009, UCT Press.

The Microsystem entails the complex relations between the developing individual and the important figures in their life, such as “caregivers, parents, siblings, friends, classmates and teachers. It is important to understand that this complex of relationships includes the connections across various people within the immediate setting” and that this has an influence on the developing individual (Hook, 2009, p. 505). The microsystem provides one with the lens of closest proximity to the developing individual and each system that follows in the environmental system expands from the microsystem, whilst creating a reciprocal relationship of development (Hook, 2009).

The individual child is seen to be interacting as a whole person within a number of systems, such as: “biological, intellectual, emotional, social, familial, spiritual, economic, communal” etc. (Sheafor & Horejsi, 2010, p. 8). These theories set “social work apart from other helping professions” because there is a focus on the individual functioning within a myriad of

systems; and not in isolation (Sheafor & Horesji, 2010, p. 8). The individual child within this system is said to be affected or influenced by the nature of familial relationships, which affects the child into their perpetual life-span (Brearley, 2007; Gibson, 2007).

This particular study looks at the individual as the child and their immediate environment as the microsystem; then it looks into the individual within extended interactions, such as the child's peer groups, followed by a further extension of groups. The microsystem extends into the moving parts of the meso-system, which include community systems, government agencies, media, communication and modes of transport (Hook, 2009; Zastrow, 2010). The Mesosystem is a system where the developing individual expands their link and bond to varying microsystems and intersect in a dyadic way; to and from multiple microsystems. Extended forms of interaction such as extended family and peers, together with the moving parts listed above, form a part of the Mesosystem (Hook, 2009).

Beyond the Mesosystem is the Exosystem. The Exosystem includes the obscure and obvious factors which affect the individual, where these factors do not have a direct effect on the individual, but where the systematic outcomes indirectly affect the individual (Hook, 2009). An example of this would be the ECD or ECD sector(s), where the system indirectly influences the individual child through policies, legislature and/or through the roles executed by the staff bodies, like the ECD social worker and ECD practitioners (National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015). The Exosystem includes structural or systemic functioning of emblematic factors which affect the child (Hook, 2009; Rosa & Tudge, 2013). Emblematic factors in the Exosystem would include the existence of the social settings or organisations outside of the individuals proximate experience (Cunningham & Cunningham, 2008; Hook, 2009). Examples of the Exosystem exist within the child's proximity to the welfare, health and education systems; like the Department of Social Development (hereinafter referred to as DSD), the Department of Health (hereinafter referred to as DOH) and the Department of Basic Education (hereinafter referred to as DBE) (National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015).

The Macrosystem, which follows the Exosystem, is the system which is inclusive of the "very broad cultural patterns of ideology, dominant economic and political systems, general and popular discourses, values, law and customs" (Hook, 2009, p. 506 & 507). Socio-historical, political, educational, legal and economic realities are central to unpacking the

position of the Macrosystem. The Macrosystem consists of the larger cultural context of the individual child's life, where there are socio-historical and cultural factors that influence the life of the individual. A political system in South Africa, such as democracy and all of its obvious and obscure implications in the various sectors result in how individuals experience the functioning of the democracy. There is a cause and effect relationship which happens with the individual and the system (Hook, 2009; Rosa & Tudge, 2013).

The Chronosystem, which is the final concentric part of Bronfenbrenner's (1977; 1979 as cited in Hook, 2009) Ecological Theory, showcases the concept of developmental processing and the order of time that influences the short and longitudinal processes in an individual child's life. According to the Merriam Webster (2020) dictionary, the definition of *chronological* is the relation, accordance and occurrences of events in an order of related time. Events and occurrences of these events influence the ways in which patterns and transitions transpire in one's life (Gibson, 2007). The definition of the Chronosystem, if broken down further, refers to the concept of linearly arranged influences and events (Webster, 2020). "Time is important as it entails the patterning of environmental events and transitions over the life-span. It also refers to the unique sociohistorical placement of the individual" (Hook, 2009, p. 507). The Chronosystem elementally contextualises the constituents of the familial, peer, social, historical, cultural, environmental, political and developmental occurrences and changes in the individual's life (Hook, 2009; Brearley, 2007). It is important to note that the events which happen through-out the life of an individual do not happen in isolation. The linear understanding of events, does not simply occur in insulated ways, but rather through an interdependent order, uniquely applicable to an individual's life (Zastrow, 2010).

Altered states of functioning are influenced by transitional and environmental changes. It is important to observe that advances in understanding the ecological theory emerge from the ever changing environment. The theory itself is strengthened when it accounts for the shifts in the five environmental systems (Hook, 2009). It is crucial to identify the reasons and relatability to systems that continue to influence each individual's experience and their prospective or pre-determined developmental outcomes. Developmental imperatives identified in the National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy (2015), further identify the importance of human potential and one's proximity to achieving their potential. It is through the identification of risk factors and protective factors, where we are able to

navigate and access the provisions and conditions necessary for the actualisation of the goals associated with achieving optimum developmental growth (National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015; Zastrow, 2010).

South Africa has been a transitional environment, where much of its encompassing features of functioning have changed and have indirectly and directly influenced the lives of individuals, from the child to the young adult, adult and older person (National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015). South Africa as a democratic country leans in on the hope to continually develop an environment where all of the people within the country have the opportunity to express and develop in holistic ways, that serve their individual needs (National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015; Berry et al., 2013). Optimum development, growth and potential are democratic aims. This noteworthy objective alludes to the concept that developmental potential which transpires through the actualisation of ECD services is achieved, is a further noteworthy aspiration (National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015).

Bronfenbrenner was a pioneer of thought when thinking about the interdependent nature of the individual and their environment. Bronfenbrenner (1977; 1979 as cited in Hook, 2009) concurs that there is an effectively ever evolving reciprocal relationship between an individual and their environment. He further concurs that an individual develops beyond their isolated space of perception, thought, desire and fears. The individual is seen as being a part of a unique social setting, where there exists socio-political, ideological and historical considerations (Hook, 2009, Gibson, 2007). Furthermore, Bronfenbrenner (1977; 1979 as cited in Hook, 2009) argued that legislation and social policy should be informed by contextual realities. Research conducted on individuals and systems of interaction should inform social policy, as opposed to social policies informing how systems operate. Bronfenbrenner has a person-centred approach, which additionally takes into consideration, the phenomenological aspects of a person's biopsychosocial environment as well as their intrapsychic humanistic development (Rosa & Tudge, 2013).

Environmental milieu consists of a number of influencing factors. The approach and perspectives used for this study form a reciprocal relationship, much like the individual and one's environment. Erik Erikson's psychosocial theory is an alternative theory used within the study together with the foundation of Sigmund and Anna Freud's explored

biopsychosocial concept and its relation to child development (Jarolmen, 2014; Gibson, 2007). This study seeks to encourage a biopsychosocial outlook; and the idea to critically analyse the reciprocal nature between the different interacting systems which make up the ‘biopsychosocial’ (Austrian, 2002 as cited in Jarolmen, 2014 p. 12). Erikson’s psychological theory, just as Sigmund and Anna Freud’s bio-psychological theories, is revealed in this study with the intention to critique and analyse the developmental theories and the advancement that it has provided to developmental theory (Jarolmen, 2014; Cockcroft, 2009). Biopsychosocial development includes accounting for the holistic functioning and influences which aid the functioning of an individual. The factors which affect the individual include physical, inherited, cognitive, psychological, social, socio-historical and cultural factors (Jarolmen, 2014; Cockcroft, 2009). Bronfenbrenner used elements of psychosocial and biopsychosocial development theory to build on his theory of ecological theory (Hook, 2009; Gibson, 2007).

An additional theory, which seeks to unpack cognitive development and the understanding of how children guide their own learning is Jean Piaget’s (1896-1980) constructivist theory on cognitive development. Piaget focused on the individual development of children and their inherent capacity to lead their own cognitive development and learning experience(s), through assimilation and accommodation of experiences that they directly or indirectly participate in (Cockcroft, 2009; Daniel, 2007). Piaget fails to include social and cultural influences in cognitive development; while Vygotsky contrastingly emphasises the inherent influence socio-cultural and socio-historical factors have on development (Cockcroft, 2009; Mooney, 2009).

The study of cognitive development has been structured around testing, measuring and observing mental experiences, knowledge acquired, how knowledge is acquired, how experiences are acquired and the phenomena associated with these processes (Cockcroft, 2009; Jarolmen, 2014). “Cognitive developmental psychologists are concerned with similarities and differences in cognitive abilities over time” (Cockcroft, 2009, p. 315). The advances of cognitive and psychosocial developmental theory have evolved with the varying theorists who have identified that there are social, socio-cultural, value-based beliefs, physical, genetic measures and structures that developmental psychology cannot overlook if the most accurate and applicable research is to be conducted (Cockcroft, 2009; Mooney, 2009).

The definition of psychosocial development relates to the behavioural and social factors that affect individual development, in children (Cockcroft, 2009; Brearley, 2007). Psychosocial development is related to cognitive development where there is a linear and constructive observation of the development that occurs in the life of the child. There needs to be scope and an understanding that linear and constructive development is not always guaranteed. Furthermore, every individual has the propensity to a unique cognitive and psychosocial experience (Cockcroft, 2009; National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015).

This study emphasises identifying the importance of understanding the holistic development of the individual child and all of the factors which aid the realisation of that. The critiques of development theories are vital to understanding that development should not be viewed in isolation, but rather within varying moving parts of interaction (Hook, 2009; Cunningham & Cunningham, 2008). Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory, together with identifying supporting theories aid the realisation of presenting the most applicable and accurate research for this study (Love, 2000).

2.4.2 STRENGTHS-BASED PERSPECTIVE: INTRAPSYCHIC HUMANISM THEORY AND ATTACHMENT THEORY

The Strengths-Based Perspective is an orientation which focuses on “the existence of positive and constructive elements, even in the most tragic of situations” in all individuals (Sheafor & Horejsi, 2010, p. 91). There is a premise that the strengths-based perspective departs from, which is: everyone has the inherent and innate capacity for strengths (Sheafor & Horesji, 2010; Jarolmen, 2014). The strengths-based perspective emanates from a helping perspective, where the orientation of the theory is focused on assisting individuals in identifying their strengths and in realising alternative methods in addressing their challenges and perceived barriers (Sheafor & Horesji, 2010). It is focused on helping relationships advance from a point where there is a collaborative effort to address challenges and identify positive reinforcements, to holistically improve on the phenomenological experiences of any individual (Sheafor & Horesji, 2010). Aldgate (2007) specifically refers to the necessity of a needs-based and strengths-based assessment encapsulating the input from the community, school and from broad social relations. Through assessment, there are hopes to achieve

greater insight into the holistic effectiveness of intervention strategies required to achieve the best outcome for each individual and their development (Aldgate, 2007).

While the ecological theory can be viewed as an all-encompassing individual and environmental philosophy of thought; it is equally as important to unpack the very intrinsic inner workings of an individual's psychological functioning (Pieper & Pieper, 1995). The object relations theory, intra-psychic humanism theory and attachment theories together provide the insight into unpacking the internal functioning of the individual child (Watts, 2009).

Watts (2009, p. 73) makes reference to Melanie Klein's Object Relations Theory of development and personality; which speaks to the intra-psychic world. The intra-psychic world "refers to the internal world of experience, that is, the activities of the mind", which depends on an interactive model of psychological functioning. However, Pieper and Pieper (1995, p. 456) state that empathy isn't reliable because it's unable to "reliably distinguish between delusion and actuality"; they further state that "conflicted human nature is not innately determined, but represents the developing human's attempt to maintain a viable sense of inner well-being in the face of unstable parenting" and other forms of traumatic attachments or events during infancy. Intrapsychic Humanism Theory focuses on creating a means to self-regulate; and move away from deviant behaviour which could have been induced by exposure to traumatic events or unstable attachment (Pieper & Pieper, 1995).

Attachment theory just like intrapsychic humanism theory focuses on maladaptive behaviours which may emerge based on disrupted attachments during infancy and childhood. Anxieties associated with separation from parents or caregivers; often lead to vulnerabilities later on in life (Senior, 2009; Jarolmen, 2014). There is often a higher propensity to engage in risky behaviour if there are no secure attachments; there is less responsiveness, expression or direct engagement with emotions when there is little self-regulation and/or attachment (Senior, 2009).

With the use of collaborative models in professional practice, the understanding of the child is imperative to the implementation of realistic practice (Zastrow, 2010). McCrea (1999, p.70) states, "... unless a social worker understands why the client's symptomatic behaviour is a meaningful response to the crisis event, s/he will not be able to help the client understand

the client's need for such behaviour". The strengths-based perspective and attachment theory assists in guiding the clinical or helping professional, like the ECD social worker to use strategies to aid the achievement of preventative and promotive practice (Gray, 2010; Sheafor & Horesji, 2010). The interdisciplinary professionals can develop and influence the development of the child, the development of the ECD sector and help determine the role of the professional(s), through the strengths based perspective and attachment theory (Sheafor & Horesji, 2010).

Because this study looks at ECD and the development of the child between birth and six years of age, there is a primary need to consider the nature of intrapsychic humanism theory (Pieper & Pieper, 2016). This theory resulted from observing that there were no real studies being done on infants below the age of two. Melanie Klein's Object Relations Theory had initially focused on children from the age of two. The development of the intrapsychic humanism theory furthered the study of child development and the concept of the internal world (Watts, 2009). Intrapsychic Humanism Theory by definition includes "a recent, nonderivative, comprehensive depth psychology that represents a unified theory of child development, psychopathology, and treatment" (Pieper & Pieper, 2016, p. 455). There was a need for the theory to be broadened as a means to further evaluate, explore and determine the psychological and developmental components of what makes us intrinsically human from the very beginning of life (Watts, 2009; Hook, 2009).

Melanie Klein is viewed as the first children's psychoanalyst. She is additionally known as the observer of children within their purest form of play, relation and self-identification. A result of Klein's work is what is referred to as play therapy (Friedman & Schustack, 2009). Neo analytic and ego aspects of the personality and self-identity in children have evolved and other theorists have expanded on her Object Relations Theory, which has developed into what is referred to as the "relational perspective in psychoanalysis" (Friedman & Schustack, 2009, p. 132). The expansion of object relations theories included moving from the inner psyche of an individual, to their relation with others (Watts, 2009). The basis of Melanie Klein's theory is that children created and responded to patterns or behaviours that were connected to an *object* (Friedman & Schustack, 2009). Objects are related to interactions with external realities, abstract encounters and real objects that children interact with while developing. In addition, objects are associated with affection, sustenance, reciprocity and or the lack thereof (Watts, 2009). Interactions and functions of identity emerge through these

exchanges. An individual's capacity for empathy or the lack thereof, is said to be traced back to primary patterns and responses to one's relations and internalised "emotional memory" (Friedman & Schustack, 2009, p. 130). Accounting for intrinsic inner workings of the mind and its relations forms part of a dyadic relation which exists as attachment. The inner psyche and attachment (secure or insecure) are assumed to form alongside each other and influence the continued development of resilience or maladaptive patterns of behaviour (Watts, 2009).

Secure emotional relations to objects according to Margaret Mahler as cited in Friedman and Schustack (2009), were found to result in healthy integrated self-identity. Secure identity formation consequently results in individuals being more resilient than those who had insecure emotional relations with the objects that they were exposed to; or the lack thereof (Friedman & Schustack, 2009). Insecure emotional relations often result in maladaptive responses in behaviour, neurosis, inconsistent patterns in self-identity and a compromised internal system of trust, empathy and resilience (Friedman & Schustack, 2009). Secure attachments from primary care-givers, the family and particularly the child's mother, are pivotal in the continued development of the child's identity development. If the child's attachment is compromised, a crisis is more often than not, an outcome and self-regulation, together with one's attitude is affected (Baron, Byrne & Branscombe, 2007; Friedman & Schustack, 2009).

"Attachment theory concerns early caregiving relationships and the way that these relationships support the child's subsequent development" (Senior, 2009, p. 215). Personality, behavioural and interpersonal development are central to the kind of attachment that a child has with their caregivers (Senior, 2009; Aldgate, 2007). Healthy relationships appear as the kinds of relations where caregivers and primary social agents are present and actively attentive to the needs of the child, which addresses physical, emotional, cognitive and spiritual needs (Senior, 2009). According to developmental and clinical practice in social work and psychology, providing a stimulating and interactive environment assists in the realisation of an assumed healthy attachment. The ambiguity with secure attachments is that there is no absolute guarantee for the most resilient outcomes in development (Friedman & Schustack, 2009). Even with the most secure attachments, there is still the possibility of maladaptive outcomes in child development (Senior, 2009). This finding provides the reason for encouraging and continuously providing the best possible environmental stimulation and support systems, to reduce any kind of outcome that would not lead to the holistic positive

development of an individual child (Friedman & Schustack, 2009). The importance of ECD and ECD social work are instruments which further aim to reduce any circumstances where development may result in anything other than reaching one's most optimal potential (Senior, 2009; Friedman, & Schustack, 2009). Identifying the predetermined factors which affect potential and holistic development, is a key in the assessment of whether the strengths based perspective is being achieved.

Attitudes and the development of attitude, play a significant role in the behavioural responses of individuals. Attitudes serve various functions in the lives of individuals; they can serve as prognosticators of behaviour through navigating the psychosocial and social world (Baron, Byrne & Branscombe, 2007). Baron, Byrne and Branscombe, (2007, p. 93) state that "attitudes influence our thoughts" and "attitudes often affect our behaviour". It is argued by Baron, Byrne and Branscombe (2007, p. 93) "When attitudes are ambivalent, they are more susceptible to change, compared with when they are uniformly positive or negative. In contrast attitudes that lack ambivalence are difficult to change". Attitude as a predetermined outcome or result of maladaptive behaviour should be understood in its relation to healthy and holistic development (Baron, Byrne and Branscombe, 2007). Attitude that results in positive behaviour patterns; which result in healthy development and self-identity, is key to furthering the developmental goal for ECD and overall developmental growth (Baron, Byrne & Branscombe, 2007).

Behaviours are acted out by individuals, but they are also experienced by others. It is through social learning, classical conditioning, subliminal conditioning, observational learning, instrumental conditioning and social comparison where individuals shape their internal thought-processes (Baron, Byrne & Branscombe, 2007). Thought processes may result in programmed negative, positive or ambivalent behavioural responses. The relevance of attitude and behaviour to this study is within the understanding that one's intrapsychic world determines the way in which one navigates one's external world (Watts, 2009). Armitage and Carner (2000 as cited in Baron, Byrne & Branscombe, 2007, p. 93) state that, "Ambivalent attitudes are easier to change than those that reflect a uniform position on an issue as a result behavioural responses tend to be unstable when attitudes are mixed".

Forming greater capacity for stimulation and the capacity for resilience depends not only on identifying strengths, intrapsychic humanism factors, attachment, attitudes and behaviour;

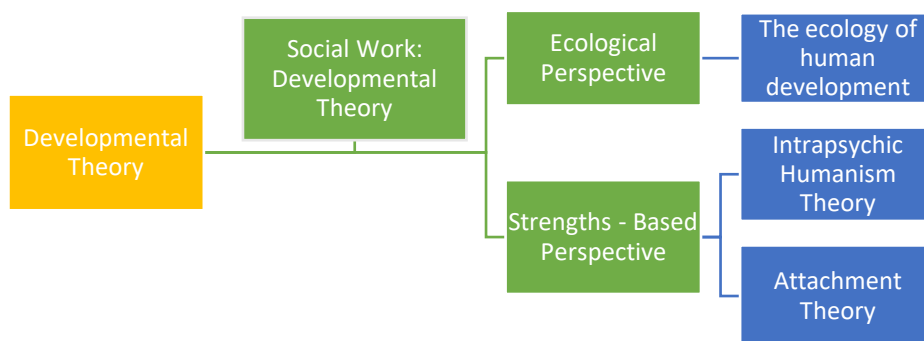
but it relies on the factors and goals set out in the National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy (2015), the National Development Plan 2030, the South African Constitution and varying policies which affect children directly and indirectly. Through accounting for inclusive and accessible developmental factors; optimum child development can be achieved (The National Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015).

2.5 SUMMARY

The building blocks toward understanding development are complex and require a multifaceted approach in unpacking what it entails. The relevance of these theories for this study includes accounting for the complexity of development as well as addressing discrepancies in the development of the ECD sector (The National Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015). The Social work development theory is most appropriate for this study, as it provides a base for collaborative discourse. The ecological and strengths-based perspectives are closely related and the relationship of the themes covered throughout this chapter are displayed in the diagram below:

Figure 3

A Breakdown of the Links between the Theories used in the Study



Note. This figure demonstrates the links between the theories used in the study. Developmental Theory is the umbrella theory of the study, but Social Work Developmental Theory is the specific theory that envelopes the specific perspectives and related approaches and sub-theories used in the study.

The ECD sector can draw from understanding developmental theories as an opportunity to look at the child as an individual with inherent capability that is influenced by a range of factors which shape them (Cockcroft, 2009; Mooney, 2009). The developmental factors are not mutually exclusive nor are they co-dependent; however, the interdependent factors can

result in promoting a range of possibilities. The ECD sector should not further perpetuate systematic exclusion, through assuming that there is only one method in development (Jarolmen, 2014; Brearley, 2007). Systematic exclusion, facilitates the process of marginalisation and the oppression of certain population groups. Understanding systematic exclusion will aid the elucidation of achieving authentic ECD in South Africa (The National Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015)

The ecological and strengths perspectives showcase the relevance of centring the life of the child and the support systems in place, in order to achieve the prioritised goal of ECD in South Africa (Hook, 2009; Watts, 2009; Senior, 2009). The ecological perspective provides a broad scope of practice and experience for the professionals involved; through its multidimensional means of operation (Cockcroft, 2009; Mooney, 2009). The strengths-based perspective provides the understanding that the individual and systems additionally add to the multidimensional means of understanding maladaptation and the contrasts of successful functioning in developmental structures (Watts, 2009; Senior, 2009). The ECD sector, with the use of the interdependent focus can draw from the interdisciplinary professionals focus and view the related professionals as a means to shape the practice and implementation to achieve the best practice for the best interest of the child. Chapter Three, which follows, provides an expanded overview on the varying interdependent and interdisciplinary perspectives, through literature.

CHAPTER THREE

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

3.1 INTRODUCTION OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW

ECD and the related professionals within the early education sector have received an increasing amount of attention in developing countries as a means to shift its focus from marginal input to a focus of providing quality service (Bernal & Ramirez, 2019). Accessibility and inclusion in the ECD sector has been a targeted area of focus as it exemplifies the detailed expectations set out in the UN Sustainable Development Goals (Bernal & Ramirez, 2019).

Nelson Mandela (1997) provided sentiments in a speech detailing his vision for education in South Africa, which embraces the need to pay close attention to children inclusive of children aged birth to six years. Mandela (1997) states:

“New education is central to the success of a whole range of human endeavours. Our own reconstruction and development effort, the renaissance of the entire continent and our successful interaction in the global village, depend largely on the progress we make in educating our populations.

In South Africa the challenges are as stark as they are real. The majority of our children, especially in rural provinces, still either do not have access to basic education or depend on institutions that lack the teaching media and equipment needed for effective learning and teaching ...

The power of education extends beyond the development of skills we need for economic success. It can contribute to nation-building and reconciliation. Our previous system emphasised the physical and other differences of South Africans with devastating effects. We are steadily but surely introducing education that enables our children to exploit their similarities and common goals, while appreciating the strength in their diversity”

In an effort to deliberate the importance of ECD in South Africa, it is essential that the historical considerations are captured and analysed as an evaluative tool. The measurement

of intentions and goals realised can only be done if there is evidence thereof (South African Child Gauge, 2013). In order to evaluate and implement the goals set out in varying policies and ratified legislation, the relevant stakeholders and workforce involved in the realisation of these goals need to be identified. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to concentrate on the ECD social worker, in South Africa. This literature review aims to bring the relevant considerations to the fore.

The literature review is the strategic method of composing discourse, where existing research is recorded with a critical outlook, in order to bring forth insight and important concepts to further the understanding of a particular discipline (Galvan & Galvan, 2017; Blaxter et al., 2004). The contextualisation of information is a key element in strategically creating a literature review. Blaxter et al. (2004, p. 98) unpacks “ten reasons for reading for research”, which may be summarised as being able to create concepts and ideas, expanding and broadening one’s perspective, strategically criticising work that has been done in order to find the gaps in research and even strengthen and legitimise one’s research as a researcher. Finally, reading for research may aid and increase the applicability, methods and strategies used to further research (Blaxter et al., 2004).

The conceptualisation of this literature review must take into account the various research studies conducted in social work practice, child development and the political functioning of the Republic of South Africa. This chapter focuses on the purpose of the literature review, linking the literature review and theoretical framework in addition to deliberating the various perspectives and studies conducted within the discipline of ECD (Blaxter et al., 2004). A further elaboration of concepts and literature in this chapter will include outlining hegemonic discourse in the ECD educational context in South Africa, child development, children’s rights, legal documents and policies which are aimed at shaping the ECD sector, clinical child development subjects such as epigenetics and brain development, and finally structural development such as child development within socially and physically constructed spaces (The National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015).

Creating a framework of thought to be displayed as literature, one that additionally creates a visual mind map of thought, is the primary intention of this chapter. The framework of this literature review is discussed through five major themes. The first major theme is ECD and the Social Work Profession. Social Work, Child Development and Children’s Right is the

second theme. A third theme is Legal Documents aimed at shaping the ECD sector. Clinical Childhood Development, Epigenetics and Child Development, is a fourth theme and the final part of the major themes to be discussed will includes Systemic Inequality within the ECD sector.

Figure 4

A Display of the Links in Literature for the Study



Note. This figure demonstrates the links in literature relevant to the study. Five major themes are presented as themes in literature. These major themes form the organisational structure of the literature review.

The figure above aims to highlight the link between social work as a profession, ECD as an educational context and child development within the space of structural impressions, that innately have an effect on all of the components of the child. Not only do these links highlight relations to the ECD sector, but they additionally concern the related professionals and the profession of ECD social workers (South African Child Gauge, 2013).

3.2 EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT AND THE SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION

3.2.1 EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

When referring to ECD in this study, there is a four part consideration. The first part is: what is ECD? The second: are there risks encountered in ECD? The third: what services are provided in ECD and finally: how are these services delivered? ECD refers to the physical, cognitive, emotional, social and spiritual development of the child between birth and school going age, which includes children that are between the ages of birth to six years of age (National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015). ECD can further be explained as a developmental policy and development programmes aimed at realising the holistic developmental needs of all children in South Africa (White Paper 5, 2001; National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015).

Risk factors encountered in ECD are the result of the holistic needs of children not being fulfilled and the continued perpetuation of vulnerabilities experienced by children. The risks include the exposure to systemic exclusion, poverty, discrimination, disease and the lack of access to food, health care and secure care-giving (National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015). “In practice, however, education in many circumstances actually reinforces existing inequalities rather than overcomes them” (Giddens, 1993, p. 78).

According to the South African Child Gauge (2013) the essential packages of services and support consists of a holistic framework which considers nutritional support, social services, maternal and child health services, support for primary caregivers and stimulation for early learning. The essential packages of services and support may be viewed through a lens of holistic practice as it promotes forms of promotive and preventive work in ECD (The South African Child Gauge, 2013).

ECD within the framework of this study envelopes the thought that children ought to access an essential service that includes their best interest at its core (National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015). The sentiment of holistic services entails the socio-historical and political context of South Africa, while aligning with the foresight of the policy and developmental work being done within the education sector. The Bill of Rights (1996) includes the priority of children being able to access their right to education; and the

necessary responsibility of the child's caregivers and the relevant multi-sectoral stakeholders involved in making education a realised priority (The White Paper, 2005). "Schools are supposedly a means whereby children can escape from the restricting aspects of the social backgrounds from which they come. Since education is not only open to but demanded of all" (Giddens, 1993, p. 78).

There is an existing framework that describes the goals for education, however the specificity of ECD is a developing priority. The delivery of services cannot exist in a singular vacuum, it relies on the intersection of family, non-state institutions and intersectoral state institutions; where a range of entities work together to achieve the goal of the best interest of the child (The Children's Act 35 of 2005). The quality of ECD can only improve if there is an evidential amount of interdependent and intersectoral work being done to achieve this goal (National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015).

ECD is only as valued as far as those invested in it, see its value (Lundlum, 2015). It makes it extremely difficult to measure the value that ECD holds when its historical and current value is still debated. The government and ECD related professionals may see the value of ECD, but this may not be extended into civil society. The measurement of the value of ECD may be difficult to understand, due to the ambiguity of the ECD sector as a whole. The availability of clearly specified roles related to ECD and social work in South Africa is limited. The policy documents related to the intersectoral and interdependent role-players in ECD although broadly outlined in the National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy (2015), are not clear or accessible.

Individual non-state and state departments have overarching descriptions for what each entity needs to achieve. The individual identification of the ECD social worker is not only limited, but indistinct. The Children's Act 38. Of 2005 in South Africa mention the roles of the minister and executives that work within the sphere of ECD centres, but there is no mention of the social worker in ECD. The more readily available academic papers are papers on the role of the school social worker, which refers more to the roles and descriptions of the school social worker within primary and secondary school environments (Higy et al., 2012). These papers are additionally based on studies which have been conducted in America, Europe and Asia. Africa and more specifically South Africa, have limited forms

of documented findings in the education sector and even less within the ECD sector (Higy et al., 2012; Teasley, 2004).

Subsequently, Higgy, Haberkorn, Pope and Gilmore (2012) suggest that the role of the school social worker is undermined because the role of the school social worker is ambiguous. The roles executed by the school social worker are context specific, despite the need and outline of this role being clear (Teasley, 2004). Literature related to ECD and the ECD social worker may be limited, but this provides an opportunity for research to be conducted and interrogated, hence the current study.

3.2.2 SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION AND ITS HISTORY

Social work is one of the formalised helping professionals, together with the formalised professions, such as; counsellors, psychologists and psychiatrists (Egan, 2010). “Helping is about constructive change that makes a substantive difference in the life of the client” (Egan, 2010, p. 8). The social work profession as we know it in South Africa was previously referred to as the social welfare system, where policies and services were drafted to serve the needs of the racial minority white population groups during apartheid (Patel, 2005; Zastrow, 2010). Democracy reveals that there was a shift in thought around a welfare state as well as specified racial segregation. Therefore, in the South African context it is inferred that there was an existent structural system of how welfare services were accessed during apartheid. Today, in the year 2021, we find that many of the structural impressions made during the time of the social welfare system, are unrelenting experiences lived as post-apartheid ramifications experienced within the democracy (Patel, 2005).

The social welfare system through its existence was “intensely political and ideological and continue shape the debate about what the direction of social welfare should be in a society” (Patel, 2005, p. 19). Midgley (1995) discusses the definition of social welfare and that the system itself is meant to practice inclusion, access and promote the maximum opportunities to achieve the greatest good for all of the citizens which inhabit the country, or welfare state. The global idea of social welfare changed as industrialisation, modernisation and globalisation expanded (Patel, 2005). Social development as a policy was “first introduced by the United Nations to address human development needs in the world’s poorest nations” (Patel, 2005, p. 29). Social welfare, social philanthropy and social development are

indicators of linear change, which occurred in response to the economic, social, cultural, environmental and political global change (Midgely, 1995). A result in the change and development was the further development of the profession of social work.

Social work historically focused on the welfare of the most marginalised and vulnerable citizens in South Africa. Social Work has significantly had an impact within South Africa's racial and ethnic groups because South Africa has been a country with an undeniable history of marginalised populations (Patel, 2005). A melting pot of contentious margins and systemic structural differences remain a challenge despite the efforts made toward sustainable developmental change (South African Child Gauge, 2013). The history of South Africa has dramatically changed and transformed, but as Parton and Kirk (2010, p. 25) state "a common thread is that social work emerges at times of rapid social change". South Africa's approach to social welfare is that democracy and citizen participation in social and economic development is vital in its development as a country. While the state prioritises the realisation of democracy, inclusion, participation and access in policy, the realisation of this is contentious. The state has a further obligation to ensure that social welfare and human needs are met (Patel, 2005).

Where rapid urbanisation and labour markets emerge; making kinship and traditional communities irrelevant, social work practice is seen to become relevant (Parton & Kirk, 2010). Awareness and critical understanding of structural issues which underpin social injustice and which further perpetuate marginality, this forces the understanding that social workers need to exemplify through practice (Cunningham & Cunningham, 2014). Social work intercepts society on various levels. Parton (2000, as cited in Parton & Kirk, 2010, p. 25) describes social work as developing a "hybrid in the 'social' intermediary zone or space between the private sphere of the household and the public sphere of the state and wider society".

Social workers together with other formal and informal helping professionals position themselves as people with skill sets that aim to assist clients who are experiencing perceived or lived problem situations (Egan, 2010; Sheafor & Horejsi, 2010). Helping and problem-solving work hand in hand. The process of helping is an outcome of a challenge being experienced (Egan, 2010). "We have yet to find ways of making sure that our children develop what most consider to be essential life skills such as problem management,

opportunity identification and development, sensible decision making, and the skills of interpersonal relating” (Egan, 2010, p. 9).

The sphere of the household according to Giddens (1993) is the family; who is the primary socialisation agency for any child. The makeup and dynamic of any family may vary depending on the social and contextual position of the family. The various “patterns of childrearing and discipline” affect the “divergences between the outlooks of children, adolescents and the parental generation” (Giddens, 1993, p. 77). The interception of social work in relation to the child, its family unit, school and other forms of socialisation; is of particular interest in this study (Giddens, 1993).

Social work occupies spaces between the those who have access to resources and those who don't. Social work “evolves through new relations between the law, social security, medicine and the school” (Parton & Kirk, 2010, p. 25). Social work addresses concerns around enabling, liberation and empowerment. Furthermore, the profession of social work is concerned with representing the law of the state and simultaneously the interests of wider society (Cunningham & Cunningham, 2014; Parton & Kirk, 2010). Nevertheless, exposure to the effects of structural impressions, forces one to question whether or not the most marginalised children's rights are being addressed, and whether the mandate for ECD is evidently being realised (Parton & Kirk, 2010).

3.3 SOCIAL WORK, CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

3.3.1 SOCIAL WORK

Social work is concerned with the discipline of performing particular aims of sustained functioning, that is associated with social exchanges. Potgieter (1998) identifies the purposes and functions of social work practice and processes. The identification of the purposes and functions of social work practice assists in the clarification of the nature and characteristics of the professional practice.

According to Potgieter (1998), the *purpose* of social work are unpacked as the following: protecting and caring for the vulnerable and marginalised population groups in society; enhancing the coping and problem-solving skills of individuals as a means to enhance their capacity and social functioning in society; the prevention of dysfunction through early

identification, prevention and promotion of human potential; lobbying for the resources which promote access and inclusion of all people; the promotion of equality, equity and social justice; the evaluation and proactive development of more realistic and relatable social policies, legal frameworks and programmes, and then finally the upholding of the social work practice through keeping the integrity of the profession through development and education.

The *functions* come as a result of applying the purpose of social work; and through this the following things may affectively be achieved: “Caring and Protection”, “Healing and Restoration”, “Prevention and Education”, “Resource Management”, “Social Justice and Equity”, “Policy Programme Development” and “Professional Education Training and Practice Development” (Potgieter, 1998, p. 28).

Egan (2010) broadens an insight into the holistic functioning of an individual and the developmental aspects which are necessary to achieve this, through identifying the relationship between functioning, levels of maturity, resilience, social intelligence and emotional intelligence. Potgieter (1998) skilfully identified the purpose and function of social work as a means to provide holistic insight into the lens through which social work is practiced and processed.

“Social work is a professional activity that utilises values, knowledge, skills and processes to focus on issues, needs and problems that arise from the interaction between individuals, families, groups, organisations and communities. It is a service sanctioned by society to improve the social functioning of people, to empower them and promote a mutually beneficial interaction between individual and society in order to improve the quality of life for everyone” (Potgieter, 1998, p. 35).

The Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2008, as cited in Egan, 2010, p. 11) state that “Some individuals have a greater capacity than others to carry out sophisticated information processing about emotions and emotional relevant stimuli and to use this information as a guide to thinking and behaviour”. Capacity within any individual, is something that is developed, and when the varying forms of stimuli combine, they may either result in a broad capacity for social, emotional, cultural and cognitive intelligence or the parallel (Potgieter, 1998; Egan 2010).

Observationally, it is assumed that identifying the variables of holistic development within the life of an individual is broad and complex. Just as the variables and make-up of individual development is evidently complex; so is the discipline, of social work. It does not take much for one to identify that discussing an entire profession of social work is a dynamic and broad one (Parton & Kirk, 2010). The purpose of discussing the profession at length is to provide contextual reference to the literature which is to follow.

Social works nature and the primary purposes, which it's meant to serve, is a considerably debated topic. The nature and purpose of social work practice, is itself very broad and requires critical enquiry for its development and growth, much like any area of practice (Parton & Kirk, 2010). The nature and purpose as concepts in social work practice operate in dynamic and diverse contexts, where they are interchangeable in different socio-historical and socio-political contexts. The contexts in which social work's nature and purpose finds itself, is within permeating dynamic environments and South Africa happens to be one of those environments (Parton & Kirk, 2010).

The role of the social worker in South Africa, is dynamic in nature and as a result, is political. There is a required amount of responsibility and systematic consideration that social workers need to participate in, in order to fulfil their professional scope of practice (Matli, 2008). Social workers operate within the space where they are the fabric between the people in society, and those that hold positions of political power in society (Matli, 2008; Stepney & Popple, 2008). The role that social workers play, is an integral role in communicating the needs of ordinary citizens. The work of social workers is focused on the holistic functioning of each individual. This professional work occurs in a country where policy and the realisation of rights and needs aren't sustainably being met, and their role provides insight into a greater issue of perpetual marginalisation and injustice (Matli, 2008). According to Matli (2008, p. 301) "social workers have to occupy positions of power" and that political activism should be a community strategy to try and curb any injustice, inequality or political failures faced. South Africa is not exempt from having to face up to the systemic marginalisation of its people nor its social workers. Professionally, social workers are mandated to have an informed say in the administrative development of welfare programmes, community development initiatives, social policy development and broad systematic initiatives aimed at realising holistic development (Matli, 2008; Midgley, & Livermore, 2005).

3.3.2 CHILD DEVELOPMENT

“Our responsibility toward children goes beyond the construction of buildings. It concerns the quality of education we offer to our children and our families” (Delrio, 2012). The quality of the life of the child and the environment within which they develop is of particular interest, when discussing child development. Heckman (2006 as cited in Egan, 2010, p. 11) discusses “the individual, social, and economic necessity of investing in disadvantaged children as early as possible and talks about the importance of both cognitive and noncognitive skills such as motivation, perseverance, and self-restraint. Social-emotional intelligence includes such noncognitive skills”.

Responding to a child’s needs both physically and emotionally is essential to the reciprocation of empathy from children to others and vice versa. ‘Empathy is the single greatest inhibitor of the development of propensity to violence. Empathy fails to develop when parents or prime carers fail to attune with their infants” (Hosking & Walsh, 2005, p. 20 as cited in Egan, 2010, p. 45). The unavailability of a parent or primary caregiver could lead to the child becoming aggressive, narcissistic, violent and emotionally unavailable which could lead to sociopathic interactions and inter-relations with immediate family, peers and even extended members of the community (Egan, 2010).

Child Development, as presented in the Theoretical Framework chapter of this dissertation refers to the varying factors that affect the development and growth of an individual child. Social work, takes these developmental theories and functions into account; while integrating the socio-historical, contextual and cultural factors (Hook, 2009).

Social work, child development and children’s rights; as interrelated concepts have a direct impact on the experiences that children may have. The presented literature intends to highlight the link between the interest of the child, the interest of the profession of social work, the varying socialisation units and the kind of impact which may result from divergent exposure (National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2013). The presented literature additionally intends to highlight the inherent capacity of each individual child, in the hope that if the social work profession understands the developmental needs of the child, that practice and legal framework(s) will be developed to suite those specific needs, rights and realities.

3.3.3 CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

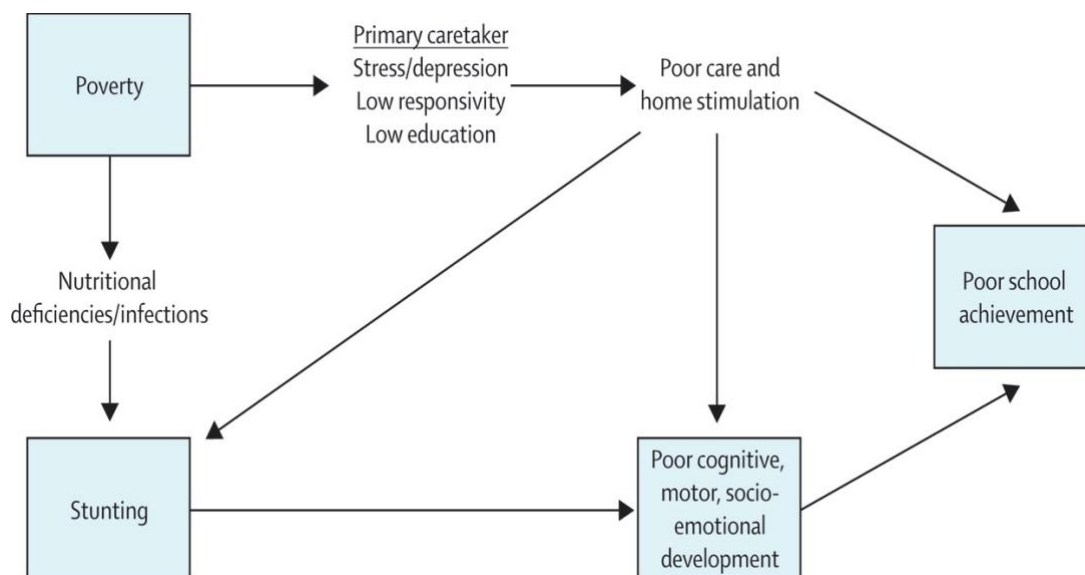
The Children's Act 38 of 2005 of South Africa, robustly states the rights and responsibilities of the child as well as the people and systems which have a direct or indirect impact on the child's life. An extremely apparent principle of the Children's Act (38 of 2005, p. 17), is the "Best Interest of the Child Standard". The Children's Act 38 of 2005 clearly states that the child's needs should be at the forefront of all decisions made regarding the child. The child needs to be treated with respect, dignity and autonomy; whilst protecting the child from any unjust discrimination that would further perpetuate being marginalised or underdeveloped. Part of achieving this mandate would be to ensure that there is an evident recognition for growth, development and stimulation, through creating an enabling environment, such as a partial care facility and/or a home facility which provides the space for play, safety, protection, nutrition and recognition of any disabilities or delayed development (The White Paper, 2005).

The underpinning outlook regarding the rights of the child, include achieving a child's full potential through ensuring a conducive environment, where physical health, mental alertness, social competence, emotional capacity and intellectual readiness for learning can be achieved (National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015). The realisation of full potential means that there needs to be a conscious and intentional effort made to curb and minimise the risk factors, which may prevent this, including poverty, malnutrition, physical and cognitive stunting, low birth-weight, transmittable and infectious diseases, environmental stressors and toxins, stress, exposure to unstable caregiving, neglect and psychosocial risks (National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015).

Freire and Ramos (1970, p. 48) provide a lens that is adaptable to how children can be viewed, where "the truth is, however, that the oppressed are not marginals, are not men living 'outside' society. They have always been inside – inside the structure which made them 'beings for others'. The word 'men' in this instance could be replaced with the word 'child'; in order to pronounce its applicability to the interest of the child, and each child's right to exist within society, without being excluded. "The solution is not to 'integrate' them into the structure of oppression, but to transform that structure so that they can become 'beings for themselves'" (Freire & Ramos, 1970, p. 48).

Figure 5

Relations between Poverty, Stunting, Child Development and School Achievement



Note. The Lancet series focuses on child development in developing countries. Through a three part series of documents, it showcases the relations between poverty, stunting, child development and school achievement (as reprinted in Bradley & Corwyn, 2002). From “Socioeconomic status and child development” by R. Bradley and R. Corwyn, 2002, *The Lancet: Child Development in Developing Countries*, 369 (9555) [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(07\)60032-4/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(07)60032-4/fulltext) . Copyright 2007 by The Lancet.

The Children’s Act 38 of 2005 of South Africa, is a densely packed legislative document, which provides insight into a lens, where the child is viewed as an active participant in their own life; alongside interrelated systems, which should holistically ensure the all-inclusive development of the child. The National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy (2015) reiterates the goal to ensure that there is action based work that is focused on the management and reversal of child related adversities, which can be done through identifying the contextual needs of children, whilst establishing proactive intervention strategies, to minimise and reverse the previously documented adversities experienced by children. The advancement of children’s rights being achieved in South Africa is central to the National Development Plan 2030 and Global Goals, which is further reiterated in the sentiment that

“a nation’s development depends on the extent to which it can unlock the potential human capital inherent within its very youngest population” (National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015, p. 18).

“The centrality of early childhood development to the national development agenda and the justification for increased public investments to secure early childhood development is premised on the recognition of the social returns of universal comprehensive early childhood development services – that it benefits not only the individual but all of society” (United Nations, 2013 as cited in the National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015, p. 20).

3.4 LEGAL DOCUMENTS THAT SHAPE THE ECD SECTOR

3.4.1 LEGAL DOCUMENTS

There are a number of documents, which continue to inform the development of the ECD sector. The National Integrated Plan, White Paper 5, the National Development Plan 2030, the 2063 Agenda for Africa, the South African Early Childhood Review 2016 and the National Integrated Policy for Early Childhood Development 2015 are just a few of the most recent documents that are being used within the sector. A fundamental role which social workers are meant to fulfil, would be to identify the stunted and significant areas of growth, and its impact related to the key documentation available to the country (Potgieter, 1998; Matli, 2008).

Based on the papers presented at the 2014 ECD Knowledge Building Seminar, there were key reflections from various professionals within the ECD sector which have informed the current discussions in the country. UNICEF contributes a considerable amount of knowledge to the sector on a universal scale; this is evident through their involvement with all the publications and organisations which they have partnered with (UNICEF, 2014). In addition, the Children’s Institute provides insightful annual reflections on children in South Africa, through the annual Child Gauge publication.

Samuels (2014) reflected upon the development in policy and legislation, specifically since 1994. She alluded to the notion that policy and legislation around Early Childhood Education and Development had been strewn and underdeveloped. She reflected on the nature of policy

in the quality of service delivery and intervention. “Since 2014 there is now a single integrated policy, which will enable us to be better coordinated in terms of early childhood development service delivery” (Samuels, 2014, p. 10). From no national curriculum in 1994, to the creation of the National Curriculum Framework for children from Birth to Four, and its actual rolling out to facilities through-out the country; there is evidential advancement. From minimal understanding of the objectives in this sector, to the development of interdisciplinary relationships between different professions; there is an undeniable reflection of progress within the sector (Social Development, 2015). Worthy relationships not only amongst intersectoral disciplines and departments; but more specifically the relationship between policy and the implementation of the mandate set out, is key if ECD is to be realised. A persistent challenge has been the scarcity of enough human and financial resources, as there has been no significant increase in either (Samuels, 2014).

Compliance issues, tied to resource and infrastructural issues continue to present equity and quality issues within the sector (Samuels, 2014; Lundlum, 2015). Equity cannot be realised if equality is not actively engaged with. Infrastructure and ECD service systems need to be scaled up in a detailed manner, not only locally but on a national scale, if equity is to be achieved in the ECD sector (Samuels, 2014; Lundlum, 2015).

To further facilitate the constructs and the realisation of equity, equality and the relationship between intersectional disciplines and departments; it is essential that advances in developmental studies are undertaken (Midgley & Livermore, 2005). Developmental studies are not limited to understanding policy development or intersectional coordination.

“By making pedagogical work both visible and subject to a democratic and open debate, pedagogical documentation provides the possibility for early childhood education to gain new prestige and legitimacy in society. Yet we cannot increase that legitimacy under contemporary conditions unless the costs of early childhood education are more closely linked in the minds of the public with the values it provides. A prerequisite for this is that educational practices and purposes must be made visible outside the domain of preschools and child-care centres; they must become part of public awareness and discourse” (Dahlberg, 2012, p. 226).

Social policy development, with social workers on the forefront is closely tied to the requirement for representation and overall community development. Development as a concept in South Africa, is largely focused on ensuring that there is a realisation of economic development (Matli, 2008). Economic development is largely associated with the investment in ECD. It is within this train of thought and connection, that we cannot continue to neglect the importance of having social workers represent the actual needs of the individuals through policy, which this ‘development’ is meant to serve (Midgley, & Livermore, 2005).

3.4.2 EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT [ECD] SECTOR

The ECD sector seemingly has the overarching view that the best interests of the child and their life-long development needs to be prioritized (The South African Child Review, 2017). There has been a considerable amount of economic investment in the ECD sector. The national treasury report states that there has been a total of R935.6 billion invested into the varying areas, which would have an impact on the ECD sector. The total amount of money spent on ECD is unclear, but the function of spending on learning and culture is R396.4 billion, health R229.7 billion and social development R309.5 billion. These amounts reflect the proposed amounts to be utilised in the financial year 2020/21 (National Treasury, 2020). “Aside from debt-service costs, the fastest-growing areas of expenditure are economic development and community development. Slow growth in learning and culture, health, and peace and security reflects the effect of proposed wage bill reductions on these labour-intensive functions” (National Treasury, 2020, p. 8-9).

The figures presented above represent the total amount proposed to be spent in the areas of health, education and social development, which are spheres of state institutions that have committed to the development of ECD (National Treasury, 2020). There are no apparent percentages in the budget which indicate how much has been allocated specifically to ECD, however, a total of R15 per day has been allocated to children, who are beneficiaries at funded partial care facilities in the ECD sector (South African Child Gauge, 2013). The National Treasury indicates that the country is moving toward achieving the National Development Plan 2030 (hereafter referred to as NDP) of having quality ECD as a priority, through ensuring that there is a successful migration of ECD from the Department of Social Development to the Department of Basic Education (National Treasury, 2020).

The ECD sector, is an organised system that operates with the intention of regulating the quality of the holistic development of the child through the varying multidisciplinary team in the sector. The multidisciplinary team in ECD is comprised of a myriad of practitioners and role players which include: governmental and non-governmental professionals, primary health care professionals, ECD practitioners, educational psychologists, ECD curriculum developers, ECD social workers, social policy writers, nutritionists etc. to name a few. ECD, as an area of focus, brings young children and their holistic developmental needs to attention. ECD is not just a mere concept, it rests on advances which aim to create and further the holistic functioning and development of every child (The South African Child Review, 2017). Over a million children are born in South Africa each year, and each child has to have their human rights met (The South African Child Review, 2017).

The Children's Act 38 of 2005 together with the National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy (2015) outline all of the stakeholders who are involved in the mandate set out to achieve the goals set out in the ECD sector. There have been a considerable amount of changes, challenges and gains in the sector, since ECD's prioritisation (Samuels, 2014). Having one integrated plan of action has created the framework of major areas of focus in the ECD sector. ECD may be confused with Early Childhood Education (hereinafter referred to as ECE) and although ECE is a major part of realising the goals in ECD, ECD is not only limited to ECE (South African Child Gauge, 2013).

Primary health care, prenatal and antenatal care together with parenting support and parental capacity development are some of the primary services, which should be made available under the 'ECD' services provided (South African Child Gauge, 2013; National Development Plan, 2012). The essential services package within ECD spoken about in a former part of this literature review, can further be unpacked as accessing the service to free-birth registration, health care, food and nutritional support and protection from any form of injustice, neglect or abuse (National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015). Primary health care professionals together with clinical practitioners, inclusive of clinical social workers are at the forefront of ensuring that these services are delivered and that they are accessed, in order to achieve equity, equality and development (National Integrated Childhood Development Policy, 2015).

ECE through an educational or recreational programme located at a partial care facility and/or a non-centre based site; are additional services that should be accessed as a part of

the essential service package in ECD (National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015; The Children's Act 38. of 2005). Educators, practitioners, programme developers, environmental and infrastructural management teams are some of the key role players, in ensuring that these services are accessed and monitored (National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015). Part of realising the vision of quality in the ECD sector is ensuring that there is support, training and the professionalisation of ECD practitioners. Thorough monitoring and development of further learning institutions targeted at empowering and enabling ECD practitioners will aid holistic socio-economic and ECD developmental goals (National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015). Ensuring the quality of services requires that there is constant planning, intervention and monitoring of all of the varying elements that contribute to the realisation of quality ECD in the sector (National Development Plan, 2012).

There are evidential plans, intervention strategies and monitoring efforts in place to assist in the progression and realisation of quality ECD in South Africa (National Development Plan, 2012). Acknowledging all of the participants, stakeholders, resources, risks and socio-historical challenges are key to understanding that there have been improvements since the year 1994 in South Africa (National Development Plan, 2012).

3. 5 CLINICAL CHILD DEVELOPMENT: EPIGENETICS AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

3.5 1 CLINICAL CHILD DEVELOPMENT

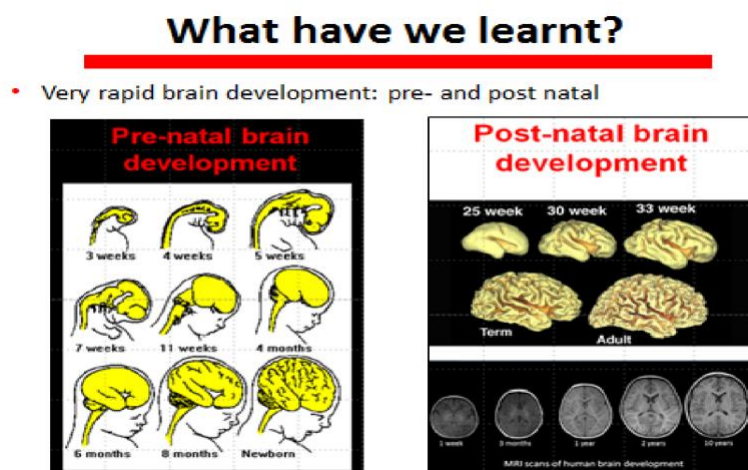
Developmental studies not only speak toward the realisation of equity and equality on a sociological level of integration; but developmental studies additionally engage with clinical and psychological means of development (Hook, 2009). Inclusive accessing of services requires a collaborative effort that accounts for all developmental stages of growth, support and capacity for transformation. To understand clinical development, the core of physical, psychological, sociological, historical and political contributing factors need to be understood. Inclusive and accessible services mean that children with stunted growth, disabilities or any challenges in development are accounted for and assisted (Samuels, 2014; National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015).

The differences and exceptions in development are affected by the adaption and assimilation of developmental and genetic sequences (Morgan, 2014; Richter, 2014). Trauma, life tasks, ego responses, attachment, relationality and relationships are but a few examples of what could affect the changing of sequences in genes (Hook, 2009). These sequences may become permanent; however, sequences have the capacity to be reversible. This finding is imperative in understanding child development, vulnerability as well as the holistic functioning of individuals (Hook, 2009). Epigenetics is a concept which focuses on the physical make-up and changes in DNA. Human genes are made of sequences and these sequences are the underlying thread in physiological development. Genetic sequences are not limited to physiology or physiological inheritance; but are additionally influenced by psychological, emotional, social, cultural and historical influences and experiences (Hook, 2009; Morgan, 2014). Genes can physically change their sequence depending on what an individual is exposed to (Morgan, 2014; Richter, 2014).

One method of measuring and tracking sequences is through tracking and measuring brain development with electroencephalography. Electroencephalography is one of the tangible advances in the medical field. Richter (2014, p. 11) identifies “sensory path ways and the neurophysiological basis of both cognition and language are established by age two”. Richter (2014) drew particular attention to the advances in measuring brain growth, structure, development and function of a baby’s brain; additionally focusing on the rapidness of brain development within the *first 1000 days of life*.

Figure 6

Brain Development



Note. This figure was presented as a part of the Early Childhood Development Knowledge Building Seminar in 2014. The figure displays anticipated stages of brain development during the pre- and post-natal development of individuals. Reprinted from Early Childhood Development Knowledge Building Seminar 2014: ECD@20 (p. 12) by UNICEF, 2014 <https://www.unicef.org/southafrica/media/1686/file/ZAF-early-childhood-development-knowledge-building-seminar-2014.pdf> . Copyright 2014 by UNICEF.

Electroencephalography is able to identify emotional functioning; and through this, it's been established that neglect or adverse emotional and or physical environments have severe effects on the developing brain (Richter, 2014). Some effects are irreversible; or in effect have long-term chronic implications, such as anxiety and depression which affects holistic emotional well-being. This contributes to the susceptibility to vulnerability and engagement in risky behaviour patterns (Richter, 2014). Preventing adverse emotional functioning and susceptibility to vulnerability, means engaging with the purpose of ECD; and holistically focusing on the factors that affect the growth and development of 'the child' (Sheafor & Horejsi, 2010). Focusing on the child, not in isolation, but within a system of contextual contributing factors, such as:

- “Pregnancy
- The first 1000 days of life
- Parenting
- Early child care including child minding
- Nutrition
- Public awareness” (Richter, 2014, p.14)

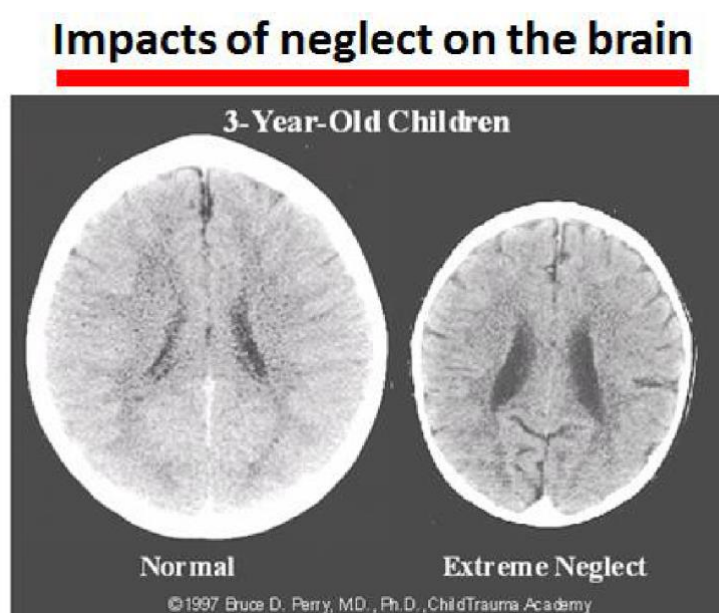
Morgan (2014, p.14) emphasises that when bearing in mind the impact of development and the contributing factors on development that we need to think of it “in terms of genes x epigenetics x development x evolution x environment interactions”. Epigenetics refers to the way environment regulates genes, often irreversibly. Morgan, (2014, p.16) argues “The physiological effort required to change brain structure and function increases as neuroplasticity decreases. There are sensitive periods during which certain conditions need to be right for optimal development”.

There is a window of sensitivity, which takes place in the earliest stages of life. The capacity for brain development, sensory pathway creation, cognition, language, emotional control, habitual responses and peer social skills; is either effectively developed, thus decreasing the need to ‘remedy’ long term vulnerabilities; or, the lack of brain capacity development further perpetuates the need to remedy long-term high risk behaviour (Morgan, 2014). Vulnerability and exposure to cyclical learning barriers, poverty and dysfunction leads to long-term high-risk behaviour (Morgan, 2014).

The brain one develops in early childhood can affect the capacity of brain development. Although neuroplasticity allows the early brain to compensate for changes, it is the concept of the brain’s capacity, that is in question, when it is compromised (Morgan, 2014). The ability to successfully cope within one’s environment is highly pre-determined by the exposure or lack of exposure and propensity to this very environment. Morgan (2014) emphasises the idea of self-regulation, internal and external to the individual. Parental involvement and investment, attachment to primary care-givers and extended family, nutrition, shelter, exposure to institutions such as school and religion (but not limited to) mutually aid the regulation and development of brain capacity development (or lack thereof), resilience (or the lack thereof) and self-efficiency (Giddens, 1993; Watts, Cockcroft & Duncan, 2009).

Figure 7

Impact of Neglect on the Brain



Note. This figure displays the comparison between a normal three year old brain and that of an extremely neglected brain. The size and structure of the brain is displayed as a means to showcase the difference between a brain that is stimulated and one that is not. Reprinted from Early Childhood Development Knowledge Building Seminar 2014: ECD@20 (p. 12) by UNICEF, 2014 <https://www.unicef.org/southafrica/media/1686/file/ZAF-early-childhood-development-knowledge-building-seminar-2014.pdf> Copyright 2014 by UNICEF.

The interacting systems related to brain capacity development and regulation could be mirrored into sociological interacting systems. Interacting systems which impact on the child include the family, education systems, religious institutions, the political regulation of the country as well as the global state of affairs. These are loosely mentioned systems; which have an immense impact on the lived experience of children. Hegemonic discourse and critical theory additionally add to the complexity and development of how children experience the world, and how the world then later on, develops (Smith, 2015).

These loosely mentioned systems are stated with the intention of providing a holistic overview of where the child finds themselves and the differential contexts which add to their development (Smith, 2015). Systemic inequalities further impact on the child's experience; and the role of the interdisciplinary professionals, is aimed at understanding the nature of the developmental outcomes which affect and effect the child's experience (Cockcroft, 2009; Mooney, 2009). With understanding the nature of the developmental outcomes the interdisciplinary professionals further aid and facilitate the intervention strategies required to enhance the lives of the child and allow for the realisation of quality ECD (Cockcroft, 2009; Mooney, 2009).

3.6 SYSTEMIC INEQUALITIES WITHIN THE ECD SECTOR

There has been a sweeping focus on the risks that children are exposed to pre-birth and post-birth in this literature review. The hegemonic discourse regarding inequalities are inescapable because it has shaped a great amount of thought related to the development of intervention strategies as well as the policies related to realising equality in ECD. Critical thought is necessary when trying to reimagine what solutions to bring to systematic inequality (Ledwith, 2001).

“Inclusion of differences improves the general educational context in yet another way. By developing learning experiences with children, we cannot and do not want to look at final products or results. We try to keep our attention on the motivation and the strategies that a child puts in to action to reach those results” (Soncini, 2012, p. 204).

Systemic inequalities are a result of multiple interacting relations. “Regardless of temporal or geographical location; educational systems and goals remain dependent upon political structures, socially constructed hierarchies, gender role beliefs, religious beliefs, economics, and access to educational opportunities” (Cohen, 2010; Cummings 1997 as cited in Ludlum, 2015, p. 5). The White Paper 5 (2001, p. 13) “confirmed the longer lasting effects of the apartheid government’s policy of racial discrimination in ECD provision for birth to five year olds” which has resulted in a multitude of issues related to equality and the urgent need to redress the long-lasting effects of the issues faced within the sector.

The redress of issues can only be achieved if there is a dialogue and interaction with the subject area and the tangible reflection of the children affected by issues faced within the sector. The distribution and attendance of ECD facilities across the country can be seen with these statistics presented in White Paper 5. “The proposition of holistic equity as a new analytical category arises from research that underscores the recognized need to emphasize the interdependence of the standards, as well as with the larger systemic inequalities and processes outside of educational systems that impact them” (Ludlum, 2015, p. 6).

Structural impressions in South Africa include having to acknowledge that the highest mortality rate occurs with the population group aged birth to four years of age. Developmental stunting is in large part due to under-nutrition, neglect, exposure to abuse and violence, minimal stimulation and minimal positive reinforcement (National Development Plan, 2013). Despite social welfare programmes being implemented in the country, systemic inequality and injustice have widespread effects (Patel, 2005).

Challenges for the helping professionals change as the time and contexts change. Challenges are broad and not limited to philosophical challenges, scientific challenges, genetic challenges, neuroscientific challenges and value-based challenges. The challenges listed

above include a critical overview of the varying ways in which helping professionals face. Epistemology as a philosophical construct exemplifies a perspective that envisages the notion: “To oversimplify complex issues for the sake of illustration, one philosophical assumption is that what we and our clients know is an objective reality separate from ourselves” (Egan, 2010, p. 15).

Based on the study and school census in Campinas, Cunha et al., (2009) as cited in Ludlum, 2015, p. 16-17) argue that “social segregation and ‘spatial differences’, as part of a relationship between school infrastructure, school academic achievement, and the neighbourhoods in which schools are located”, have a significant impact even when variables such as the education level and socioeconomic status of parents are controlled for.

The above mentioned systemic challenges need to be understood in relation to the studies and numbers of all children affected by systemic challenges. The details of these challenges need to be collected and documented through monitoring and evaluation practitioners. Social workers need statistical tools of analysis, uncovered by monitoring and evaluation practitioners in order to understand the impact and the extent of the issues faced within the sector; and the contributing factors which affect and have an influence on children. The role of social work professionals include understanding disablement, poverty, ill health and a lack of education; the associated assumed factors which leads to marginalisation, exclusion, isolation and extortion (Cunningham & Cunningham, 2014).

The above-mentioned sections in the literature review intend to create a broad framework of linked discourse. Discourse which links the holistic functioning and challenges experienced by the individual child within the ECD sector, as well as the practice of the ECD social worker within these varying contexts of understanding the individual child. The identification of the perceived roles and experiences of an ECD social worker, according to related professionals.

3.7 CONCLUSION

The social work profession has a clear mandate of roles, responsibilities and aims in the micro, meso and macro spectrum of operation and positionality. The social work profession itself, intercepts at points where there is a need for development and positive change, in the

functioning of the lives of individuals and the community or nation at large. This chapter focused on the links between the definition of ECD, the social work profession, the role of the ECD social worker, child development and children's rights. The chapter was coordinated in this way to provide context and an understanding for the deepened links between the ECD legal documents and understanding the ECD sector. Just as the former part of the literature review provided insight for the latter, the expanded discussion under clinical child development and systemic inequalities provides insight into the nuanced and particular aspects which affects the lives of children.

The variables brought to the fore are aspects which the ECD social worker needs to take into account, in order to perform informed roles within the sector. The ECD sector has made progress in its developmental mission and with the further development and shaping of the sector. With the broad spectrum of goals attached to ECD sector development, it has contributed to the ambiguous roles set out for the ECD social worker. It is only within understanding the attributes which constitute the ECD sector that roles can be determined, planned for and implemented accordingly. Despite the legal framework, policy development and national goals for the rights of the child, the melting pot of adverse and systemic challenges make it difficult to implement all of the necessary strategies aimed toward quality education and realising the best quality of life for the child.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter serves to outline the study's research methodology, this will be done through a detailed description of the methods used during the planning, collecting, analysing and the presentation of the data (Boru, 2018).

The presentation of the research question followed by the secondary objectives form the opening topics of this chapter. The research paradigm, approach and design, subsequently follow. The constructivist research paradigm and qualitative approach details form the explorative and descriptive nature of the study (Boru, 2018; Mertens, 2012). There is an evidential need for qualitative research to be conducted on the ECD sector, as there is a limited amount of literature available about the ECD social worker and their role within the ECD sector. The research design utilised was phenomenological, which promoted the evidential need for qualitative research and the documentation thereof (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). There is a symbiotic relationship between the phenomenological research design and the qualitative research approach, which will distinctly be explained in this dissertation chapter. The underlying aim of this exchange seeks to display and reflect the most accurate lived realities and developed perceptions of ECD social workers in a democratic South Africa.

The latter part of this chapter will then focus on the sample collection and the specific reasons for the purposive sample population (Boru, 2018). Following the sample collection specifics, is the identification and description of the research instrument, the method of data collection and the method of data analysis. Finally; this chapter in the dissertation locates the trustworthiness, limitations and ethical considerations applied in this study, as well as the chapter's summary (De Vos et al., 2011).

4.2 AIM OF THE STUDY

The study aimed to investigate and identify phenomena which had not yet been explored; in order to capture comprehensive descriptions of the role of ECD social workers, in the democratic South Africa. Understanding the context where these specific social workers find

themselves in, is imperative to offering new insights to South Africa and to the Social Work profession (Carey, 2013).

4.3 THE SECONDARY OBJECTIVES

The secondary objectives of the study were as follows:

1. To identify the role of an ECD social worker.
2. To determine the role of the ECD social worker in a democratic South Africa, based on the perceptions of educators, social policy writers, social workers and academics in the ECD sector.
3. To explore the relationship between the role of an ECD social worker and the veracity of the democratic South Africa, based on the perceptions of educators, social policy writers, social workers and academics in the ECD sector.
4. To determine the perceived influence ECD social workers have, within the educational and social development system in a democratic South Africa.

4.4 RESEARCH PARADIGM, APPROACH AND DESIGN

The research paradigm most applicable to this study is the constructivist paradigm. The philosophy of constructivism implies that it is qualitative in nature and asserts that subjective experiences held within contexts are created (Delpont & Fouche, 2011; Shaw, 2010). Constructivism centres the construction of experiences from the sample population in the study (Delpont & Fouche, 2011). The researcher facilitated the process of sharing of knowledge and reflection of the co-created experiences within the ECD sector, through the interviewing process (Mertens, 2012). The research process was inductive and intended to create a central focus on the exploration and understanding of socially specific roles, socio-historical events and systems, socio-political systems, interdisciplinary interaction and the influence that these varying roles have had within a the specific context of the ECD sector (Giddens, 2006). Qualitative research seeks to investigate, explore and capture subjective experiences and formulated perceptions, based on lived realities. Through this research process the researcher intentionally followed the necessary steps to ensure that the paradigm, approach and design allowed for open and flexible sharing of experiences and expertise (Pickering et al., 2020).

The most appropriate research design for this study was phenomenology as it focuses on reflecting the most accurate description of the lived experiences of the sample population (otherwise referred to as related professionals). The description of a “person’s conscious experience of everyday life and social action” is the aim of phenomenological studies (Fouche & Schurink, 2011, p. 316). The qualitative approach and phenomenological research design create an almost symbiotic relationship in this study as it aims to display a relationship between subjective experiences and phenomena that reflects reality (Pickering et al., 2020; De Vos et al., 2011). The philosophy of constructivism additionally aids the symbiotic relationship between the interpreted subjective phenomena (Shaw, 2010).

The purpose and relevance of phenomenology in this study relies on the fact that the researcher sought to reflect a valid presentation of social reality, particular phenomena related to social relationships and to one’s lived experiences (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). The perceptions and experiences of ECD related professionals as well as social workers were intentionally explored in this study (Fouche & Schurink, 2011). Each of the 17 participants in this study has had a history of working within the ECD sector for a minimum of five years and they have comparably experienced either working directly or indirectly with an ECD social worker.

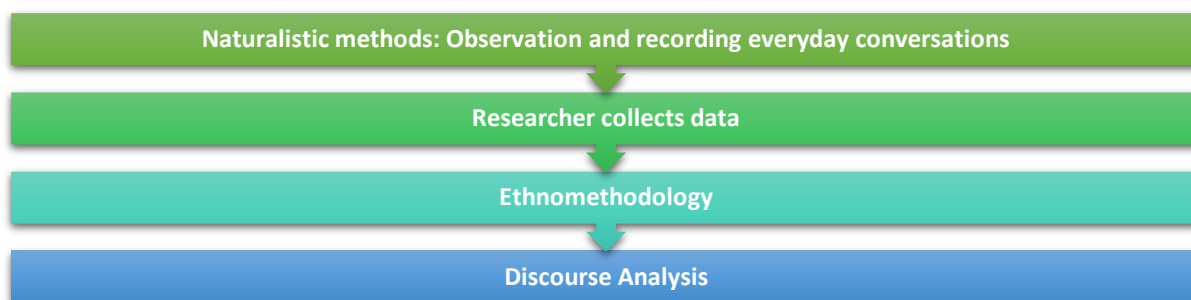
Phenomena in this study reflectively exhibits exposure to ECD and the context in which ECD related professionals experience themselves, as well as the ECD social worker. Phenomena is captured through observation and interactions between people. It is specifically captured through the co-created knowledge shared between the related professionals and analysed by the researcher (Brown, 2006; Pickering et al., 2020). Through the means of direct or indirect practice the related professionals have formed particular cultural, organisational, value-based, context specific and child development focused perspectives (Fouche & Schurink, 2011; Williams, 2021). The researcher collected data through these direct and indirect observations and interactions. Williams (2021, p. 367 as cited in Liddell and Scott, 1940) argues that although the core definition of phenomenology has been developed from the Greek definition ‘phainomenon’, which means ‘that which appears’ or loosely translated as that which ‘comes to light’; that it is imperative to take into account the ambiguity of realities experienced and the divergencies which result from varying realities. The researcher has deliberated that a primary responsibility toward the research methodology would as far as possible, ensure that ambiguity and divergencies are

accounted for (Fouche & Schurink, 2011; Pickering et al., 2020). The account of information gathered requires an analysis, to strengthen and reveal the subsequent areas of question.

Below is a summary of the phenomenological research process:

Figure 8

Empirical Process Flow of the Phenomenological Research Process



Note. The figure displays the empirical process flow of the phenomenological research process undertaken in this study, where the researcher summarised the phenomenological research process through interpreting the steps discussed by Carey (2013).

4.5 UNIT OF ANALYSIS

4.5.1 POPULATION

ECD practitioners, social workers, academics and social policy writers within the ECD sector, formed the sample population of the study. The sample population had been identified with the intention to explore the perceptions of professionals who have contributed and/or been exposed to ECD social workers (De Vos et al., 2011; Strydom, 2011). The inquiry into the perceptions and experiences, from this sample population, was an attempt to identify a clearer understanding of the lived experiences regarding the related professionals (Neuman, 2000). According to Fouche and Schurink (2011, p. 325) “successful execution of the design and data gathering is usually determined by the accessibility of the setting and the researcher’s ability to build up and maintain relationships and agreement with gatekeepers”. Gatekeepers within this study refer to the related professionals, who have shared lived experiences within the ECD context.

4.5.2 SAMPLE

The sample population in the study form a total of 17 individual professionals. The 17 participants in the study are made up of five ECD practitioners, five social workers, three academics and four social policy writers, listed in a table below:

Table 1

Sample Population Breakdown

<i>Sample Population Category of Related Professionals</i>	<i>No. of Related Professionals per Sample Population Category</i>
<i>ECD Practitioners</i>	5
<i>Social Workers</i>	5
<i>Academics</i>	3
<i>Social Policy Writers</i>	4

Note. The left column lists each sample population category according to the specific related professional group identified for the purpose of the study and its relation to the ECD social worker and the ECD sector. The right column lists the number of related professionals identified and interviewed per sample population category.

The ECD practitioners are professionals that have either managed or been employed as ECD practitioners (otherwise known as educators) at ECD facilities. The social workers, are registered with the South African Council for Social Service Professionals (hereinafter referred to as SACSSP), employed at DSD and operate as social workers within the ECD unit. The participating academics are professionals that have worked in varying fields related to ECD. Examples of the fields that they have worked in, include: foundation phase education, health, persons with disability and generic social work practice. The academics identified in the study have circumstantially recognised the academic need to participate in ECD related work, where their work is dedicated to informing policy and academic knowledge production related to the ECD sector. Finally the social policy writers, are informants of social policy work related to the ECD sector. The social policy writers are additionally advocates for accessible and inclusive ECD services in South Africa (Sheafor & Horesji, 2010; Zastrow, 2010).

The inclusionary and exclusionary factors of the study refined the purposive nature of the study. All of the related professionals who agreed to be a part of the research process had the requirement of a minimum of five years working experience and exposure to the ECD sector and were required to geographically be located in Gauteng, South Africa. In addition the participants were required to be between 25 and 65 years of age.

The exclusionary criteria relied on the inclusionary factors used to determine the most credible professionals. The criteria relied on the validity of their qualification, the professional's area of specialisation and its intersectoral relation to the ECD sector. The sample population had no gender, race or politically-specific requirement (De Vos et al., 2011; Hilton, 2015). The number years of experience within the ECD sector, however, predetermined that there were particular age margins, that excluded individuals younger than age 26. The sample population identified, collectively identify as being role players in the progression of the ECD sector, while subsequently identifying with the best interest of the child. Most importantly, the purpose of identifying the sample population as related professionals, served to identify each related professional's role in relation to the ECD social worker.

4.5.3 SAMPLING PROCEDURES

The sampling method used was purposive and the choice of the participants added to the representation of the population and the ECD sector (Neuman, 2000). Purposive sampling is a non-probability form of sampling, consequently representation cannot be guaranteed, it was therefore key for the researcher to find typical and divergent data (Neuman, 2000; Strydom & Delport, 2011; Strydom, 2011). Inclusionary and exclusionary factors were purposefully used to determine the participants identified.

A total sample of 20 professionals were identified through privately approaching professionals at national ECD community forums and through searching through online professional profiles created for professionals at academic and state institutions. Contact with these professionals were made via email, telephonically, personally and/or with the use of necessary and correct ethical controls. Of these 20 professionals identified and contacted,

a total of 17 professionals were interviewed, when saturation occurred (Fouche & Schurink, 2011).

Once the participants were identified and contacted, the necessary appendices like the Semi-Structured Interview Schedule (Appendix A), the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix C), the Consent Form for the Participation in the Study (Appendix D) and the Consent Form for the Audio Taping of the Interview (Appendix E) were emailed to the participants. The participants gave their consent to participate in the study via email with their electronic signatures on each document and/or gave their consent to participate in the study verbally, once they had received the initial contact email, or if they had indicated that the researcher could establish initial contact with them telephonically (Strydom, 2011).

4.6 RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

The research instrument used in this study was a semi-structured interview schedule (Appendix A), together with an audio recorder for the interviews. Due to the COVID-19 health regulations and protocols set in place, the health and safety regulations impacted the face-to-face interviews (Department of Health, 2020). The result of this impact meant that the interviews were telephonic. Each telephonic interview was audio recorded. The interview schedule included a variety of open-ended unprejudiced questions (Greef, 2011). Because this ‘measurement technique’ involves in-depth, subjective interviews with participants it can be considered a valid indicator of the phenomenon –the role of an ECD social worker, in the democratic South Africa– being explored and described (De Vos et al, 2011; Brown, 2006).

The research instrument was used to enable and enhance the internal validity, general credibility and trustworthiness of the research. The extent to which others perceive the study’s findings to be convincing and worth taking seriously, was informed by the use of the research instrument (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). The audio taping of the interviews allowed for the documentation and true reflections of questions and answers given. In addition, ethical and professional conduct were practiced and used as guiding instruments to assist the researcher in collecting data without harming the participants involved in the research process (Greef, 2011; Strydom, 2011).

4.7 PRE-TEST RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

The basis of a pre-tested research instrument serves the purpose of enhancing the reliability as well as the validity of the study. The pre-test research instrument aims to enhance the study, through identifying any errors, bias and ambiguity, and immediately rectifying anything which would have affected the study (Maxwell, 1998; Strydom & Delport, 2011). The single participant identified, allowed for the success of the determination of the data collected.

The participant was required to meet the inclusive criteria identified in the sample selection as previously stated (Hilton, 2015). The individual identified and interviewed in the pre-test phase of the research study did not form part of the sample of participants in the main study but merely served the role of enhancing the development of the features and content reliability of the instrument. Secondly, the application of the pre-test instrument provided evidence to estimate how long it would take to complete the data collection per participant (Greef, 2011; Strydom & Delport, 2011). Additional value of the pre-test was to orientate the researcher to the study, whilst attempting to delineate valuable information and help refine the efficiency of the interview schedule (Hilton, 2015). It was found that the duration of the interview would be 40 to 70 minutes in total and that there would have to be a secure telephonic connectivity line, ensuring that all of the relevant questions and answers were completed.

Finally, the ethical considerations and divergency management which need to be implemented in the main study, were found to be applicable, relevant and managed during the pre-test research stage (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010).

4.8 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

This study included in-depth, semi-structured interviews with the research participants, which were roughly 40 to 75 minutes in duration. In-depth, semi-structured interviews allowed greater scope for flexibility as well as clearly directed focus; consequently, guiding the interview, as well as allowing the researcher to remove or clarify any ambiguous information gathered (Neuman, 2000; Strydom, 2011; Boru, 2018). The observation of verbal behaviour, such as tone, expressiveness and responsiveness are some of the strengths of this method of data collection. Interviews could take place outside of previously suggested

working hours, which allowed for flexibility and saved on the monetary costs involved in conducting or attending face to face interviews. Data was collected over a period of five weeks. The period of time utilised for data collection was due to the availability of the participants.

A limitation of this form of data collection are the number of questions that were required to be answered and the time spent collecting the data. The time spent collecting data was substantial. Additional limitations of the study included, being unable to observe non-verbal cues and being unable to control the infrequent connectivity issues experienced during two of the telephonic interviews. Researcher bias is an added limitation and can affect the credibility of the data collected; however, having an awareness of this as a researcher can decrease the effects of researcher bias (Maxwell, 1998). Although the qualitative approach provides great insight, from a small sample population, data collected can be lengthy as well as dense, the 17 participants in the study provided layered and varying perspectives (Strydom, 2011). The data was collected using audio recordings, which was then transcribed and analysed, through the means of the six-phased thematic content analysis method (Clarke & Braun, 2013).

4.9 METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

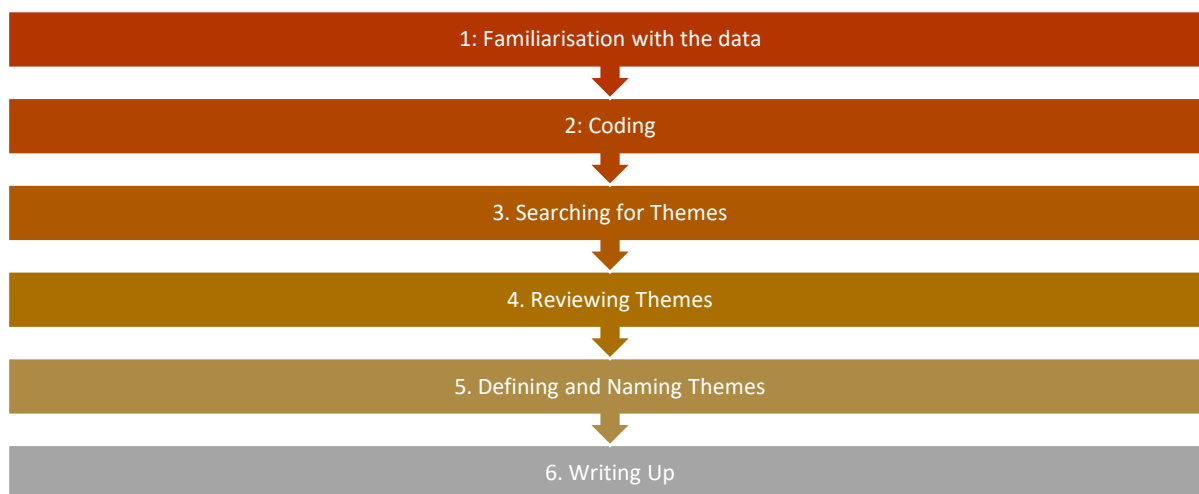
The data analysis for the study used was thematic content analysis. This is a form of analysis which served to support the findings. The phenomenological research design together with thematic content analysis was used to further support the authentication of the data discovered (Charmaz, 2006; Brown, 2006).

Thematic content analysis is used to discover recurring themes from the data presented. This particular method of analysis is based on the practice of categorising and progressively sorting out findings into ‘main themes’ and then sub-themes (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). The organising and analysing of qualitative data is done “through inductive reasoning”, thereafter sorting and categorising the findings (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010, p. 152). Being sensitive to the contextual, cultural, social behaviour and social issues experienced, is imperative for a successful research (Strydom, 2011). The thematic content analysis model presents the capacity to take into account the findings related to social work, social policy changes, child development, the ECD sector and the scope of the educational environment in South Africa,

as it allows for the presentation of the categorisation of themes. Findings can be used to “generate debate and draw conclusions from” (Carey, 2013, p. 35). Additional findings emerged from raw data findings, observations and social meanings; which speak to generalisation and theory development (Carey, 2013; Creswell, 2009).

Clarke and Braun (2013) developed a six phase thematic analysis model, which serves to meet a wide range of theoretical perspectives and research interests. This model is suitable for this research study as it accounts for the phenomena and experiences in a range of contexts presented by the participants through the data collection process. This model additionally supports the use and analysis of data, interviews, transcripts, large or small data sets and theoretically based studies (Clarke & Braun, 2013). Furthermore this model should be viewed as a flexible and recursive process (Clarke & Braun, 2013).

The implementation of the six phase thematic analysis model in this study began with the collection and familiarisation of the data. Each interview provided greater insight into the perspectives of how ECD social workers are viewed within the ECD sector. The perspectives were not limited to the ECD social workers, but included the scope of each related profession and the ECD sector as a whole. The familiarisation with the data became apparent with each interview and saturation became evident (Clarke & Braun, 2013). The sequence of interview questions in the semi-structured interview schedule allowed for the grouping of questions. A result of the grouping of questions allowed for coding to take place. Through the transcribing process, each grouping was colour coded and created the opportunity for the searching of themes to take place (Clarke & Braun, 2013). Ten major themes were identified as a result of the coding process. The themes were reviewed and then further refined. The refinement process of the ten major themes, resulted in the grouping of six themes. The themes were defined and named accordingly. The analysis of the data was then presented through writing in the fifth and sixth chapters, known as the findings, the conclusions and the recommendations (Clarke & Braun, 2013).

Figure 9*The Six Phases of Thematic Analysis*

Note. The figure displays the six phases of thematic analysis used in this study. This figure was developed by Clarke and Braun (2006 as cited in Clarke & Braun , 2013, p. 2) and adapted for the utilisation by the researcher for utilisation and summarised purposes in this study.

The primary and secondary objectives of the study suggest that there are varying areas of interest which need to be addressed and unpacked, through the research process. This model allowed for the aim and secondary objectives to be unearthed. The perceived influence of the ECD social worker and the roles fulfilled by the ECD were unearthed through this process. Due to the nature of exploring the various perceptions and experiences of related professionals; it is imperative that the data collection and the analysis process is organised in a way that will promote the most authentic findings (De Vos et al., 2011; Creswell, 2009).

4.10 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY

The relevance of trustworthiness in this study serves to aid true lived experiences of the sample population. Trustworthiness in this study entails acknowledging that bias and subjectivity are indisputable factors which will be encountered. The research is required to strategically reflect the findings from the social phenomena found (Pickering et al., 2020). Divergencies in the data are bound to present themselves, as the literature shows that there are no clear examples of the phenomena in question. Ideally the researcher should be

engaged, as opposed to disconnected or too objective. Engaging with each participant encourages the enhancement of participation and responses from the participants (Strydom, 2011). Trustworthiness subsequently added to the knowledge building in the ECD sector as well as the knowledge and practice of social work within ECD and a democratic South Africa.

Shenton (2004, p. 64) discusses the design of Guba's (1981) model being based on identifying four elements of trustworthiness that are relevant to both quantitative and qualitative studies: "a) credibility (in preference to internal validity); b) transferability (in preference to external validity/generalisability); c) dependability (in preference to reliability); d) confirmability (in preference to objectivity)". The purposive sampling type that was used in this study additionally served to make the most of the specificity of the data. Trustworthiness resides in ensuring sufficient evidence for the carrying out of ethical research. Credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability are interdependent elements of trustworthiness (Babbie & Mouton, 2011; Carey, 2013).

The credibility (validity) of this study means that procedures of multiple observations, getting a peer's opinion who is in a "similar status colleague" who is outside the context, collecting different information from multiple sources as a means of triangulation and persistently observing the context and the processes which occur within the context (Babbie & Mouton, 2011, p. 277). Triangulation was achieved while collecting data from similar status colleagues including the ECD practitioners, social workers, academics and social policy writers in the ECD sector. The method of data collection and analysis revealed similar findings, which provided deeper insight into the trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, generalisability, reliability and confirmability of the data (Heale & Forbes, 2013; Shenton, 2004).

Heale and Forbes (2013, p. 1) state that "methodological triangulation is the most common type of triangulation. Studies that used triangulation may include two or more sets of data collection using the same methodology". Triangulation, used to avoid biases, is used to confirm implied findings. Triangulation objectively increases the reliability of the study as it reveals similar findings; thus, merging findings into a convergent or a single phenomenon (Heale & Forbes, 2013). This study revealed that the perceptions of related professionals experienced similar experiences within the ECD sector in Gauteng, South Africa.

Triangulation was therefore an evident outcome of the data collected (Heale & Forbes, 2013).

Enough detail is essential in determining transferability (generalisability). According to The National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy (2015) ECD is a growing area of focus and a recent priority and a developmental goal in South African education. This statement is not only limited to a policy document, but evidently presented itself through the experiences described through the data collected. The transferability of data collected was consistent with the identified themes. The dependability (reliability) of the research process has the essential requirement of being guided by the ethical and professional conduct (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). The trustworthiness of the study resides in the transferability found in the thick description of the data collected and analysed. The transferability of information will not only add to practice, but it will potentially add to formulating key documentation and policy within the ECD sector (Strydom & Delpont, 2011). Dependability relies on credibility and transparency. Dependability is the evidence which is used; and applied in comparable contexts or with comparable respondents; evidence sought and found needs to be “internally coherent” in order to be deemed trustworthy (Babbie & Mouton, 2011, p. 278).

Confirmability (objectivity) was as far as possible achieved through the use of a reflective journal which served to account for and minimise any researcher bias. The reflective journal (Appendix B) was used over the duration of the research process. The researcher’s intentions together with their influences and potential biases were required to be accounted for. This was done through auditing the researcher’s thoughts and “predispositions” through the reflective journal (Shenton, 2004, p. 72).

“The concept of confirmability is the qualitative investigators comparable concern to objectivity. Here steps must be taken to help ensure as far as possible that the work’s findings are the result of the experiences and ideas of the informants, rather than the characteristics and preferences of the researcher” (Shenton, 2004, p. 72).

The pre-test instrument together with member checking and a reflective journal kept by the researcher additionally strengthened the reliability and validity of the study in this regard (Strydom & Delpont, 2011). A reflective journal served to bring transparency and

confirmability to the study which provided a platform to bring all potential discrepancies to the surface (Ortlipp, 2008).

4.11 LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Limitations are unavoidable in any research study; however, reducing the extent of the limitations should be one of the researcher's primary intentions. Delivering the most accurate reflections through the necessary research methodological processes is essential in ensuring trustworthiness, through-out the study (Creswell, 2009). It was an essential for the researcher to understand what was expected and ensure that the guidelines for this dissertation were accomplished. Giddens (1993, p. 17) indicates that "sometimes behaviour undertaken with a particular aim in view actually has consequences that *prevent* the achievement of that aim". Human action often reveals that there is "intended and unintended consequences" for the ways in which systems or actions unfold (Giddens, 1993, p. 16). The environment in which humans find themselves, is often guided by the unfolding of these intended and unintended consequences experienced within operating systems (Giddens, 1993). Not only were human actions augmented through this study, but the ethical considerations and dissertation requirements were accounted for as well.

Furthermore, the following limitations were envisaged: the capturing of data and methods of probing have time constraints which limit the credibility and dependability of the data collected (Legard, Keegan & Ward 2003). The research method's major challenge is that it requires an interpretive approach (Neuman, 2000). If the participants aren't in their natural setting, then this could also deepen the limitations of the study (Strydom, 2011). Conducting interviews telephonically may have had an influence on the responsiveness and level of comfort experienced by the participants, during the interview. The overall sense of comfort may have differed according to each participant's needs (Strydom, 2011). The consequences of COVID-19 and the appropriate measures taken through the process of social distancing, resulted in interviews being limited to telephonic interviews (Department of Health, 2020).

Context plays a significant role in how the study is carried out and how the participants contribute. It is imperative that the researcher does not limit the study by overlooking the holistic contributing factors, informed by the context, as further outlined in the Literature Review (Carey, 2013).

4.12 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

It is the responsibility of the researcher to account for anything which may compromise the trustworthiness of the study. This leans enormously on accounting for the ethical considerations such as: voluntary participation, seeking informed consent, being aware of any generalisations, negative reactivity, divergencies, bias or any form of discrimination which would lead the study being unreliable and threatening to the participants involved (Carey, 2013; Hugman, 2013). Maintaining professional conduct; and remaining objective throughout the research process is an expected form of ethical accountability, together with authenticity, all round positive regard and a non-judgmental attitude. It is the responsibility of the researcher to treat all moral principles required for the study, equally, in order to avoid ethical dilemmas (Strydom, 2011; Hugman, 2013).

Ethical consideration is essential in realising unbiased reporting, documentation and researching through the in-depth and semi-structured interviews (Sheafor & Horesji, 2010). The applicability of ethical considerations in this study serves to guarantee as far as possible authentic outcomes, with minimal harm posed to the participants (Neuman, 2000). Additional considerations were the inclusion of university ethical clearance (protocol number H19/11/67); ethical clearance from the Department of Social Development (Appendix G) and ethical clearance from the Department of Basic Education (Appendix H). Ethical clearance from each of the respective ethical board was granted for this study on the basis that transparency and the research process be adhered to.

It was important that ethical consent was gained from the Department of Social Development as the social workers and social policy writers have a mandate to uphold the necessary ethical norms and standards provided by the Department of Social Development. Similarly, the ECD practitioners and some of the academics identified for the purpose of this study, have to uphold the necessary mandate and employment regulations from the Department of Basic Education. Furthermore, necessary protocols were additionally required and set out by the University of the Witwatersrand (protocol number H19/11/67), to ensure that the researcher representing the tertiary institution, maintained the institutional mandate.

4.12.1 VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

It was the responsibility of the researcher to explain the expectations, roles and rights of the participants of the study, to the participants of the study. An example of this, was explaining that participation in the study is completely voluntary and that there would be no negative consequences for choosing to withdraw from the study (Babbie & Mouton, 2011). There should be no form of any unjustifiable or implied deprivation for the refusal to participate (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). The necessary information sharing, through the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Forms took place before the data collection process convened, this was done via email and telephonically, to ensure that the ethical considerations were upheld (Strydom, 2011; Hugman, 2013). The appendices were utilised and deliberated on to ensure that voluntary participation and consent were assured and gained ethically (Wits, 2020). Subsequently, participation from all of the participants was voluntary and well informed.

4.12.2 INFORMED CONSENT

Participants need to be well informed about the content, intentions and the dissemination of information gathered from the study. It is from this point that participants make well informed decisions about their voluntary participation. Participants have the right to reconsider their participation in the study and however tedious this may seem, it should be communicated transparently (Strydom & Delport, 2011; Hugman, 2013). Furthermore, the participants could withdraw from the study at any point with no negative consequences (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Creating an open and safe environment for transparent communication to take place regarding consent, was extremely important to the researcher. It is the primary duty of the researcher not only to conduct research; but also, to protect the well-being of the participants involved in the study (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

4.12.3 ANONYMITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

It is the researcher's obligation is to guarantee privacy and the confidentiality of the participants input. The researcher had the responsibility to ensure that all information shared is protected. An additional responsibility of the researcher is to ensure that the participant feels no sense of harm or distress, in any physical or mental form (Fouche & Schurink, 2011). Anonymity and confidentiality as objectives serve to attempt as a mechanism to maximise benefits of the research. The implementation of anonymity includes the

negotiation of risks through the means of assessing possible ways in which a participant may be harmed. This assessment is an essential part in the planning phase of the research (Fouche & Schurink, 2011). The participants in this study were given pseudonyms to ensure their anonymity in the study. Furthermore, there was a further discussion between the researcher and participant related to the use of verbatim quotes used for the report and data kept for further publications, if required. Any violation of anonymity would imply that, not only is there an increase in bias, but also an increase in the potential maltreatment, which could have long-term negative effects on the participant. Being sensitive and safeguarding the participant is therefore imperative to producing ethically sound research (Strydom, 2011).

Confidentiality was ensured through the safe keeping of data during and after the collection process. While privacy infers the component of “personal privacy”, “confidentiality can be viewed as a continuation of privacy, which refers to agreements between persons that limit others’ access to private information” (Strydom, 2011, p. 119). Safe keeping the data is a means to ensure that there is no breach in the ethical principle of confidentiality being served. The continued safe keeping of the data will be implemented through storing the electronic records and audio-recordings for a period of two years, on a protected computer with a password. The physical copies of the data collected will be stored in a locked cabinet for a period of six years. Again, the further implementation of confidentiality was upheld through the means of assigning pseudonyms to the participants, as well as through individualising each telephonic interview and not mentioning any specific details about any other participant in the study (Strydom, 2011). Misleading participants through withholding information or intentionally deceiving participants is unethical and could cause unforeseen harm to the participant (Strydom, 2011; Hugman, 2013).

4.13 SUMMARY

This chapter aimed to reflect as accurately as possible the necessary steps undertaken to achieve the required planning, collecting, analysing and the presentation of the data (Brown, 2006). The theoretical framework and literature review provided contextual support that informed the choice of research methodology presented in this chapter of the dissertation. The data collected depicts descriptive perceptions of the role of the ECD social worker and the state of the ECD sector, within the Gauteng Province in South Africa. The findings in this study are limited to 17 individuals and therefore cannot be assumed generalisations, of

all related professionals in Gauteng. The findings additionally indicate that with more resources, time and data, that this study could probe the perceptions and/or experiences experienced by related professionals across the country (Greef, 2011).

This chapter methodically addressed the necessary components of a research methodology. The order of components were discussed thoroughly and presented throughout the chapter. The initial components discussed were: introduction to research methodology, the aim and secondary objectives. The aim and secondary objectives of this study were centred on the exploration and identification of the lived experiences of the related professionals identified in the ECD sector specifically within the democratic South Africa . The research paradigm embedded in the philosophy of constructivism, the qualitative approach of research and the phenomenological research design, were then discussed. (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). This was then followed by discussing the population, the sample, the sample strategy. The purposive sampling method and the specific details pertaining to the information shared with the participants, were deliberated. The discussion of the research instrument (semi-structured interview schedule) and the pre-test research instrument led to the deliberation of the data collection method and the analysis of data. The latter part of the research methodology chapter further reflected the trustworthiness of the study, the identification of limitations and finally the ethical considerations (Greef, 2011; Strydom, 2011; Strydom & Schurink, 2011; Delport, Fouche & Schurink, 2011).

Through the intentional exploration and deliberation of the research methodology, the literature review and theoretical framework chapters'; knowledge and philosophies related to the individual child and professions related to the profession of social work were similarly discovered. Together; these chapters have provided a guided thought process and insight into the final analysis of data processed, collected and analysed. The chapter which follows serves to present the data collected, processed, analysed and collated as the findings of the research study.

CHAPTER FIVE

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter serves to present and deliberate the analysis of the data, found through the data collection process. The findings presented in this chapter follow the relevant concepts and methods discussed in the Research Methodology chapter of this dissertation. The central question to this study concerning the perceptions of the role of the ECD social worker within a democratic South Africa, has been maintained through-out the study and will continue to be central to this dissertation chapter. Due to the level of engagement required in this study, there may be limitations on how in-depth the researcher was able to engage with the subject matter and the participants of the study. Despite the apparent limitations in the study, there are many positive and reliable components that have aided the development and reflection of the data collected, analysed and presented.

The participant profiles are initially presented in this chapter. The participant profiles provide insight into the intentional identification of the participants and their related roles within the ECD sector as well as their relation to the ECD social worker. Following the presentation of the participant profiles are the findings from the interviews. The findings will critically be discussed in an arranged order. The major themes and sub-themes discovered through the six phased thematic content analysis presented will thoroughly be unpacked and supported with quotes from the participants, as well as academic literature.

As discovered, there are 10 major themes in this study. The themes realised are presented in a table which will follow the presentation of the participant profiles. The 10 major themes can be summarised as: the current time, roles and experiences of the ECD social worker, the current experience of the ECD sector in Gauteng and the democratic South Africa, interactions within the ECD sector and with social workers, the socio-historical changes, knowledge and philosophies experienced amongst the related professionals in the education sector. The findings from this study presented in fascinating ways of intersection, where different experiences and perceptions consequently informed the attitudes, perceptions and assumptions of the participants in the study. Finally, the summative thoughts on the findings will be deliberated on and will be presented in the latter part of this chapter.

5.2 PRESENTATION OF PARTICIPANT PROFILES

The selected participants, known as related professionals for this study were purposefully identified. The ECD practitioners, social workers, academics and social policy writers profile outlines are carefully presented in this subsection of this dissertation. Although it would be really interesting to review each participant's individual case history within ECD and their contribution to the sector, focusing on each participant, may result in this study being extremely long winded.

The presentation of results were a result of having specific requirements for this study. Each participant in the study has been given a pseudonym to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. Trustworthiness and ethical considerations were at the forefront of collecting data from the related professionals in this study (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). The analysed results and summaries of each category of selected participants are discussed below.

5.2.1. *THE ECD PRACTITIONER*

The ECD practitioners in this study go by the pseudonyms **Emma, Ilsa, Pheladi, Louise and Terry**. The ECD practitioner in this context relates to the practitioner that has implemented child care, provided direct input into the lives of the children and the families of the children that have attended specific ECD facilities. Not only has the safety and health aspects of the facility been ensured by practitioners, but subsequently the educational and programme implementation aspects, to the best of their ability, have been fulfilled by the practitioners as well. The five practitioners in this study have managed or worked at ECD facilities for periods of time ranging from 7 to 52 years. Practitioners feel as though they have grown within the sector during the time of their practice. They describe their experience in various ways, which is reflective of the nature of their exposure and context within the ECD sector.

There has subsequently been a build-on the requirements and understanding of administrative and business aspects of ECD practice. Administrative and business aspects cannot be separated from the practice of providing ECD services, because there is a socio-economic need and a resource dependency required to provide ECD services (Midgley, 1995). ECD practitioners are recipients of salaries and in exchange they provide a plethora

of services to the children, the parents, the community and their employer. The services provided include, but are not limited to, educational, social, developmental, communicative, nutritional and spiritual. **Emma, Ilsa, Pheladi and Louise** have been working within facilities for years on end, facing systemic issues and recurring obstacles within the ECD sector. The difficulties faced have been due to the varying registration, administrative and political changes in the sector and particularly because they are women of colour (Midgley, 1995). These women have often found themselves on the receiving end of animosity because they are *women* and *women of colour*. **Terry** on the other hand, is a white male that has made strides within the education sector. He has had advantages because of the privilege that comes with being a white male. **Terry** used this privilege to advance the ECD sector and assist fellow ECD practitioners in the sector. Admittingly, **Terry** has observed many of the advantages that white business owners in the education sector received during the apartheid regime. Although he is aware that circumstances have changed for everyone, irrespective of race and or gender, he has observed that independent schools in the ECD sector are still in the position to access many resources available, like clinical and advanced educational services (Midgley & Livermore, 2005; Patel, 2005). Not the same can be said about previously disadvantaged community based ECD services like those that have employed and/or been managed by **Emma, Ilsa, Pheladi and Louise**.

5.2.2 THE SOCIAL WORKER

The social worker in this context relates to the social workers that have either worked within the ECD sector, or social workers that have been in contact with ECD social workers. The social workers within this context are limited to operating within DSD. The pseudonyms of the social workers in this study are **Penny, Sam, Kelly, Melody and Raven**. The social workers that participated in this study have been executing their respective social work responsibilities for a period of 5 to 8 years. They are arguably long-standing and dedicated to their roles as social workers, despite the ambiguity within their roles in the ECD sector and particularly within a State institution.

Penny, Kelly and Raven have collectively expressed their experiences within the Department of Social Development as being ambiguous and unclear. **Sam** and **Melody** have expressed that they are still positive and hopeful about their role at DSD, despite sporadic moments of disillusionment. The shared sentiments amongst the social workers interviewed,

were that there are three main functions of this role in the ECD unit, and that other roles fulfilled or identified are roles that they wish they could execute. The three identified functions are: monitoring, registration and quality assurance of ECD facilities, in the Johannesburg Region of Gauteng. The ideal roles include being proactive advocates for children's rights, proactive child protection experts, while being expert communicators and holistic organisational social work professionals which is additionally echoed through the work of Sowers and Sowers (2007) and, Stepney and Popple (2008).

5.2.3 THE ACADEMIC

The academics were given the pseudonyms **Maxine**, **Justine** and **Carmen**. The three academics identified in this study have worked in various sectors in the country, but their compounding experience ranges for a period of 5 to 56 years. The participating academics in this study have provided critical thought to the function and functioning of the ECD sector. The academics in this context have moreover worked directly or indirectly with the ECD social workers in the ECD sector. They are not the most loved professionals in the community forums, as a result of their questioning nature. Other related professionals suggest that academics are out of touch with reality. These sentiments are shared with academics like Patel (2005) and Ife (2008). Whatever the perception of academics in the country are; there is a considerable amount of contributions that academics have added to the shaping of the ECD sector. In addition, academics have supplemented the scope, development and transformation of the scholarly make-up of the ECD sector (Jarolmen, 2014).

Maxine and **Justine** are academics in the ECD sector, they have accumulated experiences within the Non-Profit Organisation (NPO) spaces, related to education, training and development. Their experiences have subsequently had a direct influence in the ECD sector. Education, health and parental planning are major themes in the history of these academics careers. Although the age range of the participants are significant in difference, there are significant similarities in the academic space shared. **Carmen** has worked within the 'persons with disabilities' sector for a few years and the reasoning for her interest in academic knowledge building, comes from her passion in making the ECD inclusive and accessible to children with learning, behavioural and/or physical barriers .

5.2.4 THE SOCIAL POLICY WRITER

The social policy writer is often informed by an academic background, however, in the context of this study, the social policy writers' have been working tirelessly, in an attempt to carve out a way for the ECD sector to thrive and achieve the goals so meticulously set out in children's rights related policies (The National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015). The four participants, who identify as social policy writers and / or contribute to policies, go by the pseudonyms: **Shelly, Naledi, Ginny and Annie**. These women have dedicated time periods of 8 to 24 years of their professional careers to the realisation of innovative and systemic problem solving for the ECD sector.

Shelly perceives her own role as a means to ensure that there is compliance and sustainable ways to provide holistic services to the children. Shelly additionally wants to ensure that the running of the business, is not forgotten, but maintained and improved. **Naledi** has been working for 24 years in the area of policy writing and development, she has made strides in the ECD sector. **Naledi** has overseen ECD policy development and has created a path for the ECD sector at DSD. **Ginny and Annie**, although disparate in the number of years within the sector, 8 and 18 years, they believe in the power of innovation and the need to advance the current methods of interaction with people on the ground. They have used their respective platforms to advance thoughts on ECD services through ensuring that policy issues and ECD service information are made available to the public on large scales (The National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015).

5.3 PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS: INTERVIEW FINDINGS

The subsequent interview results in this section of this dissertation chapter follow the sequence and structure of the in-depth semi-structured interview schedule. The theoretical frameworks applied together with the major themes presented in the literature review are successive themes and links to the study and analysed results. The related professionals in this study initiate the results through discussing their experiences and first hand exposure to the ECD sector. The in-depth semi-structured interview schedule reveals the following sequence of themes:

Table 2*Major Themes Found Through the Data Analysis Process*

Theme no.	Major Theme
1	Time and experience within the ECD sector: A two-fold experience
2	The current experience of the ECD social worker: ambiguity and influence
3	The ideal social worker: A reimagined role
4	The current experience of the ECD sector in Gauteng and the democratic South Africa
5	Interactions with the Department of Basic Education
6	Interactions within the ECD sector and with social workers: The effects
7	Historical knowledge and philosophies experienced as social workers and related professionals in the education sector
8	Social welfare environment and the overall historical overview of the changes experienced within the sector
9	The policy documents: Reliability explored
10	The interdepartmental shift from DSD to DBE: The uncertainty

Note. The table reveals the ten major themes that were unearthed through the process of the six phased thematic analysis by Clarke and Braun (2013). The major themes were unearthed through the process of interviewing the related professionals. Their experiences and first hand exposure to the ECD sector formed the perceptions which are collated in this table above.

5.3.1 TIME AND EXPERIENCE WITHIN THE ECD SECTOR: A TWO-FOLD EXPERIENCE

The time spent within the varying professional careers of the related professional reveal that within the time spectrums of 5 to 56 years of practice, that there have been moments of reward but similarly moments of drawn out disillusionment. The point of operation has revealed itself in the act of remembering that the professional passion driven work is centred in the core value and the best quality of life for the child (South African Child Gauge, 2013). The related professionals in the ECD sector collectively revealed that there is apparent

underlying frustration, but that this is coupled with wanting to maintain job security, as well as securing a position in a sector that has much potential for growth and development (Midgley & Livermore, 2005).

The ECD practitioners in the sector have experienced different conditions over the duration of their practice. They have found that creating a space for the care of children to be difficult, but rewarding. **Ilsa** states: *I looked around in my community and saw the need to establish an ECD centre. Pheladi expresses that getting support and doing things according to the expectations of the government can be difficult, especially in the areas that were previously disadvantaged.* ECD practitioners suggest that there is a perpetual running around in order to get consistent contact and guidance from the necessary state departments and government officials. There is also fear associated with the government officials that conduct visits at the ECD facility, because the government officials give commands which are not necessarily helping guidelines that could assist the ECD practitioners and their contribution to the functioning of the facility. **Pheladi** says, *Practitioners understand their role as being nurturers. They make sure that the children learn, to take care of them, educate them and play a role of a motherly role or parent to a child. Then the role of the principal is to oversee that the role of the practitioner is done well and also build a relationship with the children.*

Louise has been working in the ECD sector as a ECD practitioner for 26 years now, and has only just recently been in contact with a social worker. She has no comparable source of information on the roles that the ECD social worker should be fulfilling, which is vital information for this study, because many ECD owners or practitioners do not know that there are social workers that can be accessed by the community. **Louise** is thankful for the informational and emotional support provided by the social worker as well as the financial support from DSD. When engaging in helping relationships, as a social worker, it is important that the client receives communication or message that “will have a beneficial effect on the client’s thinking, feelings, or behaviour” (Sheafor & Horesji, 2010, p. 146). **Louise** expresses that, *since registering with the Department of Social Development and then being funded by them, I’ve found them and the social worker assigned to me, to be very supportive. All I want to know is whether or not I’m doing the right thing and for my social worker to guide me. So far, it has been a good experience.*

ECD social workers in the field of ECD social work; and those who work within the ECD unit at DSD feel as though their role and place within the sector is ambiguous and unclear. Although they would like to provide more visible access to their clients or members in the community, their access is dependent on bureaucratic and managerial systems (Higy, Haberkorn, Pope & Gilmore, 2012). **Melody** says, *I took a long time to learn and try to understand the government structure.* **Kelly** furthers a sentiment by saying that *it was disheartening to know that even after a period four years, that I feel like I'm still finding my feet in the ECD unit. My expectations and what was happening, did not match.* **Penny** has noted that *for the past five years it's been very demotivating. I ended up questioning my role there because there is no platform or room for growth. This destroys the unit. It destroys individuals and breaks us and the unit at large. You end up not seeing the point of having an ECD sector if it's not going to be respected.* There is a clear indication that there is no respect, recognition or leadership present. The lack of support results in a lot of frustration amongst the related professionals in the field.

With little to no confidence in the role that needs to be fulfilled as a social worker that works within the ECD unit of DSD; it is worrying to the participants that they are still expected to execute their duties. **Sam** expressed that *you need to provide information and resources to individuals who have limited resources. So it's been difficult because one has to compromise when it comes to limited resources provided by DSD.*

Justine suggests that *one has to build on experience within the sector and integrate ones professional and personal exposure and experience to see the potential and need for further development.* This perception presents a two-fold experience where interrelated experiences and forms of exposure are co-dependent and/or are prerequisites for understanding and establishing the core reasoning for practicing in one's respective profession. *The impact and priority status of ECD may be found where the beauty of intersectoral ideas pop up and where I see what's being mirrored in my practice, states Justine.* **Justine** wonders; *I have from time to time queried if there is a future for me in the sector? But I love this country and I'm invested in the sector.* For **Justine**, being an academic and a champion for ECD is something that just 'fits'. The same can be said for the other academics in the sector. **Maxine** states that *the sector has changed drastically*, she has had a hand in the development of the curriculum presented at university level related to early childhood education and that of the foundation phase in education. She's noted that *the department of Social Development was*

focused on the social welfare of the children and not initially the programme development required for the practice of early education. There is a resounding dedication that exists. The sentiments expressed by the participants in the study reveal that academics and policy writers have an immense desire to create opportunities for change, but they are critical of each other and themselves, they feel as though there is a disconnection between intent, policy and the lived experiences of people at the grass root level (Parton & Kirk, 2010; Midgley & Livermore, 2005).

Naledi states that *there has been a lot of strides in the area of policy. Supervisors sabotage their subordinates within the social work profession, this has been a constant experience through-out history. But we work our butts off. I can tell you that we work our butts off.* It's clear that there are many efforts in creating change and an impact within the sector. The social policy developers and contributors have expressed that this sector is young in comparison to primary, secondary and tertiary education sectors (National Development Plan, 2012). Starting from scratch has been no easy feat. Change is inherently presented as a challenge, and if there has been no blueprint, then where does one begin? **Annie** emotively presents a question, *so we didn't have any kind of consortium addressing the issues around the millions of hungry little mouths. There was no concern before and so the National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy addresses this now. The previous political body would not concern themselves at all about this kind of policy.*

The time and experiences within the ECD sector are evidently quite complex. Despite the commonality of the related professionals working toward a presumed common goal, there are layered experiences and perceptions formed amongst the participants (South African Child Gauge, 2013).

5.3.2 THE CURRENT EXPERIENCE OF THE ECD SOCIAL WORKER: AMBIGUITY AND IMPACT

The current experience of the ECD social worker, may be just as indistinct to the social workers working within the ECD unit as they are for the related professionals who have interacted with ECD social workers.

Penny very emotively reflected that *the roles are very much unclear. We are contracted as generic social workers. There should be some clauses that speak to different units at the Department of Social Development. It should be clear from the titles, functions and roles. Management additionally don't really know what their or your roles are. You are just told what to do. You get commands in fact without clarity and guidance about our roles and that's the most frustrating part. Older social workers in the ECD unit seem to have just accepted their situation and are just doing their job, because they get salaries and that's all but I've never met somebody where I work, who is really, really fulfilled and who's motivated and provides excellent services due to the lack of understanding of our roles. Quote on the lack of motivation* There is a common outlook with other social work participants, where although **Melody** views herself as a case manager, that provides support and advocacy to the children at the ECD centre, she too is frustrated with the amount of time and indistinguishable roles spent within the ECD unit (Egan, 2010).

Despite being extremely demotivated, **Penny** listed what she knows her role to be, perhaps philosophical in thought, but what is noteworthy in the policies, is what she has attempted to practice in the ECD unit. *As ECD social workers our main focus is on the holistic development of the child, meaning that our roles are very critical professions that are needed in a child's life especially at grassroots level. We don't only focus on the physical wellbeing or educational wellbeing of the child, we focus on the whole round wellbeing of the child. Physical, mental, community and socio-economic wellbeing,* says **Penny**.

Sam shares similar sentiments. **Sam** has reflected his frustrations related to the ECD unit and the ambiguity related to the role of the ECD social worker. **Sam** notes that *three to six year olds are the focus, like the Education Department are focused on the Grade R's. But we know nothing about the curriculum and yet we are mandated to ensure that these children are being educated. I think that we are meant to be working together. We need each other to achieve effective services. There has been no change, no roles have changed. There has just been monitoring and evaluation. Although I think that policies have changed. ECD social workers focus more on the care and we should also be focusing on the programme. Its affected our monitoring tool and the work of social workers as well. We also focus on registrations and on other areas that don't concern us, but concern other departments, like monitoring and evaluation, like health and safety departments.*

ECD practitioners like **Pheladi, Emma, Louise** and **Ilsa** share similar sentiments regarding ECD social workers where, ECD social workers offer guidance and support in ways of guidance regarding safety, health, security and nutrition, but this is coupled with a perspective where there is discontent (Zastrow, 2010). **Pheladi** says, *the practitioners don't really have to worry or concern themselves about the social worker. They say that the social worker will just complain about the mats being dirty, or didn't mark the register or didn't clean, or didn't cook the right food on the menu. It seems as if the principal is the only one that has to fix the issues raised. But the ECD facility functions as an system of connected functions.*

The academics and social policy writers in this study added to the theme of ambiguity and incoherent roles executed by ECD social workers. To support this theme the academics and social policy writers make the example of the monitoring and quality assurance guidance tool, utilised by the ECD social worker. **Shelly** states that *social workers are interested in a checklist or a form and not actually interested in the content. Social workers are report writers. I have noticed that social workers are not in the ECD centres, they are placed at district and municipal levels. Their monitoring is inconsistent and there is a lack of connection with the people on the ground. If anything they make the lives of their clients really difficult. But this is systematic and it only takes social workers who want to go the extra mile to prove anything different to me, but there are only very few social workers who are willing to go the extra mile.*

Annie furthers this indication by stating that *social workers are seen as the people who police the ECD centres and surely this is not their role. This is how they are seen and definitely not clear.* **Carmen** says, *I noticed that the work we do is not necessarily linked to disability and ECD, but is generally about ECD and children who don't have behavioural issues and disabilities. There is a mental shift from what I wanted to do, and what we actually do, which I have no control over.* With the need for professionals to make mental shifts to the reality, there is a need to investigate. **Carmen** implies that ECD services are not inclusive or accessible and that she has had to compromise on her vision of her role, because the sector may not have the capacity to regulate or advance the inclusion of children with behavioural issues and disabilities. The presented data exhibits that the role of the social worker is not in line with the roles which they are meant to be executing. The ideal role would be that, "Developmental social work integrates multidimensional theories that emphasise the

interconnections between human problems, life situations and social conditions” (Patel, 2005, p. 214).

Maxine expressed that *social workers are overburdened*. It can only be assumed that this has led to the current reaction and attitude of ECD social workers. Any individual that operates within unclear bounds, reflects their powerlessness in similar ways, just like a child would, with an insecure attachment style (Hook, 2009). **Kelly** states that *working within an NPO brought a different experience. A completely different experience from the government and I think that maybe that’s why I was a little uncomfortable and confused as to what was required or expected with social work, especially in the ECD unit*. **Naledi** reiterates the idea of powerlessness through the sentiment that *supervisors sabotage their subordinates within the social work profession, this has been a constant experience through-out history*. **Naledi** expands on this by stating that *many of the frustrations are self-imposed*. **Naledi** makes it a point to refer to the Children’s Act 38 of 2005 and states that *the roles should be clearly indicated*. But she comparatively states that *the legal part of the Department is not fulfilling their duty, in terms of safeguarding and highlighting the necessary roles, laws and bi-laws required by different parts of the country and municipal regions*.

While it is clear that the related professionals have not had very positive experiences with social workers in the ECD sector, overall, there has not been great experiences within the sector either. Although there are very few moments of understanding the role of the ECD social worker, it is met with questioning, whether the influence and purpose of the social worker is positive or helpful at all (Sheafor & Horesji, 2010). The confusion and the ambiguity of the role of the ECD social worker led to re-imagining what the role of the ECD social worker should be, rather than what it currently is (National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015).

5.3.3 THE IDEAL ECD SOCIAL WORKER: A REIMAGINED ROLE

The ideal social worker as a theme displays the reoccurring thought pattern that concerns the reimagining of the role of the ECD social worker. The related professionals presented a number of similar perceptions and findings.

The central component of the findings related to the ideal ECD social worker, is that the child is the central focus of operation, together with improved professional proficiencies (The National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015). With accessibility and inclusivity, **Naledi** states that, *we are meant to do comprehensive child protection services; we have to unpack it. When we talk of comprehensive, what do you mean?* **Ginny** infers that *making services accessible, to provide support, to assist with food security and refer children with disabilities to the right people. Ideally it would be wonderful if the ECD social worker was an expert about ECD and could impart knowledge systems onto the people working in the field.*

Shelly asserts that *social workers should come into schools, assess what children are learning, assess their portfolio of evidence and the practitioners lesson plans. Through this they may be able to pick up on any learning difficulties, barriers or children doing exceptionally. They may even be able to pick up on abuse or anything happening in these children's homes. They should be looking at the overall environment, not only now in terms of hygiene, cleanliness or access to water, but rather the holistic functioning of the environment.* **Shelly** argues that *this is not happening in reality, despite the intentions of what monitoring should look like according to the Children's Act.*

Carmen poses that *the role of the social worker would be to be proactive enough that social workers should be placed at ECD centres to play their role, to advocate for resources and to be available when the needs are needed. They shouldn't be placed at district or municipal levels. That's a silent role. You cannot sufficiently monitor what you are not a part of everyday. That's what I would want to change, because automatically our roles would change. You would be able to observe these kids and create interventions that are timeous and proactive.* Child justice and child protection are not being met because of how inconsistent the visits from ECD social workers are. The inconsistencies of the visits from ECD social workers further create barriers and perpetuate the issues faced around child justice and child protection. These findings oppose the norms and standards set out for social workers (Zastrow, 2010). There additionally seems to be a view that the municipal and district ECD social workers present with a hierarchical status, which has left related professionals feeling angsty and fearful.

Kelly additionally states that *ECD social workers aren't only focused on education, they are also focused on child protection and health, as well as birth registrations. Ideally the social worker may be more involved in the welfare and wellbeing of the child. Instead of only focusing on the mastering of the milestones by a particular age; the social, the development, the impact of the family, the community and whatever else happens in and out of the class. The social worker would be more a community developer, and look at children's rights. The social worker is viewed as the problem solver, who is gonna address issues, our conflicts or challenges and things from home too. The argument is that there is very little interaction that happens between myself as the social worker and the actual child. This results in limited involvement with the child.* According to **Kelly, Shelly, Emma and Annie**, there is currently a numbers approach when assessing the services provided to the children, the assessment of success is measured by the number of children reached, as opposed to a more quality oriented and holistic approach to the child (The South African Child Gauge, 2013). The numbers approach infers that social workers just conduct head counts of children, in order to showcase the increase in the number of children receiving services from DSD. The increase in the number of children receiving access to funded services from DSD does not always result in holistic and quality service from DSD (Midgley & Livermore, 2005). There is a legal obligation for a social worker to intervene if there is suspected abuse, but depending on the requirement of the job description provided and the management protocol, some ECD social workers may not be able to fulfil some tasks. Even in the face of suspected abuse, systemic and managerial protocols take preference.

ECD social workers additionally indicated that they would like to be included in the social policy writing process. The proximity which ECD social workers have to the community, to the gatekeepers within the community, to the children and the parents of the children in the community; represents them as being a key link to ensuring that there is a transfer of community wants and needs (Cunningham & Cunningham, 2014). ECD social workers are ideally meant to act as advocates and as voices for those who may not have the kind of proximity, language or access to the social policy makers and law makers (Ife, 2008). **Penny** indicates that *the very most important one, is to involve more social workers in policy making when it comes to ECDs, consulting people that work directly with children on a daily basis and also involving the DBE as well. When there are policies passed down to us, they should adhere to making that change. Secondly, policies that are made should be reviewed on a yearly basis. Thirdly, everybody should attend events that ensure that training happens*

before they carry out their duties. **Kelly** summarises a sentiment and says that tasks are extensive and it needs you to invest so much of yourself in it.

ECD practitioners propose that the ideal social worker should pay attention to detail and ensure that their interactions with their clients are meaningful (Sheafor & Horesji, 2010; Egan, 2010). **Pheladi** gives advice by stating that *the social worker shouldn't just have a surprise visit. The social worker should go to certain practitioners classrooms and spend at least an hour per classroom, just monitoring how the practitioner speaks to the kids and conducts themselves.* **Terry** further indicates by saying that, *I've never had a good experience with social workers at DSD. The social workers treat you like you're children, there is no respect and no sense of urgency to revert back to you with information. They'll take your registration file and then throw it back in your face, saying that x, y and z are missing, without explaining the background of the documents or the purpose of them.*

Maxine brings forward the ideal focus that she would like to see unfold within the ECD sector: *you as a social worker have a different focus. Your focus is on vulnerability and vulnerable children. Children who need a particular type of care. I don't think that health department can do it either, because health too will be looking at different factors with regard to health care and not education. So I think that you need and what is necessary is people who have qualifications from all three areas or disciplines, health, pedagogy and care. The child needs someone who has got really great insight into their development and their pedagogical needs. However there are roles dished out without an explanation for them.* The significance of the quotes framed above are reflections of varying ideals held by the participants in the study.

5.3.4 THE CURRENT EXPERIENCE OF THE ECD SECTOR IN GAUTENG AND THE DEMOCRATIC SOUTH AFRICA

Maxine presents an opening sentiment, to the experience within the ECD sector within Gauteng and the democratic South Africa: *quality can't exist in a vacuum.* **Sam** states that *ECD facilities have difficulty when it comes to compliance and adhering to the regulations set out for the sector. We are not monitoring every day. I feel like we're compromising on the children because we're not monitoring every day.* The perceptions regarding the ECD sector in Gauteng are shared by **Penny, Shelly, Annie, Emma, Justine** and **Maxine**, where

there are different realities for people in South Africa and that not enough intersectoral and/or interpersonal and interprofessional work is being done to secure and safeguard the quality and development of the ECD sector. **Kelly** articulates the following, that, *the thing is we want to create equal opportunities at the starting point of life to say this is ECD and we want to give you equal opportunity to be in a ECD but we're not getting equal outcomes at the end of the 12 year cycle the outcomes are completely different. We really need to start developing or designing tools where we monitor quantity alongside quality.*

While there is dismay experienced, participants like **Naledi, Ilsa, Louise, Melody, Justine** and **Annie**, they correspondingly feel as though there have been many strides in the sector. They feel that these strides are attuned to the outcomes related to the policy creation and implementation (The National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015). For critical analysis however; **Penny** relayed her feelings regarding the ECD sector by stating: *I don't feel like there has been developments, I just feel like it's a bunch of people who know nothing about ECD and Basic Education at the grassroot level. I also don't think that they ever consult with social workers and teachers, and then there's no piloting of those policies to see if they are suitable for our sectors.*

Shelly reiterates these sentiments by saying that, *the general process or output out there is that 25% of ECDs are registered and 75% are unregistered. So there is nothing to misuse, because there are so many people that are still having to fend for themselves without the support from the State. In any way I think that the State contributes to their misery every day. The investment comes from the people themselves, not the State. All finding funding from wherever they can. They have to compromise themselves so much, having to do what they have to do, instead of following what they are being told to do.*

Carmen says that *systems are fragmented and they don't really consider the work of NGOs as valuable.* **Shelly** furthers this by saying that *there is no humanity in DSD, everyone works from within a box. It's got to be unique and special to a person. Social workers come into this space with empathy, but its DSD that takes that away from them because social workers are required to work within a box of operation, they become box-tickers.* **Maxine:** *I don't think that South Africa has got the political will. I think that there is a lot of talk but we can't exemplify anything.*

The sector has varying states of operation. The Non-Profit Organisation (NPO) and Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) sectors within the ECD sector function quite differently from the State. There is an evident yearning and longing from the academics, social policy writers and ECD practitioners for the professionalisation of ECD practitioners in the sector (White Paper 5, 2001; South African Child Gauge, 2013). The professionalisation of ECD practitioners is not final and this has had rampant consequences for the assigned value to the individuals who so diligently work within ECD facilities. Associated value given to a profession directly affects the pay scales and economic status in the sector. **Shelly, Justine** and **Maxine** collectively express that ECD practitioners are not paid well at all, which results in the continuous devalued status of the practitioners as well as the overall respectability experienced within the ECD sector (Matli, 2008). Similarly the directive to give the title 'ECD Social Worker' has not been professionalised or formally been noted as an area of specialisation despite the particular areas of function.

5.3.5 INTERACTIONS WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION

The overall impression regarding the interactions with DBE is that contact is indirect. Directives given by DBE is given via trainings and policy implications, which are enforced rather than understood and implemented. DBE has been invited to forum discussions as informed by **Carmen**, but *they have not shown up to represent themselves or what their intentions for the ECD sector are*. **Maxine** states that *there is a need to work together with DBE. They are vital in the process of implementing the curriculum for children aged zero to six years old and beyond. There is a separatist function at play, which is demotivating*.

Naledi states that *DBE is involved to a degree*. **Justine** and **Annie** further this notion by suggesting that DBE are intrinsic to the holistic functioning of the ECD sector, but that there is a separatist function at play, which is counterproductive and which also brings into question the kind of leadership that will take place when the DSD to DBE State function-shift takes place (National Development Plan, 2012). The lack of involvement in the ECD sector to this point presents an insecurity, that has long widened. **Ginny** says, *I would like to partner with DBE, but it seems impossible*. All of her ideas around education and the ways in which services are being accessed by the children that attend her organisation, are shut down. This attitude and response is something that resonates with all of the participants in the study, irrespective of the professional difference.

The National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy (2015) reveals that there ought to be apparent relations between DBE and DSD, and particularly the beneficiaries which they serve. This finding unfortunately reveals that this is not a reality for the sector.

5.3.6 INTERACTIONS WITHIN THE ECD SECTOR AND WITH SOCIAL WORKERS:

IMPACT

While there is an apparent reality that there are negative connotations related to the practice of ECD services within the ECD sector and performed by ECD social workers, there are additionally idealistic sentiments shared. This is indicative of an opportunity to reimagine the interactions within the ECD sector (The National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015). Interactions are dependent on shifting the nature of contact and the shared efforts of all involved within the ECD sector. **Carmen** expresses; *I think that it would be valuable for DSD to do more than what they are currently doing. Their intervention would be to liaise more with DSD stakeholders and for them to consider more about what is happening in the ECD sector and things happening on the ground. There is a desire for multidisciplinary teams to come together and improve the holistic functioning of the sector.*

An example of the value that could be prioritised would be for DSD to appoint relevant social workers with the actual interest in the ECD unit, **Naledi** further states that *social workers previously working within the Partnerships and Finance section, were senior social workers who had worked in other units like Foster Care and Child and Families. But this dynamic shifted, there are younger social workers working within the ECD unit, many of whom were never exposed to the term ECD, never mind the practice of ECD social work. Haphazard appointments of new social workers in the department, where there is just a filling of a need, not specific to individual interest. This may result in the lacklustre feeling and disinterest in work executed.*

The ECD social workers state that their interactions within the ECD sector and with ECD social workers had only begun after they had qualified with their social work degree, this similarly indicated that the ECD sector is something that is not yet covered in university curricula and this arguably poses itself as a challenge. Professionally, this limits the kinds of interactions that can take place within the ECD sector, amongst peers and colleagues in the

ECD unit and most importantly within the community, where ECD services are provided. **Sam** clearly pronounces; *I had not known anything about this role or an ECD social worker. I only found out about ECDs when I joined the department. I found out that they were monitoring safety, monitoring and quality assurance of the ECDs.* **Melody** additionally only ever found out about ECD when she started working for the State, she says that *there is still a big need to inform the community about ECD services as there are illegal operations that continue to provide questionable services to the community. The term 'mushrooming' serves to describe the popping up of ECD centres all over the community, without the necessary fulfilment of regulations and obligations to the health and safety of the children at the ECD centre.*

Terry, Annie and **Maxine** suggest that history presents a time where white owned pre-schools were assisted with efficiency but also followed a standard of strict requirements. Today the government is trying to be inclusive of everyone, but this is at the cost of quality and consistent follow-through. **Shelly** asserts that *there are a lot more people who are ECD centre owners and not enough people on the ground to facilitate the implementation of this legal obligation.* The ECD practitioner, **Pheladi** states that *the interactions between the social workers and the practitioners are not really good relationships, because the only thing they do really, is that they just check on how many kids there are, or the food. And they only really have a relationship with the principal and not the practitioner.* This is counterproductive, as the practitioner facilitates the daily interactions and learning with the children, not only the nutritional aspects that need to be fulfilled. There is a clear need for robust intervention and observation when thinking about the interactions within the ECD sector and with the ECD social workers (Teasley, 2004; Higy, Haberkorn, Pope & Gilmore, 2012).

5.3.7 HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE AND PHILOSOPHIES EXPERIENCED AS SOCIAL WORKERS AND RELATED PROFESSIONALS IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR

Terry, Maxine and **Annie**, lived through the time where they observed the privileges of apartheid's white-owned nursery schools. They suggest that there were many advantages provided to these nursery schools. During apartheid white-owned schools had access to multidisciplinary teams, where the holistic needs of children were met. The reversing of

developmental stunting or developmental delays were curbed early on (Patel, 2005). This was done together with clear guidelines regarding the expectation of registration from the varying departments, when applying to register an ECD centre.

Maxine declares: *You know there were sudden changes. Terminology and conceptualisation in the sector is still very confusing. In 2012 there was a decision to swop authority. But nothing was done to inform anyone of these changes. They haven't gotten these changes correct in all of these years, so knowing the potential implications for the shift which is to follow, is daunting.*

Maxine further reiterates that, *we were looking at children and all other aspects, when we spoke about the early childhood development, in the process, people forgot about the pedagogy. And there was a sorting to and fro, and of course poverty issues were important and of course vulnerable children, disadvantaged, safety and food, but the health side had always sort of been there, whether it worked or not. But for me the social development side, was never quite so strong. I feel that ECD is a very complex field, it's not straight education, not straight social work and not straight health. It draws on many things and its complex and its difficult.*

Penny asserts: *before democracy there was a lot of oppression, so very minimal kids were taken to ECDs in poor black communities. With this was the ideology that the youngest children didn't require much stimulation until school-going age. This has changed, which is positive, but it has left a lot of responsibility in the hands of the government and the community, Penny and Sam agree. Ilsa discusses that there was only one day care in my area, many years ago. I saw the need in my community and decided that I should start a day care of my own. I started off on a residential property that had two garages and a room. I've built myself up since then, and with the help of funding from Social Development and guidance from social workers, I've been able to run a successful business that also serves the children in my community. Pheladi says that more children can attend school now, especially children younger than four years old now. More children have more access to ECD centres. There used to be regular follow ups from DOH concerning the health of the children at the ECD centre. But the curriculum has never be an area that has been forced onto anyone in the sector. The attitudes of social workers influences the kind of work that is done within the centre. There has been a general operation, from a place of fear.*

Ilsa further discusses: *I had to pester social workers to come and conduct inspections at my day care years ago, but now I have a social worker that comes to visit and monitor my school consistently. There is information that you might need from social workers and you realise that they haven't yet been given that information either, it's still with management so sometimes they don't know, which is not their fault.* It is clear that ECD practitioners and the sector itself is quite dependent on the presence of the ECD social worker. It is evident that there have been changes in the sector and that professionals have had time to evaluate what the effectiveness of services being provided (South African Child Gauge, 2013).

Carmen emotively discusses the changes in history, from democracy, to policy change and then the individual experiences related to the relationship with children and the ECD sector:

Yes, before democracy we were fighting Bantu education. Systems were more fragmented then, than now. And when I was reading the history of ECD and where it stems from, policies were not there, the roles were not that clear, there weren't ECD professionalisation. Not like we have now. There has been a major shift when it comes to policy related matters. 21st Century education is putting ECD in the forefront and even our government, they are putting ECD in the forefront of development. We can debate what's happening on the ground, but policy-wise we are put into the governments agenda, even in the Sustainable NDP 2030 goals we are recognised as the most important sector.

You can see the shifts in policy, the National Integrated ECD Policy and NDP 2030 policies were mandated in 2015. There are conversations around the sector around professionalisation, but how to improve practices especially in the Community of Practice. I've seen a lot and heard a lot around the practical implementation of policy and integration. People want to know more and integrate more and share between each other. There has been a shift from elders or old grandmothers being nurturers of children, to younger people wanting to nurture now too. This is a notable shift.

It is evident that there has been a considerable amount of impact in the ECD sector, where growth and the understanding of ECD has shifted. This is as an outcome of the policies that

have been implemented, but the implementation of the policies do not meet the expectations that the related professionals have experienced. The measurement between the quality of the policies created and the quality of the implementation are disparate (South African Child Gauge, 2031; Cunningham & Cunningham, 2014). There is a distinct disjuncture in the management within the ECD sector, the management of the ECD social workers and the overall administrative processes in the ECD sector. Historically, experiences within the sector seemed streamlined and efficient, but *perceptively*, only for white people in the country (Patel, 2005; Zastrow, 2010). The current structures of ECD practice and implementation have shifted and the current democracy has embarked on a mission to try and include all applicants and practitioners in the ECD sector. This has not been effective in the kind of quality of experiences of services provided and experienced by the recipients of the services within the ECD sector.

5.3.8 THE SOCIAL WELFARE ENVIRONMENT AND THE OVERALL HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE CHANGES EXPERIENCED WITHIN THE ECD SECTOR

It is undeniable that there are social workers and practitioners that are unaware of the changes in policy. The *social welfare environment previously served white marginalised groups* and with the reality of the shift in the democratic political scope of the country, the result in the social welfare environment changed too, as inferred by **Terry. Sam** expresses his understanding of the social welfare environment and the history connected to the sector and says that, *the history of the sector previously is that most of the children could not afford to go to creches, but since then, government has made sure that every child has access to attend nursery school, and that every child should be in a safe environment that is inclusive and accessible, irrespective of the colour of their skin, their background etc. and then finally prepare children for primary and general school readiness.*

The landscape of social welfare in South Africa is far reaching. And although participants like **Shelly**, lean on the opinion that the current government has overpromised and over committed without realistically showing up, there is an overall understanding and belief from the participants in this study, that the social welfare state in South Africa is widespread (Patel, 2005; Zastrow, 2010). **Carmen** furthers this sentiment through reflecting on an internal area of measurement of control and evaluation of services, she says; *Monitoring and Evaluation is the responsibility of DSD. The engagements around ECD and Monitoring and*

Evaluation is very limited because of demotivation and the fragmented system of the government and DSD. The Monitoring and Evaluation team is seen as incompetent. This has rampant effects on the quality of service delivery and overall accountability from DSD.

One cannot overlook the systemic dynamics in the ECD sector without considering the varying levels of interception politically, socially, economically, historically and culturally. **Shelly** gives her view on the NGO sector which is deeply connected to the social welfare environment by saying that, *the ECD sector is run by white women who govern the NGO space. DSD gets a lot of their advice from these existing silos. The questions should not be so top down. But it is. We should be asking the people on the ground level, what they want and need. We seemingly panel beat the people on the ground to fit into the mould of what the people on the top look like and not actually understanding their challenges on the ground, and it's not that they don't see. They see and know a lot.*

Naledi joined the state department just after the apartheid regime ended, which is significant because she was at the forefront of the change and deeply invested in overseeing change happening in real time. **Naledi** states:

*When I arrived at the department it was a very crucial time. It was just after the dawn of the democracy and I learnt that the in the past or during apartheid that the Department of Social Development was responsible for children between the ages of zero to three years and it was mainly for the poor children and then municipality had its own ECD centres that they were running, or zero to four years and then there was the Department of Education that was taking children from three years to school going age. Each department was doing something. The Department of Health were also doing something. The word 'ECD' was non-existent. If you look at the Child Care Act it was talking about a Place of Care. There was purely the **care** there was no programme that was expected. Nutrition was a central focus and there were additionally well established structures that were built in townships, approved by government.*

The programme aspect came at a later stage in operation. There was a lot that democracy brought, then because each government department had their own legislation around the operation of the ECDs, it was decided that now we are moving

towards a new dawn and we need to reframe. Every department now needs to be registering that each process needs to now be given to social development. The reason for this was the fact that the Department of Social Development had legislation around children. DSD was the gatekeepers for a while whilst changing the sector. The Department of Basic Education had to focus on changing the frame of schooling in South Africa and in the process forgot about the youngest group of children in the country, this resulted in Social Development taking the lead with zero to four year olds.

Naledi deliberates on her memory of the minister at the time of her appointment by stating that he had returned from exile, and while in exile, was exposed to ECD programmes and facilities abroad. It was imperative to him to have our youngest children be exposed and have access to holistic stimulation. He did not want to leave any child behind. He saw the benefit of ECD services and wanted South African children to be included in this goal (National Development Plan, 2012).

*The sector needed policies and legislation. The sector started from scratch and although the pace of the intervention may seem slow, there have been many strides made. 27 years ago there was no documentation or documented goals for the zero to four year old group in the country. Since then, we have a National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, there is the Children's Act 38 of 2005, the White Paper 5, NELDs and the National Curriculum Framework, states **Naledi**. These are all guiding tools that are evidence of how stakeholders, academics, social policy writers and professionals have come together to aid the development of the ECD sector in South Africa. **Naledi** furthers her sentiment by stating that it was imperative for us to have policy documents so that we could move and give it a legal status, in a way and not just work in a vacuum and also beef up our legislation. The change that is happening, is happening now at national level and is the one reason that things led to the changes at political and administrative levels. A lot of research was done, our officials did research in over 20 countries looking at different curriculums, to ensure that a sufficient programme is implemented in South Africa.*

5.3.9 THE POLICY DOCUMENTS: RELIABILITY EXPLORED

Most of the sections above have undertones directly related to the policy documents and the impact of ECD related policy. Policy issues were verbalised by all of the participants in the study. While there is a very positive response to the intention and purpose of policies, there are however varying emotions related to the implementation of policies in the ECD sector. **Shelly** exclaimed: *The policies are not user-friendly English. People can't use it. They write in such a way that is ridiculous and it affects DSD directly.* This brings accessibility and inclusivity into question. **Carmen** reveals her experience with policies being that *the policies are there but they don't necessarily reflect on what is happening on the ground and that's exactly when we need updated policy interventions, that talk to the ground. And most of these policies Jade, they are internationally shaped. And there are these international challenges, that are not the same as South African challenges. It brings into question the kinds of debates around policy that need to be spoken about. So the politics and policies don't always resonate.*

The progress in the ECD sector is as a result of the development, facilitation and implementation of the following policies and programmes in the sector: National Curriculum Framework (hereafter referred to as NCF), A National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (hereafter referred to as CAPS), Play-SA and The National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, they are viewed as a milestones for the sector. UNICEF, DBE, Cotlands, The South African Child Review, Child Gauge and The Lego Foundation have been key bodies in the processes of formulating and implementing the above mentioned policies. **Kelly** additionally feels that *we are informed by different policies and legislation and that we have progressed from the millennium development goals to sustainable development goals and to the national development goals.* Comprehensive goals, is the aim, in order to ensure that there are injustices that are being corrected.

Again the question regarding inclusivity and accessibility to policies are brought to the fore. With the variants of needs and the multi-lingual representation, the policies in place don't meet the necessary requirements of being representative of all of those who the policies are intended for. **Melody** notes that *we are focusing more on one part of ECD and specifically day care centres or ECD centres, but they still need to focus on the other parts as there is still a shortage of information on toy libraries, play groups and mobile libraries. The policy*

still needs to improve and it needs to expand in terms of policies such as day mothers. Compliance issues have not been adapted to the needs in the different ECD programmes.

There is a certain amount of resonance required for people to really understand, comprehend and then integrate that information into their lives. The necessary requirements to successfully facilitate ECD services, require this resonance. There are various programmes within the ECD sector like toy libraries, day mothers and mobile libraries. *These programmes are often forgotten during the registration processes with DSD, because there is a focus on the ECD facility and ECD programme at this facility. This however; neglects to be inclusive of all of the alternative programmes aimed at including children who may not be able to attend a full day programme at an ECD facility,* says **Melody**. The neglected programmes were created to include children that cannot regularly access full day ECD services and the fact that they cannot frequently and safely attend these alternate ECD services, defeats purpose of having those programmes available (Midgley & Livermore, 2005; Parton & Kirk, 2010). **Sam** informed the study by stating that *our monitoring tool isn't meeting the standards of what is happening in the field.*

There is an urgent need to support age-appropriate learning and support for young children, because we know that research shows that the first few years of life are so significant in establishing neurological pathways, which are key to learning. We have this little window in the life of each person and so it's critical that we step up radically rethink what's necessary to meet the needs of those children, and each year that passes, we lose an opportunity for another generation of children, says **Ginny**. **Ginny** facilitates programmes that are alternative, like virtual reading groups, play pop-ups and children's museums, which are inclusive of parents and children.

Carmen has a personal interest in marginalised groups, like children and persons with disabilities and the lack of social policy development and implementation for these marginalised groups, directly affects them. Children with disabilities should still be able to access ECD programmes. But these facilities are extremely limited in the country. It's paved a pathway for social policy writers to start the process of creating documents related to integrating all marginalised children (Midgley, 1995). **Carmen** further states that *The Global Health Institute provided a platform for me to review international policies. There are Communities of Practice for ECD, where the National Integrated Early Childhood*

Development Policy is broken down into areas for discussion. Penny, an ECD social worker states: I haven't attended any conferences that have to do with policy making or reviewing of policies. My job is to make sure that those policies are enforced and monitor how they are implemented. Those regulations need to be adhered to but you won't really get to see how they are implemented. Although I haven't seen any changes, I feel like there should be change and policies should be revisited and amended, and when they do that, they should also include social workers and the Department of Basic Education, cause those are the people that work with children.

5.3.10 THE INTERDEPARTMENTAL SHIFT FROM DSD TO DBE: THE UNCERTAINTY

Carmen emotively states that *the parents are initially the ones that are nurturing and growing the kids and then the kids eventually go to a centre.* When thinking about the relevant state departments involved in the shift in the ECD sector, the fact that parents are involved in this process is often neglected. Most of the participants, have not worked directly with the DBE, despite this department being such a pivotal role-player in the education sector. The shift should be an urgent matter of discussion, but it's currently not. Establishing whether or not the people on the ground were consulted, is difficult to determine. It is assumed that the decisions related to the shift did not include a consensus related to the parents or the community, nor the related professionals. Most participants in this study, irrespective of profession, are very sceptical about the shift.

Shelly states that *it wasn't clear as to what would happen, who would fund it, run it, or where the children would go. What do you think about what's going on between DBE and DSD and protocols? Because you can find the protocols affect the child but no one is speaking about the child. Protocols are spoken about between the staff but not the people they affect.* The best interest of the child rhetoric and objective is brought into question. The impact of the decisions made within the sector are disjointed, which according to the participants in the study has had negative outcomes in the ECD sector and inherently negatively affected the ECD social worker.

Shelly further questions: *I want to know why the social workers haven't been trained in curriculum development? Why social workers are only checking if children are merely*

eating and sleeping? Negative experiences at the ECD facility versus positive experiences at the ECD facility. If ECD social workers had that expertise, then the onus for DSD to continue their work, they should keep the ECD section under DSD, but this is lacking big-time. The intention is for children to be provided with holistic facilitation and learning, unfortunately DSD is actually not offering all of those services, so this results in DBE the having to focus on this.

The shift in the sector is notably unclear. According to **Carmen**, *it's really unclear what's going to happen. The conversation is that the Department of Health will handle the health side, Department of Social Development the social protection side and Department of Basic Education the professionalisation of the programme, because they're saying that ECD is about education, so why isn't the Department of Basic Education already part of the shift? So, I can't imagine what it's going to look like?* **Penny** additionally states that the shift from DSD to DBE will be negative, that the focus will be one-dimensional. The focus being on the programme, may result in the neglect of holistic wellbeing of the child.

Shelly pronounces:

So the question is then, what is the actual intention of ECD? If social workers aren't formally trained in curriculum development and studying it, then what is the intention of ECD? Does DSD intentions align with what is actually being expected from the ECD social workers? DBE is also not necessarily interested, they too are too focused on formal learning even for the Grade R's, where that should not be the sole focus at that point. So things are not aligned with DBE either. I am worried that their strict way of doing things will also jeopardise the children's development.

Penny doesn't really know what's happening with the shift, nor does **Pheladi** or **Sam**. There is a hope that DBE and DSD work together. The fact that the ECD social workers and ECD practitioners know nothing regarding the shift is quite worrisome, because they will also directly be affected by the shift. They will have to directly implement change. How does one do this when the change is not understood?

Sam however, is in favour of the switch. This is due to the focus on the educational aspects of the programme being given focus. **Sam** is focused on the potential improvement in the quality of education, longitudinally. **Kelly** states that *we can't overlook the biopsychosocial*

aspects of ECD. There is a concern for the well-being of the people in the sector and what this shift means for the stakeholders and the children involved (National Development Plan, 2012). Naledi notes that the function shift is happening, and although there is minimal transparency, that the departments and social service professionals need to prepare themselves for the shift. The shifting, I don't think anybody can be having a problem with that, I mean this is all in the interest of our children, that's what we need to focus on.

5.4 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The anticipation of this study's focus was the role of ECD social worker and although the bulk of the data collected provides this insight. Of the 10 themes revealed through the data analysis process, there was undeniable evidence suggesting that related professionals view the ECD social worker as well as the ECD sector in a negative light. The concentration on the role of the ECD social worker, was not only limited to the execution of daily tasks, but there were corresponding themes of the ECD sector, its history and its policy related characteristics (Zastrow, 2010). Bringing forth the argument that related professionals view the ECD social worker and sector in a two-fold experience, does not honestly reflect all of the evidence provided, this experience and the perceptions related to the role of the ECD social worker is immensely complex and layered. There is an apparent disjuncture in the expected roles that social workers are meant to fulfil and what is actually being done, this arguably reflects that theory and practice are not coherent. There is a need to refine the practice within ECD settings, which is reiterated by Stepney and Popple (2008, p. 3) who state that "social work practice is experiencing the challenge of the government's agenda for the modernisation of public sector services, the expansion of a mixed economy of welfare, and the changing organisation of social work and social care services for children families and for vulnerable people".

The ECD social worker and the ECD sector are viewed this way for varying reasons. There is a clear indication that the related professionals are extremely frustrated. The frustration stems from systemic, managerial, intersectoral, cultural, ethical and professional inequities. The foundation of the ECD sector is still quite immature in its quality, compared to that of any other part of the greater education sector. The attitudinal influence related to how society has viewed children, has added to the frustration; as society just does not completely see the

value of the ECD sector , *so it's about the philosophy of education and influenced by how you view children. The discipline of practice is so important*, says **Maxine**.

Maxine exclaims: *How do you view children? Just as vulnerable beings, casual beings of learning? Incompetent? There is a huge shift in learning and development that comes from developmental theory, which is rooted in Social Development. There is also psychology, sociology, anthropology and all of the elements that come to play when taking into account, culture. Language is another one. And so I think that Early Childhood Development is very complicated, and so I don't think that any one particular department should have power over it.* Without professionalisation and rightful compensation, the ECD sector remains stagnant. **Annie** states that, *frustration can lead to one path and motivation to another. This knowledge is not concrete. This is how I deal with government officials, I am sweet because I need cooperation.* This statement suggests the necessity to negotiate and to compartmentalise feelings, in order to achieve the necessary requirements to practice or provide ECD services in the sector.

There is evidently the need to compromise, in order to gain access to cooperation from government officials, and in the context of this study, the ECD social worker. The social work participants in this study express that they too have trouble identifying any of their colleagues who take pleasure in performing their role, which adversely affects the nature of their work and their role. The fact that there is a need for compromise suggests that there is a struggle to access services. There does not seem to be a win-win situation. There is a battle for basic needs in the sector being met. The layered nature of this study has resulted in the need to further deliberate on the findings. It is necessary to further summarise and unpack the findings, which will be done from this point onward.

5.4.1 TIME, EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS FORMED IN THE ECD SECTOR

Time within the ECD sector is perceived as being a period of growth and development for the sector itself, the policy development and advocacy for children's rights and the implementation of age-appropriate and culturally appropriate curricula have been developed and implemented (Hook, 2009; The National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015). The academics, social policy writers and ECD practitioners in this study presented the perception that they have seen progress in the ECD sector and that this had a

progressive impact in the lives of the children and the community. There has been an increase in the reach of the ECD services for the children in South Africa, and despite the focus being on a numbers approach, (which is not all encompassing and inclusive) there have subsequently been advances in the development for the many children that *have* been able to access the services (Samuels, 2014). The ECD social workers on the other hand have not been able to recognise this development and growth (Higy, Haberkorn, Pope & Gilmore, 2012). This may be an outcome of the confusion and ambiguity related to the role that they are fulfilling. ECD social workers do not seem to be able to recognise their own influence and/or the developmental roles that they're fulfilling. Although the ECD social workers realise the role that the democracy has played in the workload and tasks they've had assigned to them, there is an evident amount of uncertainty related to the bigger picture for the ECD sector in the country. Despite the progress witnessed in the ECD sector as a whole, the ECD social workers are still perceived negatively and their purpose within the sector is questioned with doubt (Samuels, 2014).

Time, experiences and perceptions formed within the ECD sector seemingly present a challenge, where not all professionals are included in the discussions, trainings and information sharing platforms. This has resulted in exclusionary and hierarchical practice, which by its very nature ensures that there is a certain exclusivity within the sector (Patel, 2005). All related professionals in this study feel as though they have been excluded and that their work and impact within the sector may be futile and therefore not necessarily keeping children's development at the centre of the work that they do. **Ginny** says; *the child should be learning no matter where they are, whether they are at home or on the street, out and about, in the park, in the ECD centre. It is the same child and we want to create a whole society that is there to support them in their early learning. This concept was not received well a few years ago, and it still isn't being viewed as relevant, or worthy of being implemented. Awareness cannot necessarily be transferred into quality. That practical element of implementation is not being realised*, says **Ginny**.

5.4.2 INTERDEPARTMENTAL INTERACTIONS AND THE ECD SECTOR

Interdepartmental interactions and the ECD sector, as an unearthed theme in this study, further suggests the idea that there is a deep yearning for the related departments like the DBE, DSD and the DOH to work together, to fulfil the holistic vision that the National

Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy (2015) ever-so optimistically envisions. The reality of interdepartmental interactions, is that there has been no fundamental and longstanding interaction between the departments. There have been reoccurring exchanges of promises made and very few occasions where these promises have been kept. The use of the word ‘promise’ in this instance refers to the verbal and written agreements from state officials that represent DSD, DBE and DOH. There have been occasions where these officials were requested to present and guide community members or organisations, with developmental and expert information on the ECD service requirements; but who very infrequently kept to their agreement. **Annie** states that *there is a clear indication that NOBODY is managed, there is never anything like a Monday morning meeting, and that no report backs regarding current achievements. This shows itself in the backlog that is an ever present challenge in the State Departments.* Interdepartmental interactions and the ECD sector seem to have issues that can be situated in the managerial and systemic challenges.

There is a evidential lack of accountability in the ECD sector, that showcases itself in 1) a backlog of work and services executed and 2) minimal efforts in ensuring that there is follow through with interdepartmental communication and commitments to the sector being employed. The lack of accountability has resulted in far-reaching insecurities within the ECD sector. This has, as a result, dampened the attitudes and informed the participants perceptions regarding the kind of quality and the lack thereof within the sector.

5.4.3 HISTORICAL CHANGE, SOCIAL POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Historical change, social policy development and social policy implementation as subsequent themes in this study showcase the perceptual accumulation of discourse and systemic critique. The related professionals in this study collectively imply that the history of South Africa has been transformative, even though it has been slow (Cunningham & Cunningham, 2014; South African Child Gauge, 2013). Apartheid to democracy has been a road that has been shared and it has affected everyone in South Africa, whether directly or indirectly. There is an association with progress and quality. This measurement for the ECD sector and within the related NDP 2030 goals, reveal that there has been an immense amount of work and socio-economic investment from the country, put into the ECD sector (The National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015). Approximately 27 years

ago, before the dawn of democracy, there were little to no policies, documents or formalised legislation intended for the reform and transformation for children aged birth to six years of age. The nature of the current operational state in a democratic South Africa realistically reflects that quantity is the measure of progress, for the ECD sector in the country. Quality is yet to be effectively applied across all contextual and socio-economic spectrums in the country. There are evidential disparities related to race, gender, class and personal capability. While disability, marginalisation, class, gender and race inequities are still existence, then quality and its application in the ECD sector still requires an insurmountable amount of aided effort (Zastrow, 2010).

5.4.4 THE ROLE OF THE ECD SOCIAL WORKER

The ECD social worker role has been reflected. The related professionals successfully unveiled their perceptions, of the role of the ECD social worker. The unveiling of these reflections showcased that there is an existent ambiguity associated within the historical scope of ideal roles that the related professionals would rather see being executed. Social policy development and policy implementation have been reflected as areas in the ECD sector that have grown and progressed. Social policy development reflective of children's rights and what children ought to access and be inclusive of, are phenomenal. The unfortunate reality is that the implementation of these objectives are ineffectively implemented. Social policy and legislation additionally do not overtly provide the characteristics and tasks expected of the ECD social worker which further informs us that there has been no form of professionalised role placement or title approval, for this type of social worker.

5.4.5 THE INTERDEPARTMENTAL SHIFT BETWEEN DSD AND DBE

The final theme; the interdepartmental shift of ECD from DSD to DBE subsequently revealed that there is an ongoing theme of confusion, disillusionment and ambiguity within the intersectoral space. Where the programme and the set out curricula for children had lacked before; the care, health nutrition and safety aspects had initially served as the primary placeholders. With the shift to DBE, it is said that the curricula for children aged birth to four years old will begin to change (National Development Plan, 2012). Seeing this shift happen in real-time is the concern and the challenge. With the shift in departmental mandates, there are a lot of questions and concerns regarding the possible progress that may

be lost along the way. Care, health, nutrition and safety from DSD have been seen as great gains for the development and fulfilment of children's rights. These gains may be lost during the transitional shift between DSD and DBE. The related professionals are collectively concerned about the impact that the shift will have on the ECD sector, but the ECD practitioners and the social workers from the ECD unit at DSD are particularly concerned that their job scope and job security may be in question as a result of the shift.

The concerns are similar yet specifically different for each related professional group. Change and ambiguity seem to be the only resonating feeling that exists within this space. There are nuances of hopefulness and reflections concerning the varying forms of progress within the ECD sector, but this falls short in comparison to the very valid anxiety and concern in the very same sector. The nuances of hopefulness and reflections of mixed feelings will be discussed in the chapter which forms the concluding chapter. The conclusive thoughts together with the recommendations, will be presented as a means to encapsulate the findings of the study.

CHAPTER SIX

KEY FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 CONCLUSION

The intention of this study, was to explore and determine the perceptions of related professions regarding the role of the ECD social worker, through phenomenological research design. Ensuring that the aim and secondary objectives of this study are addressed, is central to the conclusion of this dissertation. Furthermore, it is key to determine whether or not the purpose of the study was realised, through the conclusive discussion below. The key findings, conclusions and recommendations draw to a close, the intent and objectives of the study, which will be unpacked in this final chapter of the dissertation.

6.2 KEY FINDINGS

The key findings of this study are reflective of the data collection and analysis process. The key findings are just as layered as the thoughts and perceptions shared during the data collection process. Due to the occurrence of some of the perceptions shared, there are a number of findings which serve as confirmable shared perceptions and experiences. The primary aim of this study intended to investigate and identify phenomena which had not yet been explored; in order to capture comprehensive descriptions of the role of ECD social workers, in the democratic South Africa. Understanding the context where these specific social workers find themselves in, is imperative to offering new insights to South Africa and to the Social Work profession. The primary aim together with the secondary objectives, were successfully reflected through the key findings and conclusion of the study. Listed below are the **secondary objectives**, which were used to compare the key findings and establish whether the objectives were achieved during the research process:

1. To identify the role of an ECD social worker.
2. To determine the role of the ECD social worker in a democratic South Africa, based on the perceptions of educators, social policy writers, social workers and academics in the ECD sector.
3. To explore the relationship between the role of an ECD social worker and the veracity of the democratic South Africa, based on the perceptions of educators, social policy writers, social workers and academics in the ECD sector.

4. To determine the perceived influence ECD social workers have, within the educational and social development system in a democratic South Africa.

The first key finding, was the overall indistinguishable outline of the role of the social worker within the ECD sector. The first key finding emerged through-out the research process and resulted in addressing the first secondary objective of the study. The first secondary objective of the study was to identify the role of an ECD social worker . While the role of the ECD social worker was found to be ambiguous, it was found that the roles of the ECD social worker include: monitoring, facilitation, assessing and developing the operational functions of ECD facilities. The role of the ECD social worker has fuelled a lot of frustration, not only for the social workers that execute the ECD related roles, but for the related professionals as well. There is a need to further define what the role of the ECD social worker is. There is an apparent disjuncture between the ideal role of the ECD social worker versus the lived reality of the ECD social worker (Jarolmen, 2014; Rautenbach & Chiba, 2010).

The second key finding, presents as an apparent need to commit to institutional change. The landscape of ECD in the country has changed tremendously and although the change has been positive, there has been a theme of incomplete change within the ECD sector. State institutions have aided the work related to poverty reduction and developmental stunting, however, more work needs to be done in order to improve the quality of practice. Institutional change cannot occur in policies and legislation, there has to be an evidential amount of reproduction in intent and actuality on the ground (Ife, 2008).

The third key finding is, the inaccessibility of ECD services for children with disability or developmental delays. In order to really achieve inclusive and accessible services for all children requires that services should be created and implemented on the ground (National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015). In order to achieve the best quality of care for all children in South Africa, there is a need to reimagine what inclusion and access looks like. Strengthening the intersectoral and community based networks is the fourth key finding. The related professionals collectively identified this as a need. There are disjointed communication lines between the various interdepartmental departments, which affects the quality of the relationships and services with the members of the community and the ECD practitioners. With the approaching shift in departmental function between DSD and DBE,

there is an even greater need to facilitate the strengthening of networks and communication (Patel, 2005).

The fifth and final key finding, is the need to centre the child within the ECD sector. The roles, professional practice, academic knowledge and policy development, are often blindsided by the technicalities of the work being done, which has resulted in the child often being forgotten in the process. If ECD is to be effective, it has to be inclusive of the child (National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015). Interventions and work aimed at improving the quality of the life of the child, need to depart from the child being at the centre of the work being conducted (Stepney & Popple, 2008). The work of the social worker in the ECD sector, may be an assumed role of an organisational social worker, which is work that focuses on organisations rather than direct work related to children. The state of reimagining what the role of the ECD social worker requires further deliberation and intentional certainty (Zastrow, 2010).

While the outline of the five key findings collectively alludes to the identification of the role of the ECD social worker, it is evident that the aim and the secondary objectives were achieved, as the role of the social worker was identified, the nature of the relationship between the ECD social worker in the democratic South Africa was determined and the perceived perceptions and influence of the ECD social worker in the ECD sector and in South Africa were further identified. Although the findings are not all positive, they reflect the reality of the perceptions of the ECD social worker.

6.3 DETAILED CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this dissertation details the outline of the aims and objectives of this study, and provides a further evaluation of how they were achieved. The primary aim of this study, was to explore and determine the perceptions of related professions regarding the role of the ECD social worker. The 17 related professionals revealed their own perceptions, experiences and contextual accounts of the ECD social worker as well as the environment that the ECD social worker finds themselves in. The ECD practitioners, the ECD social workers, the social policy writers and the academics, revealed varied and similar experiences which converged (Zastrow, 2010; Teasley, 2004).

The roles that were unearthed included: being a support for the development of ECD facilities and the facility management, related to the health, safety, nutrition and holistic care of children. Additional roles include advocacy for children and the community, attending ECD related community forum meetings, registration of ECD facilities and the continued monitoring and quality assurance of ECD facilities (National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015). The overall function of the ECD social worker is one that is focused on organisational social work. It was found that the broad ECD social work roles are undervalued and ambiguous in nature, resulting in limited variations of practice. Ambiguity related to the roles which need to be performed has caused a lot of confusion in the sector, causing negative perceptions related to ECD social workers. The related professionals perceive the ECD social worker in an idealised way, where they have either, never had contact with an ECD social worker or where they assume that the ECD social worker should be fulfilling child protective roles, together with welfare oriented roles, like providing grants and/or reports related to the safeguarding of children within the context of their home or community environment (Sowers & Sowers, 2007). Based on the conclusive findings discussed above, there is sufficient evidence that the first secondary objective of the study was achieved.

The second objective of this study was determining what the ECD social worker in a democratic South Africa is, based on the perceptions of practitioners, social policy writers, social workers and academics in the ECD sector. An ECD social worker in a democratic South Africa contextually implies that the role created, is in response to a need in the country. ECD in South Africa has been a growing sector and with that the role of the social worker, has been developing too. South Africa introduced the ECD sector as a primary sector of focus where impact is equivocal and urgent, in order to ensure that the development of children is at the forefront of the country's long term success and constitutional mandate (National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015; Jarolmen, 2014). Through exploring the second secondary objective of the study, the implication of this broad and idealistic goal is that it needs to include the professionals and people who are expected to aid and facilitate the actualisation of this goal.

Through the perceptions of the related professionals in ECD it was found that there is a deliberate need to create a platform for social workers to be included in the process of detailing their experiences within the field of organisational work, playing the role of the

ECD social worker, there is no formal title attached to this form of practice but there should be. Or there should at the very least be guidelines which exemplify and reflect the existence of these professionals. There is a lot of work being done by ECD social workers in the community and within the state institution, none of which are formally recognised. The policies listed, like the Children's Act 38. of 2005, don't clearly indicate their title, this is brought to the fore because there are social workers like probation social workers or foster care and adoption social workers who have been given a formalised title to assert the area of specialised work that they conduct. Formalising the role of an ECD social worker may assist in the streamlining of the expected roles and activities which need to be fulfilled by them (National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015; Patel, 2005).

The third objective of this study was aimed at exploring the relationship between the role of an ECD social worker and the veracity of the democratic South Africa, based on the perceptions of the related professionals in the ECD sector. This objective presented a challenge to the related professionals, where the bigger picture was questioning whether or not there is real place for social workers in the ECD sector. This is because their role is unclear and those who interact with ECD social workers constantly have to negotiate their own tonality and attitude, in order to attempt to access the services that ECD social workers provide. Impact is measured by the quality of the work being done to meet the necessary expectations and objectives of the goal at hand. With the uncertainty and the negative reception of the ECD social worker in the democratic South Africa, their veracity of their role is distinctly distorted. The third secondary objective in this study was determined as it reflects the actual relationship between the ECD social worker and the access that ECD social workers have to the constituents which make-up the legal, social, political, historical and developmental aspects of South Africa.

A further finding is that legislation is not clear, the children's Act 38 of 2005 does not specifically state the role of the social worker in the ECD setting. The partial care facility related programmes and the related staff body in charge of implementing the necessary roles, lie in the direct hands of management and the minister. The deliberation of the roles does not include the specific type of social service professional. This may be different for different sections in the Children's Act 38 of 2005, but not for the section on partial care facilities and/or child protection. With ECD social workers conducting these varying roles, it is an entry point and an opportunity to further create a space for them, in a country where their

services are so clearly needed. This finding indicates that the relationship between the ECD social worker and their operation in South Africa is unclear and ambiguous.

The fourth and final objective of this study was aimed at determining the perceived impact that ECD social workers have, within the educational and social development systems in a democratic South Africa. Children do not operate in silo's, children develop as individuals, but they also develop within a community of systems. In order to create a safe and secure environment for them, ECD social workers together with other helping professionals need to have clear directives to aid the realisation of this environment. To avoid the further perpetuation of maladaptive and traumatic childhood experiences, it is important that all of the role players, including ECD social workers to assume their place and work toward reducing the effects of unsafe, under stimulated, undocumented and constraining environments. It takes professionals who understand the social dynamics of systems and behaviour, to encourage and create enabling environments, where children may thrive exponentially, into the future (Teasley, 2004; Jarolmen, 2014). To reimagine the future where children are emotionally and socially apt, means including the various role players in this process. ECD social workers are an important component of this. Social workers acquire the skills and philosophies to deliver the necessary tasks to aid the further the development of children and the community at large. Due to the constraints experienced at a systemic level, social workers and specifically ECD social workers are unable to execute the skills and roles expected of them.

The objectives of this study were met. The key findings together with the objectives transparently reveal that there is ambiguity and an urgent need to continue to address issues of accessibility, inclusion and to evaluate what quality means to the ECD sector (and those affected by it). The study progressively revealed phenomena that had not yet been explored and it was found that there is a considerable amount of frustration felt amongst the related participants, there is additionally frustration directed at the ECD social worker that works within the ECD unit at DSD. Finally the study revealed that the related professionals could not capture comprehensive descriptions of the role of ECD social workers, however, they could reveal the perception of an ideal ECD social worker.

The findings present an opportunity to further explore the role of the ECD social worker and challenge the current frustrations and concerns, experienced within the ECD sector.

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The key findings and conclusions in this study revealed that there are valid recommendations which could aid the enhancement of the functioning of the ECD sector, the ECD social worker and the development and training related to ECD. In terms of recommendations the study process revealed a number of key areas with legitimate aspirations to:

6.4.1 Further the research on the topic at hand, not only within formal settings like state institutions but also as a means to include the people on the ground. Creating platforms where people on the ground can have their needs addressed and not be on the receiving end of options or opportunities made on behalf of them. This could increase the accuracy and relevance of the kind of intervention strategies used.

6.4.2 To include the people on the ground, in order to create an inclusive environment where access to policy and legislative development is within reach. Legislation and practice need to reflect realistic outcomes that work in favour of ECD and development, for all of the people that it affects.

6.4.3 Conduct more research on the role of DSD and their relatability to people's actual needs and the programmes that they've developed to target addressing social, cultural and economic needs in the country. There are divergencies and discrepancies that still present themselves in forms of systemic revelations about who has had more access, those who know how to make use of an unjust system and those who thrive irrespective of the status of the system (Ife, 2008). Being aware of the existing systemic inequalities deserves interrogation.

6.4.4 Strengthening the current roles being accomplished by the ECD social worker and formalising the profession, as a potential means to provide redress to a profession that has received much criticism, despite the apparent desire to have a greater impact on the ECD sector (Zastrow, 2010; Stepney & Popple, 2008).

6.4.5 Introduce this area of specialisation into the university curriculum. There is a need for exposure to the ECD sector, because it is a social and education related human sector focused on child development, the lack of focus on this perpetuates ECD as a continued social issue (Sowers & Sowers, 2007).

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APPENDIX A

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

**THE PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF RELATED PROFESSIONALS ON
THE ROLE OF THE SOCIAL WORKER IN EARLY CHILDHOOD
DEVELOPMENT**

- How long have you been working at your respective organisation, company or institution?
- What has your experience been like, during your time at your respective place of professional practice?
- Have you previously worked with the Department of Social Development or the Department of Basic Education, whether through policy, with employees or institutionally?
- If so; what have your experiences been like?
- Do you have historical knowledge of the role of the Early Childhood Development [ECD] sector in South Africa?
- Do you have any historical knowledge of the ECD social worker?
- Irrespective of the amount of knowledge you may have, do you think that the mandate set out for the sector is in line with current policies and current politics?
- Have you worked with an ECD social worker?
- If so; what have your experiences been like?
- In your professional opinion, what is the role of your profession in the ECD sector?
- In your professional opinion, what is the role of an ECD social worker?
- Are there particular roles which are fulfilled by ECD social workers which are clear?
- In your opinion, what should the roles of the ECD social worker be?
- Are there any roles which may be misunderstood or roles which are unclear, which ECD social workers are currently fulfilling?
- Do you have any personal opinions regarding the role of an ECD social worker?
- Do you think that the state of democracy has had an effect on the current state of the ECD sector, in South Africa?

- What are your overall thoughts on the current state of the sector in relation to our socio-historical and current democratic state, and how do you think this may affect the role of the ECD social worker?
- What are your thoughts regarding the change of the ECD mandate, being transferred from the Department of Social Development to the Department of Basic Education?
- What do you think that this change may result in?

APPENDIX B

DAILY OBSERVATION NOTES

**THE PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF RELATED PROFESSIONALS ON
THE ROLE OF THE SOCIAL WORKER IN EARLY CHILDHOOD
DEVELOPMENT**

Daily Observation Notes	
Observation note number:	Observation date:
Name of Research Area: Perceptions about the role of the social worker in Early Childhood Development in a democratic South Africa: The case of the Department of Social Development, Gauteng.	Name of researcher: Jade Valentina Trueman
Notes	
Relevant observations and information acquired through conversations:	
Personal comments:	



SOCIAL WORK
THE SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (SHCD)



Private Bag 3, Wits, 2050 • Tel: 011 717 4472 • Fax: 011 717 4473 • E-mail:
socialwork.SHCD@wits.ac.za

APPENDIX C

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

THE PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF RELATED PROFESSIONALS ON THE ROLE OF THE SOCIAL WORKER IN EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

Good day,

My name is Jade Valentina Trueman and I am a post graduate student registered for the degree Master of Arts in Social Work at the University of the Witwatersrand. As part of the requirements for the degree, I am conducting research which will investigate the perceptions and experiences of related professionals on the role of the social worker in Early Childhood Development. It is hoped that the information gathered could assist in identifying the perceptions and experiences of the role of the social worker in Early Childhood Development in a democratic South Africa. The outcome of this study could inform both the knowledge base and practice of Social Work in Early Childhood Development.

As a member of a multidisciplinary team in the Education sector working with children, policy and/or the implementation thereof, you are ideally positioned to contribute to my research. I therefore wish to invite you to participate in my study. If you accept my invitation, your participation would be entirely voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty. You may additionally refuse to answer any questions that you feel uncomfortable with answering. There are no consequences or personal benefits of participating in this study. If you agree to take part, I would arrange to interview you at a time and place that is suitable for you. Anonymity and confidentiality will be guaranteed. Anonymity will be limited to you (the participant) and myself (the researcher), as the research will be collected through a face to face interview. Confidentiality will be ensured

through the non-disclosure of your identifying particulars. The interview will last approximately one hour. If you decide to participate, I will ask your permission to audio tape the interview. No-one other than the researcher and the supervisor will have access to the tapes. The tapes will be kept in a locked cabinet for two years following any publications or for six years if no publications emanate from the study. A copy of your interview transcript without any identifying information will be stored permanently in a locked cupboard and may be used for future research.

Please be assured that your name and personal details will be kept confidential and no identifying information will be included in the final research report. The results of the research may also be used for academic purposes (including books, journals and conference proceedings) and a summary of findings will be made available to participants on request. Please contact me on 072 317 9042 or jadevalentinatrueman@gmail.com, or my supervisor, Prof. Edmarie Pretorius on (011) 717 4476 or edmarie.pretorius@wits.ac.za if you have any questions regarding my study. We shall answer them to the best of our ability.

If you have any concerns and complaints about the study, please contact Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical) Contact Details: Chairperson: Jasper.Knight@wits.ac.za or the administrator: Ms Shaun Schoeman, Tel 011 717 1408 or Shaun.Schoeman@wits.ac.za.

Thank you for taking the time to consider participating in the study.

Yours Sincerely,

Jade Valentina Trueman



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APPENDIX D

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE STUDY

THE PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF RELATED PROFESSIONALS ON THE ROLE OF THE SOCIAL WORKER IN EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

I,, agree to participate in this research project. The research has been explained to me and I understand what my participation will involve. I agree to the following:

(Please circle the relevant options below)

I agree that my participation will remain anonymous	YES	NO
I agree that the researcher may use anonymous quotes in other research report	YES	NO
I agree that the interview may be audio recorded	YES	NO
I agree that the information I provide may be used anonymously after this project has ended, for academic purposes by other researchers, subject to their own ethics clearance being obtained.	YES	NO

I understand that:

- I may choose not to answer any

- | | | |
|--|-----|----|
| specific questions asked if I do not wish to do so. | YES | NO |
| • There are no foreseeable benefits or particular risks associated with participation in this study. | YES | NO |
| • My identity will be kept strictly confidential, and any information that may identify me, will be removed from the interview transcript. | YES | NO |
| • A copy of my interview transcript without any identifying information will be stored permanently in a locked cupboard and may be used for future research. | YES | NO |

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Name of Participant: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Name of Researcher: Jade Valentina Trueman



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APPENDIX E

CONSENT FORM FOR THE AUDIO TAPING OF THE INTERVIEW

THE PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF RELATED PROFESSIONALS ON THE ROLE OF THE SOCIAL WORKER IN EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

I hereby consent to participate in the research study and acknowledge the use of an audio taping device, during the semi-structured interview process. The purpose and procedures of the study have been explained to me.

I understand that:

- My participation in this study is voluntary and I may withdraw from the study without being disadvantaged in any way.
- I may choose not to answer any specific questions asked if I do not wish to do so.
- An audio-recording device will be used to document the semi-structured interview.
- There are no foreseeable benefits or particular risks associated with participation in this study.
- My identity will be kept strictly confidential, and any information that may identify me, will be removed from the interview transcript.
- A copy of my audio-recording will be kept without any identifying information and will be stored on a password protected computer for a period of 2 years.
- A copy of my interview transcript without any identifying information will be stored permanently in a locked cupboard (for a period of 6 years) and may be used for future research.
- I understand that my responses will be used in the write up of a Masters project and may also be presented in conferences, book chapters, journal articles or books.

Name of Participant: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

APPENDIX F

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



Research Office

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

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE**PROTOCOL NUMBER: H19/11/67****PROJECT TITLE**

The perceptions and experiences of related professionals on the role of the social worker in early childhood development

INVESTIGATOR(S)

Ms J Trueman

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT

Social Work/

DATE CONSIDERED

15 November 2019

DECISION OF THE COMMITTEEApproved
Risk Level: Minimal**EXPIRY DATE**

22 April 2023

DATE

23 April 2020

CHAIRPERSON

(Professor J Knight)

cc: Supervisor : Prof E Pretorius and Prof S Moonsamy

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 submit an amendment of the protocol to the Committee. I agree to completion of a regular progress report. For Minimal and Low studies, this is due annually on 31 December. For Medium and High Risk studies, this is due twice annually on 30 June and 31 December.

Signature _____

Date _____

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES

APPENDIX G

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



Enquiries: Dr. Sello Mokoena
Tel: 082 331 0786
File no.: 06/10/19

Dear JV Trueman

**RE: APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT**

Thank you for your application to conduct research within the Gauteng Department of Social Development.

Your application on the research on "*The Perceptions and Experiences of Related Professionals on the Role of the Social Worker in Early Childhood Development*" has been considered and approved for support by the Department as it was found to be beneficial to the Department's vision and mission. The approval is subject to the Department's terms and conditions as endorsed on the 14th October 2019.

You have permission to interview departmental officials, conduct observations and access relevant documents where necessary.

May I take this opportunity to wish you well on the journey you are about to embark on.

We look forward to a value adding research and a fruitful co-operation.

With thanks

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "AHS", written over a faint, larger signature.

Ms Amanda Hartmann
Deputy Director General: Support Services

Date: 2019/10/15

APPENDIX H

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

**GAUTENG PROVINCE**

Department: Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

8/4/4/1/2

GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	14 October 2019
Validity of Research Approval:	10 February 2020 – 30 September 2020 2019/299
Name of Researcher:	Trueman J.V
Address of Researcher:	6 Haldane Crescent Wendywood Sandton, 2091
Telephone Number:	072 317 9042
Email address:	jadevalentinatrueman@gmail.com
Research Topic:	The Perceptions And Experiences Of Related Professionals On The Role Of The Social Worker In Early Childhood Development.
Type of qualification	Masters of Social Work by Dissertation
Number and type of schools:	Five ECD Sites
District/s/HO	Johannesburg East, Johannesburg South, Johannesburg Central, Johannesburg North and Johannesburg West.

Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

The following conditions apply to GDE research. The researcher may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:

Making education a societal priority

Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management

7th Floor, 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001

Tel: (011) 355 0488

Email: Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za

Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za