

**The influence of ecosystemic factors on  
Black student teachers' perceptions  
and experiences of  
Early Childhood Education**

by

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

**MAGISTER EDUCATIONIS**

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PRETORIA

## Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my son, Jude Mark.  
Although a baby, his arrival and presence  
inspired me to complete this study.  
I hope and pray that further research will attract  
and inspire future educators for our children.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With faith, all things are possible. Thank you to everyone (known and unknown) who prayed for me.

This study could not have been completed without the support of my family. First, I would like to thank my parents who both regarded education as extremely important. Dad, I appreciate your constant interest in my studies and the many prayers for me. Mom, thank you for being my sounding board and for unconditional support whenever and wherever needed. To my sister, Tam, thank you for always listening to me and sending me strength when I needed it.

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## DECLARATION

I, Donna-Anne Mary Hannaway, hereby declare that this MEd thesis:

*The influence of ecosystemic factors on Black student teachers' perceptions and experiences of Early Childhood Education*

is my original work and that all the sources I consulted have been acknowledged.

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Signature

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August 2012



## SUMMARY

*“No problem can be solved by the same consciousness that created it.  
We need to see the world anew.”  
Albert Einstein*

Post-1994 welcomed political transformation in South Africa which also brought about change in the educational sector since Black students had access to former White universities. Contrary to the growing number of Black students, the impetus for this study was found in the short supply of Black student teachers in ECE. Moreover, this study attempted to investigate how ecosystemic factors influenced the low enrolment of Black student teachers as well as their perceptions and experiences of the ECE programme at a former White university. The study was conducted from a qualitative, case study approach. The various data collection techniques, such as photo voice, narratives, semi-structured interviews and a focus group interview with five final year student teachers yielded the following results:

Various ecosystemic factors influenced Black student teachers' perceptions and experiences of ECE. First, the history of education in South Africa has had a detrimental effect on the experiences and perceptions of Black students in ECE, as well as a negative influence on the status of ECE. Second, Black students are under-prepared for their studies at tertiary level which results in negative academic experiences for the students, as well as a high dropout rate. Third, and most recurrently, it was evident that economic circumstances affect Black student teachers in terms of academic status, support offered by the HEI and enrolment into ECE teacher training. Fourth, societal factors such as the communities' perception of, and the low regard that they hold for ECE, influenced Black students' decisions to consider this phase of teaching as a career. Finally, personal factors, unique to each individual Black student teacher, influenced their perceptions and experiences of ECE.



## KEYWORDS

- Black student teachers
- ecosystemic factors
- Early Childhood Education
- experiences
- perceptions



## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

APS	Academic Point Score
DoE	Department of Education
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECE	Early Childhood Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
SAIDE	South African Institute for Distance Education
TESA	Teacher Education in South Africa
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Fund
UNSWRS	University of New South Whales Research Consortium



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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The year 1994 announced the dawn of democracy in South Africa, which brought about important changes in all spheres of life. Education was one of the sectors which was radically transformed, and for the first time in the history of South Africa, Black students had access to all former White universities. Subsequently the composition of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) has changed to such an extent that it is estimated that currently 72% of the student population in South Africa is Black (Brüssow, 2007).

In his analysis, Steyn (2009) has shown that growing higher education participation during the period 2001 to 2007 indicates broadening access, but at the same time it does not necessarily imply increased output (i.e. completed qualifications) rates. Smith (2011) adds that it is appreciated that the fragmented education system merged and that many innovative changes took place, yet the elimination of inequalities from the apartheid era will continue for many years. Furthermore, the increase in the number of candidates which received matric exemptions, thus allowing them entrance to tertiary institutions, subsequently created an increased need for access to universities between 2007 and 2009 (Smith, 2011). According to the midyear (June 2010) population figures, 39,6 million (79,4%) of South Africa's inhabitants are Black (Smith, 2011) which increases the demand on higher education. To add to this, Steyn, Harris and Hartell (2011) confirm that Early Childhood Education (ECE) is adversely affected because of a lack of teachers at this level. This may partly be due to the availability of job prospects in other sectors, the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic on the teaching population, the departure of many teachers who take teaching positions in other countries and the serious shortage of well-trained, qualified teachers at this level.

Even though there seems to be proportionately more Black students in other fields of study (Basit, McNamara, Roberts, Carrington, Maguire & Woodrow, 2007; Woodrow,



1996; Pathak, 2000), the under-representation of qualified Black teachers' remain a problem in South Africa. Griffin and Allen (2006:538) argue that one of the reasons for this under-representation is rooted in the disparities between Black students and their White peers regarding their preparation and readiness for university.

Research has consistently demonstrated that the number of Black recruits to teacher training programmes at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) is lower than would be expected in relation to the Black population of the country (Basit *et al.*, 2007). Various ecosystemic factors may contribute to this, for example economic, social, family, racial, institutional (Basit *et al.*, 2007), personal (Griffin & Allen, 2006), and cultural factors (Woodrow, 1996). Moreover, the throughput rate of Black students is significantly lower than that of their White counterparts. Similarly, a study done by Green (2010) on Foundation Phase teacher production by public higher education institutions in South Africa confirms perceptions that the number of new Foundation Phase teachers being produced by the public higher education institutions falls short of national and provincial needs. Furthermore, the recruitment and supply of African language Foundation Phase teachers (Black student teachers) is particularly problematic, especially in the context of mother-tongue instruction during the early years (Green, 2010). Subsequently, this study attempted to qualitatively investigate how the ecosystemic factors influence the low enrolment of Black student teachers as well as their perceptions and experiences of the ECE programme at a former White university.

## **1.2 RATIONALE**

The South African Department of Education (DoE, 2009) has noted that by 2009 4147 Foundation Phase teachers were needed annually to meet the growing enrolment of children, yet the expected graduates for 2009 were only 1275. Of these expected graduates, only 168 were Black teachers speaking African languages, suggesting that the shortage of and hence the urgent need for Black teachers in predominantly Black areas are enormous (Green, 2010). In 2010 a mere 7.92% of the student population in the Early Childhood Education Department at the higher education institution under study was Black (Faculty of Education, 2010). This is despite the fact that higher education institutions also experienced an impressive growth in student numbers (Gbadamosi & De Jager, 2009) and former White

universities experienced a dramatic shift in demographics. The results from a survey on Foundation Phase teacher production done by Green (2010) further reveals that only 1.5% (2 out of 135) Black student teachers at the higher education institution under study were expected to progress to the final (fourth) year of study. In addition, “the realities of a complex and diverse classroom where West and African, the scholastically advantaged and disadvantaged, a number of different cultures and languages interact, often conflicting and deviating political and worldviews congregate, have not yet been researched sufficiently within the new higher education dispensation” (Hay, 2008:936). Considering these political, academic and cultural factors, I continued and further supplemented this relatively untapped area of research, specifically regarding the influence of ecosystemic factors on Black student teachers.

The low enrolment and pass rate of Black students motivated me to explore how the ecosystemic factors influenced Black student teachers’ perceptions and experiences of ECE. Qualitative research methods such as “photo voice” (Olivier, Wood & De Lange, 2009), narratives, semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews were conducted and examined through the theoretical lens of Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory.

This study is significant in its attempt to provide reasons for the low enrolment and high attrition rates of Black student teachers. It aimed to accomplish several important purposes, the primary being to understand Black student teachers’ perceptions and experiences of ECE within the theoretical framework on Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory. Second, based on the findings, it aimed to provide recommendations to strengthen the ECE programme to meet the needs of the Black students it serves. And finally the insight gained addressed the need to recruit and retain Black students.

### **1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

#### **1.3.1 PRIMARY QUESTION**

- ⌘ How do ecosystemic factors influence Black student teachers’ perceptions and experiences of Early Childhood Education?

### **1.3.2 SECONDARY QUESTIONS**

- ⌘ Which ecosystemic factors influence Black students' perceptions and experiences of Early Childhood Education?
- ⌘ How do ecosystemic factors influence Black student teachers' enrolment in Early Childhood Education?
- ⌘ How do ecosystemic factors influence Black student teachers' perceptions and experiences of the relevance and appropriateness of Early Childhood Education?

## **1.4 CONCEPT CLARIFICATION**

For the purpose of this study, the following concepts will be explained and further recognised as such: ecosystemic factors, perceptions, experiences, Early Childhood Education (ECE) and Black students.

### **1.4.1 ECOSYSTEMIC FACTORS**

*Ecosystemic factors* derive from Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979) which explains mutual relationships among people, communities and institutions. Within the context of this study, these relationships take place between the Black ECE student teacher, Black communities, and the higher education institution (HEI) under study. More specifically, ecosystemic factors will refer to the specific factors that influence Black student teachers' perceptions and experience of ECE.

### **1.4.2 PERCEPTION**

*Perception* can be defined as the way in which something is regarded, understood, or interpreted (Simpson & Weiner, 1989). According to Pomerantz (2003), perception (Latin: perceptio, percipio) is the process of attaining awareness or understanding of the environment by organizing and interpreting sensory information. Relevant to this study, Smith and Mackie (2000) define social perception as the part of perception that allows people to understand the individuals and groups of their social world, and thus as an element of social cognition. For the purpose of

this study, the term *perception* will refer to how Black students teachers regard and understand ECE.

### **1.4.3 EXPERIENCE**

Simpson and Weiner (1989), define *experience* as a general concept that comprises knowledge of, or skill in, or observation of something or some event gained through involvement in or exposure to that thing or event. The term may also mean “a particular instance of personally encountering or undergoing something, the process or fact of personally observing, knowledge or wisdom gained from what one has encountered, involvement and participation” (dictionary.com). For the purpose of this study, the term *experience* will mean the particular and personal encounters of Black student teachers in the ECE programme.

### **1.4.4 EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION (ECE)**

In South Africa ECE corresponds with what is often referred to as Early Childhood Development (ECD) which include children from birth to 4 years of age in families and early childhood institutions, as well as children from 5 to 9 years accommodated in the Foundation phase (Grades R-3) of schooling (DoE, 2001). For the purpose of this study, the term *Early Childhood Education* will refer to the programme in which student teachers are enrolled. It will also refer to the education and training of student teachers whose teaching will be aimed at children between birth and the age of 9. The terms *Early Childhood Education* and *Foundation phase* will be used interchangeably.

### **1.4.5 BLACK STUDENTS**

For the purpose of this study, the term Black students will refer to all Black African language speaking student teachers in South Africa.

## **1.5 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **1.5.1 BACKGROUND OF THE HISTORY OF SOUTH AFRICAN EDUCATION**

South Africa experienced its first democratic elections in 1994 after which the segregationist laws of the apartheid regime were abolished implying that all races

are allowed to mix freely and, amongst many other benefits, attend the same educational institutions. It must be noted that reference to the term 'race' does not imply that race is anything but a social construction. The country's new constitution, adopted in interim form in 1993 and in final form in 1996, stated expressly that "everyone is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and benefit of the law". It furthermore defined equality so as to include "the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and freedoms," and education was explicitly singled out as one of them (Republic of South Africa, 1996). Fiske and Ladd (2006:95) agree that a major task of South Africa's new government was to design a more racially equitable education system using three concepts of equity, i.e. equal treatment by race, equal educational opportunity and educational adequacy. However, integration across the board was not the result of the removal of these discriminatory laws and the "tentacles of the apartheid past still run deep in contemporary South Africa" (Finchilescu, Tredoux, Mynhardt, Pillay & Muianga, 2007:721) and are still notable in the education system. In this regard, Hay (2008:936) claims that:

*How cultures meet, what kind of interactions takes place, how applicable and acceptable the content is for students, the appropriateness and user-friendliness of study guides, examples for applications of knowledge, culture friendliness of assessment strategies, the way in which questions are asked, etc., are often a secret enterprise between lecturers and students.*

### **1.5.2 BLACK STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES AT FORMER WHITE UNIVERSITIES**

A number of international studies have been conducted revealing the experiences of Black students at former White universities (Sedlacek, 1999; Hay, 2008; Davis, Dias-Bowie, Greenberg, Klukken, Pollio, Thomas & Thompson, 2004; Gbadamosi & De Jager, 2009; Kornfield, 1999; Meacham, 2000). Most of the studies focus on the negative aspects, the barriers, which indicate that Black students experience university significantly differently to their fellow White students (see Paragraph 2.9.2.1 for a more detailed discussion).

Sedlacek (1999) claims that the way Black students feel about themselves is related to their adjustment and success at White universities. He further claims that unequal admissions, prejudiced relationships with faculty, social norms of campus life, and negative attitudes of White students towards Blacks are some of the more common

forms of racism faced by Black students at predominantly White institutions. Racist practices are not always direct, but are often hidden in the expectations and practices of institutions. As stated in Griffin and Allen (2006:480), more hostile campus climates, especially where students are subject to subtle racism, negatively affect academic achievement, retention and satisfaction of Black students.

In addition, Davis *et al.* (2004) state that the theme of isolation that Black students experience with their university denotes a perceived barrier Black students need to overcome in order to achieve academic success. It is well documented that “the inability to develop a connection with some aspect of the university will generally result in failure” (Davis *et al.*, 2004:439). Likewise, for many Black students, attending university involves a period of transition and adaptation that requires them to utilize coping strategies for dealing with problems such as maintaining enrolment, grades, emotional adjustment and physical health (Chiang, Hunter & Yeh, 2004: 793).

While much of the literature focuses on the barriers experienced by Black students, a few positive aspects or assets were identified which are noteworthy for the purpose of this study. With regard to personal factors in the ecosystem, Griffin and Allen (2006) noted that Black students’ academic choices and behaviours were motivated by the positive career, social and societal outcomes that awaited them if they were academically successful. The above-mentioned authors further explain that Black students are motivated partly by achieving highly valued outcomes, such as reaching their career goals, making their families proud, and being a positive representative of the Black community. Relating to institutional factors in the ecosystem, “policy-makers have accepted the view that Blacks have a positive and affirming contribution to make to education provision... to eradicate racism and counter cultural stereotypes” (Basit *et al.*, 2007:281).

### **1.5.3 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PRE-TERTIARY ACHIEVEMENT AND ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

It is well documented that many Black students in South Africa are to a great extent underprepared for tertiary studies (Bradbury & Miller, 2011; Bradbury, 1997; Craig, 1991; Molobi, 1994). As a result, they experience many barriers which Jansen (Van Wyk, 2008) attributes to large inequalities between Black and White schooling.

These academic factors manifest as inequalities in terms of materials and human resources, the inferior quality of education in Black schools compared to that in White schools, and the subsequent matriculation results. Furthermore, Black parents, teachers and learners were long alienated from decision making in education under a previous authoritarian regime and the duplication of apartheid education provision by nineteen different racial and ethnic departments of education was highly inefficient, divisive and ineffective. Schools that were previously separated according to racial groupings for Whites, Africans, Coloureds and Indians became integrated in 1994 which led to the migration of Black learners from township schools to former White schools, and an influx of Black students into former White universities.

Although research indicates that pre-tertiary academic achievement has a strong, positive and consistent correlation with the probability of attending tertiary institutions (Thomas, 2000:337), Fraser and Killen (2005:27) maintain that "...achievement has very limited value as a predictor of student success in higher education". I agree with the latter, especially when taking into account that the majority of Black students in the country are from far rural and township schools. These schools are in most cases characterised by "non-performance, where the preconditions for quality education simply do not exist..." (Msila, 2005:175), where a "non-existent culture of learning and teaching prevails" (Masitsa, 2004) and where "erosion of competence" can be found (Kamper, 1998:84).

Subsequently, academic results cannot be regarded as the crucial predictor of academic success – non-academic factors should also be considered. These predominantly non-cognitive student features include self-concept, motivation, attitude (Sikhwari, 2007), student satisfaction (Lourens & Smit, 2003), support from families (Dass-Brailsford, 2005), approach to studying, cultural expectations, academic literacy, time management skills, psychosocial factors, peer culture, the quality of teaching, the interaction between students and the academic and social systems of the university, students' belief in their own ability and the student support structures offered by the university (Fraser & Killen, 2005:27).



#### **1.5.4 RACE AND SOCIAL MOBILITY**

Hall (2008) confirms in a study on intergenerational mobility over the last thirty years that race, rather than access to educational resources, is still the primary determinant of social mobility. Moreover, “continuing racial discrimination (in which Black students are made to feel unequal through daily experiences of differing treatment in their general lives) affected student performance at school and universities” (Favish & Hendry, 2010: 274). Although specific to the University of Cape Town, Luescher (2009) shows that race is an important factor in a deliberate struggle in university governance by students in general, and Black students in particular, to make any form of racial marginalisation public and open up race as a topic for deliberation in the post-apartheid university. Pattman (2010:953), similarly to Oloyede (2009), critically reflects on social cohesion at higher education institutions “from the position that ‘race’ is an important category which determines students’ lives, identities and relations.”

Despite the above-mentioned, much of which is entirely theoretical in nature, attempts are made to address racial inequality, a movement towards equity, and the status of Black students at higher education institutions. Fiske and Ladd (2006:106) conclude their study of assessing how far South Africa has progressed in terms of racial equity in education by stating that, “yet for all the dramatic changes over the last decade the state education system of South Africa – for better or for worse – retains important continuity with its past.”

#### **1.5.5 SHORTAGE OF BLACK STUDENT TEACHERS**

“Many countries, including South Africa, are confronted with mounting problems of teacher supply” (Arends & Phurutse, 2009:2). South Africa’s problem of recruiting more Black students into primary education is part of an international challenge (Santoro, 2007). According to 2007 figures, little change in the demographics of teachers has occurred since 2000 and little growth has been reported in the number of students entering teacher education programs (Planty, Hussar, Snyder, Kena, KewalRamani, Kemp, Bianco, & Dinkes, 2009).

In their study on the perception of racism in teacher education, Basit *et al.* (2007) analyse the international problem of recruitment and retention of Black students.



First, they attribute the relatively low proportion of Black teachers to negative attitudes towards the teaching profession. Second, the authors note cultural differences in the specific choices in higher education made by students: those of Asian and Chinese origin, for example, predominately choose computing and business studies, whereas students of African origin (Black students) tend to be attracted to the social sciences. These differences are explained by reasons ranging from implicit curriculum bias to social assumptions, learning styles, personality preferences and career intentions (Basit *et al.*, 2007). Finally, they highlight that education is one of the subject fields least likely to be studied by Black students. Yet the outcome of the Basit *et al.* (2007) study implies that recruiting Black students will be highly beneficial in terms of supplying the country with a home-grown workforce, providing a role model for Black students and dismissing myths and stereotypes that exist among the White population such as Black people are only capable of entering certain professions.

According to Fiske and Ladd (2006), apartheid left a legacy of underqualified teachers in Black schools. A study on Foundation Phase Teacher Production by Public Higher Education Institutions in South Africa (Green, 2010) expects that, in a stable system focused on maintaining quality, the major source of new teachers would be well-qualified new graduates. This is certainly not the case in South Africa where there is a serious national shortage in the number of Foundation Phase teachers that are being produced: new teacher graduates provided only 27.8% of the estimated need for Foundation Phase teachers in 2009. Fiske and Ladd (2006) further note that the majority of Black students continue to attend schools that have under qualified teachers, inadequate facilities and other drawbacks such as a shortage of books and other teaching materials.

Since Green (2010) concludes that only 13% of all Foundation Phase teachers produced in 2009 were Black, it is evident that fewer Black teachers enter into the profession and even less become Foundation Phase teacher educators. Hence a system is perpetuated which continues to put the education of future teachers into the hands of those whose lives are often far removed from those of their students (Sleeter, 2001; Varghese & Jenkins, 2005).

## **1.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

“A useful theory is one that tells an enlightening story about some phenomenon. It is a story that gives you new insights and broadens your understanding of the phenomenon” (Anfara & Mertz, 2006). The meaning of theory in any scientific field is to provide a framework useful to explain relationships among the phenomena being studied and to provide insights leading to the discovery of new relationships (Tudge, Mokrava, Hatfield & Karuik, 2001:3). The following conceptualization of the Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory served as the lens through which I conducted my exploration (see Chapter 2 for a detailed discussion on the literature according to Bronfenbrenner’s Ecosystemic Model and Chapter 5 for an in-depth integration of the findings according to this framework).

### **1.6.1 BRONFENBRENNER’S ECOLOGICAL THEORY**

In order to understand the context of ECE and the diverse settings for which Black student teachers are being prepared, the Ecosystemic Model was used to guide and explain the literature and results of the study since it focused on factors in the immediate environment of the developing individual as a student (parents, lecturers, and community), the contexts from which Black student teachers choose to enter the profession, and the mutual interactions among these factors. Swart and Pettipher (2005) affirm that against this background, the contextual framework of Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Theory. This framework is based on the systems theory which explains mutual relationships among people, communities and institutions. The systems theory views different levels or groups in the social context as ‘systems’ where the functioning of the whole is dependent on the interaction between the various parts, and vice versa. These systems are distinguished as the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem.

#### **1.6.1.1 Microsystem**

A microsystem is an arrangement of social roles, activities and interpersonal relations with particular physical, social and symbolic features experienced by the developing person. Such features may serve to include or reject engagement in sustained, progressively more complex interaction with an activity in the immediate environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1994:39). According to Jasnoski & Schartz

(1985:473), the developing person spends a good deal of time engaging in activities and interactions in this environment within this system. In this study the microsystem focussed on the profile of Black student teachers in the ECE programme.

#### **1.6.1.2 Mesosystem**

The mesosystem constitutes the interaction between two or more settings containing the developing person, where various associations and actions take place. This may include the relations between home and university, or university and workplace, etc. For the purpose of this study the mesosystem (which is a set of microsystems associated with one another) included factors such as the cultural relevance of higher education in South Africa.

#### **1.6.1.3 Exosystem**

The exosystem, on the other hand, also consists of the interaction between two or more settings, one of which does not contain the developing person. In this system events occur that do not directly affect processes within the immediate environment in which the developing person lives (Bronfenbrenner 1994:40). For the purpose of this study, the exosystem emphasised the context in which Black student teachers do not participate directly, but which has an impact on the functioning of important members of the students' life, such as the socio-economic status of these individuals.

#### **1.6.1.4 Macrosystem**

The macrosystem consists of the overarching pattern with particular reference to the belief systems, bodies of knowledge, material resources, customs, life-styles, opportunity structures, hazards and life course options that are embedded in each of these broader systems (Bronfenbrenner 1994:40). In this study, a macrosystem was regarded as the relationship between culture and education, with particular emphasis on Black communities' view of the status of ECE and the ECE teacher.

### 1.6.1.5 Chronosystem

A chronosystem encompasses developmental time-frames (which span the duration of an individual's life) pertaining to family structure, socio-economic status and living conditions or the stress and ability in everyday life (Bronfenbrenner 1994:40). For the purpose of this study, chronosystem refers to the fact that environmental settings have multiple physical, social and cultural dimensions that can influence an individual's progressive stages of development. In this study, the chronosystem will explore the historical context of education in South Africa.

Bronfenbrenner has shown that the interactions that occur in face-to-face, long-term relationships (for example, lecturer and student) are the most important in shaping lasting aspects of development. Swart and Pettipher (2005) assert that the way individuals perceive their circumstances influences the way they respond to their human and physical contexts. Therefore, in considering the approaches that must be taken to build capacity, in number and quality, within the ECE programme, it was imperative to examine the various factors in the systems as they complied with the aims of this study.

## 1.7 PARADIGMATIC FRAMEWORK

Congruence between the epistemological assumptions, theoretical assumptions and methodology provided an overarching framework of guiding principles which assisted to make meaning from my investigation.

First, the epistemology based on the interpretative paradigm endeavours to "understand the subjective world of human experience" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2005:23). Similarly, I began with Black student teachers and set out to understand their interpretations of the ECE programme because "the social world consists of and is constructed through *meanings*" (Livesey, 2006:4). Second, my prime motivation was to take a social view by examining Black student teachers' everyday interactions, which was guided by Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory. Finally, concerning the methodology of the study, it was decided to use a qualitative approach which I used to conduct and interpret a multifaceted study in which the influence of ecosystemic factors on the perceptions and experiences of Black

student teachers was explored in the Black student teachers' institutional environment (Maree, 2007).

## **1.8 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **1.8.1 RESEARCH DESIGN**

The study was conducted from a qualitative, case study approach, which aimed to “provide an in-depth understanding of the world as seen through the eyes of the participants being studied” (Wilmot, 2007). In qualitative research, the inquirer asks participants to share ideas and build general themes based on those ideas (Creswell, 2012). By utilising qualitative inquiry, the context, views of participants and phenomenon can be explored (Ary, Jacobs & Razavieh, 2002:426). In this study the subjective experiences of Black students were investigated. This was achieved by using an approach that appreciates the views and experiences of the participants.

#### **1.8.1.1 Case study**

The case study approach is recognised by researchers as an effective qualitative design because it focuses on experiential knowledge and the social context of individuals (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011:256). I chose to make use of a case study for the reason that I aspired to gain a deeper understanding of the perceptions and experiences of ECE by Black students at a particular higher education institution. The case study method is descriptive and utilizes one or two instances, in this study, the perceptions and experiences of Black students, to show what a situation is like, which helped interpret other data. This particular case study served to familiarize the unfamiliar and make readers conscious of the students' lifeworld.

Kuper and Kuper (2004:92) state that the objective of case study research is to obtain “a thick description.” It therefore considers the social context of the individual (Yin, 2011:4). Miller (1990:164) recognises the importance of the case study approach in research by stating that it enables the researcher to integrate educational theory into the real life experiences of individuals (see 3.3. for a more detailed discussion of a case study).

### **1.8.2 DESCRIBING THE SAMPLE AND RESEARCH SITE**

Since the research for this study adopted a qualitative approach and there was a need to target a particular group for the case study, the method of sampling was non-probability. More specifically, I chose “the nearest individuals to serve as participants” (Cohen *et al.*, 2005:102) in a homogenous sample of the fourth year Black student teachers in an ECE programme at a higher education institution in South Africa.

This method of sampling is used in special situations where the sampling is done with a specific purpose in mind (Maree, 2007:178), for example in a case where a certain profile of student is necessary. I purposively selected five fourth year Black student teachers from a particular higher education institution to participate in the research since it has an established and accredited ECE programme. The reason for choosing the above-mentioned students was to reflect the exit year of ECE student teachers as they have experience of the first three years which provided them with rich information needed for the study. I also made use of the facilities at the university to gather my data, for the practical reason that they provided the most accessible venues for students that were familiar with this location (see 3.6 for a more detailed discussion).

### **1.8.3 ROLE AS RESEARCHER**

The researcher adopted the role of interviewer, observer and interpreter by establishing a research role (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001:435). The research role included facilitating photo voice; preparing, structuring and conducting interviews; analysing data; and crystallising data (Maree, 2007). According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001), the researcher needs to be a sensitive observer who records phenomena as faithfully as possible while at the same time raising additional questions, following hunches and moving deeper into the analysis (see 3.5.2 for an in-depth discussion).

## **1.8.4 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES**

### **1.8.4.1 Photo voice method**

The photo voice method involved cameras being issued to participants who were prompted to take pictures of people or things that are closely connected to the research topic. I was introduced to the particular strengths of the “photo voice” method (also known as “reflexive photography”) to highlight personal experiences in particular, and to *inter alia* gain optimal commitment in participants’ involvement in the research project (Olivieret *al.*, 2009). I thus decided to use this method, combined with narratives, semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews. This method of gathering data was chosen due to the qualitative nature of the research, to allow participants the space to elaborate on complex issues and to allow for flexibility to explore complex issues that may arise, as recommended by Fielding and Thomas (2001). I estimated that the study would consist of at least three sessions (Orientation, Exhibition and Wrap-up), which are discussed in more detail in Paragraph 3.8.1).

### **1.8.4.2 Narrative inquiry**

The case study approach makes use of underlying narrative principles and, therefore, narrative inquiry is also utilised. This method is defined by Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou (2008:5) as “individual, internal representations of phenomena and the events, thoughts and feelings to which narrative gives external expression.” According to Harnett (2010:3), narratives play an important role in research because they enable the reader to have a better understanding of a phenomenon from the individual’s perspective through the collection and analysis of the stories of participants (Maree, 2007). I made use of this mode of inquiry during the third session (wrap-up) of the second phase of data collection by asking participants to write a story in response to their chosen photograph. During analysis, I applied functional analysis, which means looking at what the narrative is “doing” and what is being told in searching for the narrative thread or major emerging theme (Maree, 2007) (see 3.8.2 for an in-depth discussion on narrative inquiry in this study).

#### **1.8.4.3 Individual interviews**

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000:633), an interview is the art of asking questions and listening to get answers. In this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with Black teacher students enrolled in the fourth year of the ECE programme. I conducted the interviews during the third phase of data collection. In a semi-structured interview the interviewer asks all respondents the same series of pre-established questions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:649). Maree (2007:87) states that this type of interview usually requires the participant to answer a set of predetermined questions while allowing for the probing and clarification of answers and “defining the line of inquiry”. I asked permission from the respondents beforehand to use a voice recorder and to take notes. The recorder was used during the process of interviews and the notes were transcribed for data analysis (see 3.8.3 for a detailed discussion of individual interviews pertaining to this study).

#### **1.8.4.4 Focus group interviews**

Marshall and Rossman (2011:93) recognise the importance of interviews in qualitative research because it permits the researcher to concentrate on the experiences of participants. In this study, focus group interviews were conducted with the five Black participants during the third phase of data collection. Cohen *et al.* (2005:288) state that focus group interviews “are contrived settings, bringing together a specifically chosen sector of the population to discuss a particular given theme or topic, where the interaction with the group leads to data and outcomes”. “The focus group interviewing strategy is based on the assumption that group interaction will be productive in widening the range of responses, activating forgotten details of experience and releasing inhibitions that may otherwise discourage participants from disclosing information” (Nieuwenhuis, 2007b:90). Furthermore, focus groups are useful to triangulate more traditional forms of interviewing (Cohen *et al.*, 2005), as was the case in this study where the focus group interview generated data from the preceding semi-structured interviews (see 3.8.4 for a detailed discussion of focus group interviews in this study).



**Table 1.1: Phases for data collection**

PROJECTION OF DATA COLLECTION			
PHASE	DATA COLLECTION STRATEGY		OBJECTIVE
PHASE 1	Administration	1. Ethical clearance	• Permission to conduct research
		2. Contact participants	• Establish relationship in higher education institution
		3. Correspondence with participants	• Explain nature and intent of study
PROJECTION OF DATA COLLECTION			
PHASE	DATA COLLECTION STRATEGY		OBJECTIVE
PHASE 2	Facilitate Photo Voice	1. Photo Voice Technique	1. Orientation
		• Discussions • Preliminary field notes	2. Exhibition
		2. Narratives	3. Wrap-up
PHASE 3	1. Individual interviews 2. Focus group interviews		• Gather data
	Analysis		• Interpret data

### 1.8.5 DATA ANALYSIS STRATEGIES

According to Bromley (in Maree 2007:75), the case study research is a “systematic inquiry into an event or a set of related events which aims to describe and explain the phenomena of interest.” Furthermore, it opens up the possibility of giving a voice to the voiceless, for example previously disadvantaged groups, and it is also essential in assisting the researcher to come to a deeper understanding of the dynamics of the situation (Maree, 2007).

Moreover, my paradigmatic framework is grounded in interpretivism which is based on the assumption that “the social world is understood (“interpreted”) by different people in different situations in different ways” (Livesey, 2006:4), which may differ across time and place. Therefore, inductive data analysis is preferred to reach the “possible means to identify multiple realities potentially present in the data” (Maree, 2007:28).

Data analysis began informally during the initial orientation session with participants. Thereafter, a more formal approach to the collection of data was assumed during the exhibition of photo's in the second phase, as well as in the discussions of the photographs, during the narratives, semi-structured interviews and focus group interview in the third phase, which was continued during transcription when recurring categories and themes became evident. The documentation method during the data collection consisted of extensive note-taking, audio recordings and verbatim transcriptions. I then analysed the salient points and ideally linked these themes explicitly to the larger theoretical and practical issues (see Chapter 4 for a detailed discussion of the data analysis).

### 1.8.6 QUALITY ASSURANCE

According to Kyburz-Graber (2004:7), there are five quality criteria when working with a case study, namely: 1) theoretical basis and case study protocol; 2) crystallisation in methods and procedure; 3) documentation of a case-study research project and case-study report; 4) designing a chain of evidence; and 5) the logic of generalization.

The following table illustrates the strategies that will be employed to ensure the quality of this study:

**Table 1.2: Quality assurance strategies** (Adapted from Kyburz-Graber, 2004)

Quality Criteria		Strategy
1	Theoretical basis and case study protocol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory as theoretical framework</li> <li>• Case study</li> </ul>
2	Crystallisation in methods and procedure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experiences, judgments and perceptions of participants emerging from the data analyzed in the light of the theory</li> <li>• Several data sources</li> </ul>
3	Documentation of a case-study research project and report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reviewing and rewriting</li> <li>• Report and data accessible to interested audience</li> </ul>
4	Designing chain of evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Step-by-step guide to facilitating photo voice</li> </ul>

Quality Criteria		Strategy
5	Logic of generalization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Replication logic – “findings may be generalized to the extent to which they can be replicated in other cases” (Kyburz-Graber, 2004:11)</li> </ul>

## 1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Mertens (1998:23) maintains that ethical guidelines are needed to guard against the obvious and less obvious atrocities of research. These principles were applied in this study as participation was voluntary and participants were able to withdraw from the study at any time. No inducements were offered to the ECE student teachers who took part in this study. Likewise, participants were fully informed regarding the process and intention of the study and informed assent was acquired beforehand. The student teachers were guaranteed safety in participation and were not placed at risk or harm of any kind. Similarly, the confidentiality, anonymity and privacy of participants were protected at all times. Lastly, the student teachers in the study were not exposed to any acts of deception or betrayal in the research process or in its published outcomes (University of Pretoria). The researcher applied for and received ethical clearance from the University of Pretoria (see Appendix F). This enabled the researcher to observe all the ethical codes of conduct and procedures as stipulated (see 3.11 for an in-depth description of ethical considerations).

## 1.10 OUTLINE OF STUDY

This dissertation comprises of five chapters.

### **Chapter 1: Introduction and Orientation to the study**

The first chapter of this study states the orientation and background of the proposed research, the rationale, as well as the method and plan of study.

### **Chapter 2: Literature study**

This chapter of the study provides an in-depth account of the literature that is relevant to this study according to the ecosystemic factors outlined in Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory.

### **Chapter 3: Designing and conducting research**

This chapter presents the layout and implementation of the proposed qualitative research methodology, the selected research design, research participants and data collection procedure, including addressing credibility, trustworthiness, and ethical considerations pertinent to the empirical research of this study.

### **Chapter 4: Data analysis and findings**

This chapter consists of the presentation and discussion of the acquired data and information obtained from the photo voice method, narratives, semi-structured interviews and focus group interview. The interpretation and analysis of the results emerged from data provided by each participant.

### **Chapter 5: Results and recommendations**

In this chapter relevant conclusions are drawn and recommendations from the study are presented. A synthesis of the main findings from literature and the empirical study is made. A synopsis of research is provided that inform recommendations for further study.



## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

*“Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it.”*

English Proverb

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

Many countries around the world experience a shortage of teachers, and South Africa is no exception. ECE in South Africa specifically is affected more severely, particularly in township and rural areas (Crosser, 2009) and it is generally recognized that there is a serious shortage of well-trained, qualified teachers at this level (Arends & Phurutse, 2009). Parallel situations are recorded in the United States, New Zealand, and Great Britain with literature showing that each of these countries is experiencing increased demand for qualified early childhood staff. The shortage is exacerbated by significant turnover and attrition in the existing early childhood workforce (University of New South Whales Research Consortium, 2002: 18). The reasons for the shortage of staff range from educational opportunities, graduates leaving the profession, work conditions to the professional support and status of the profession (UNSWRC, 2002: iii).

Adding to this predicament, universities in South Africa experience a very low enrolment rate of Black students in ECE teacher training. This study aims at exploring ecosystemic factors that influence Black student teachers' perceptions and experiences of ECE. In doing so, it also attempts to determine possible reasons for the weak interest in this field. It moreover attempts to address the issues related to the strengthening of the capacity of higher education institutions to provide more Foundation Phase teachers to meet the growing demand for teachers among the Black community in South Africa. In determining these reasons, the importance and value of ECE will be discussed first.

## 2.2 EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION: A GLOBAL FOUNDATION FOR FUTURE LEARNING

A nation's future is essentially dependent on its young children. "What happens to children in their first days, months and years of life affects their development, the development of our society and the development of our world" (Bernard van Leer Foundation, 2004:3).

The field of ECE has received increased attention in recent decades. "Globally, urbanisation, changing economic circumstances, migration and adjustments to family structure have resulted in greater acknowledgement of formal early childhood care and education as a feasible alternative to home based care-giving" (Are, 2007; Bowes, Watson & Pearson, 2008, in Pearson & Degotardi, 2009:99). These researchers conclude that ECE has the potential to promote change and enhance the lives of communities on a global scale. The Organization for African Unity (2001:6) agrees when they report: "The future of Africa lies with the well-being of its children and youth". This organization furthermore acknowledges that socio-economic transformation and growth rests with investment in the young people of the continent. "Today's investment in children is tomorrow's peace, stability, security, democracy, and sustainable development" (Pan-African Forum for Children, 2001). Similarly, Aidoo (2008) maintains that ECD is the foundation of human development whereby a focus on the young child and holistic ECD provides an opportunity for sustainable human development, economic growth, social change, and transformation in Africa.

Universal provision of formal early childhood services has also been promoted via international organisations who view the early years as formative in terms of later development and learning (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 1990). These developments have stimulated global interest in the provision of early childhood services and, in particular, the goal of achieving positive outcomes for young children. Kaga (2007:54), for example, supports UNESCO'S goals in stating that education empowers children and societies "...by equipping them with values and basic skills that allow them to critically reflect and make informed decisions about issues and courses of action". By equipping

young children with important life and learning skills, ECE has the potential to promote change and enhance the lives of communities on a global scale.

Garcia, Virata and Dunkelberg (2008) emphasize the importance of investing in young children to increase primary school completion rates. National data from 47 sub-Saharan African countries reveals a strong association between early childhood factors and success in primary school and furthermore, average primary school completion rates are strongly associated with the level of pre-primary enrolment and with children's health and nutrition status in their early years. Investing in young children would likely improve the chances of these children to succeed later in life. The completion rates in the primary years, as well as the primary gross enrolment rates, are positively affected by the level at which countries invest during the early years in nutrition, health, preschools, and childhood care (Garcia *et al.*, 2008:57). Young (1996) maintains that by improving the quality of education, lifelong human capital improves which in turn fosters social behaviours that lessen welfare costs. It also benefits community development and such investments in ECE would furthermore contribute to the longer term economic development of sub-Saharan African countries.

Another issue regarding ECE is that learners have to be prepared for their future responsibilities as citizens of a democratic society (Schoeman, 2005). This author declares that many institutions help to develop citizens' knowledge and skills to shape their civic character and commitments, for example family, religious institutions, the media, and community groups which all exert important influences. In her study, Schoeman (2005:275) furthermore ascribes a specific responsibility to ECE programmes whilst maintaining that they bear a special and historic responsibility for the development of civic competency and responsibility. Aidoo (2008) agrees when asserting that countries need to develop ECE policies that will guide strategic decision-making and resource allocation (Aidoo, 2008).

Research has shown that quality care and education during early childhood are beneficial to children's growth and development throughout life and it will moreover ensure that children grow up with the necessary skills and capabilities to cope with the expectations of childhood and later, with adulthood (Samuels, Bophela & Seleti, 2009:40). However, this is subject to the condition that a sufficient supply of teachers

who are well educated and trained at higher education institutions are available within a country.

## **2.2.1 EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA**

### **2.2.1.1 Government response to ECE**

In South Africa, ECD is defined as “...a comprehensive approach to policies and programmes for children from birth to nine years with active participation of practitioners, their parents and other caregivers” (Education White Paper 5 on Early Childhood Development, 2001:7). Young children “...are holders of all rights enshrined in the Constitution and early childhood is regarded as a critical period for the realization of these rights” (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2005:1). The basis for service delivery for young children in South Africa is found in government’s commitment to child rights as specified in the constitution and rights instruments approved by government (Biersteker & Streak, 2008:12). The South African Constitution (Republic of South Africa, 1996) builds on the primary interests of the child, non-discrimination, survival and development and participation whilst the primary responsibility lies with parents to raise children with needed assistance given by the state (Biersteker & Streak, 2008).

The South African government has responded to challenges such as access to ECE and disadvantaged members and low qualifications of staff, in its efforts to establish universal access to Grade R by 2012 (South African Institute for Distance Education, 2007). Dr Zola Skweyiya, Minister of Social Development verbalises Government’s commitment when stating: “In the human life cycle the early childhood phase from birth to nine years is considered the most important phase for every human being. Giving children the best start in life means ensuring them good health, proper nutrition and early learning” (Maaga, 2009:1). Another area for which Government is primarily responsible, both logistically and in terms of funding, is the remuneration of teachers and the recognition of their qualifications (South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE), 2007:19). It has been identified that the employment of qualified staff is an indicator of good quality childcare and even with accreditation, high quality care will be at risk until each and every childhood educator is encouraged to enter and remain in the profession (Keller, 2001).



### 2.2.1.2 Supply of Black teachers

In the National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa (2006) the aim is to strike a balance between the number of teachers entering and leaving the profession every year and to “...ensure that appropriately qualified teachers fill all vacancies in all schools” (DoE, 2006:11). Numerous factors influence the above-mentioned supply and demand of teachers (also see 2.2.1.3):

- The Ministry’s qualification requirements for teaching and the South African Council of Educator’s criteria for registration as an educator.
- The annual number of graduates from initial teacher education programmes who make themselves available for employment as teachers for the first time.
- This graduate output is reduced by the number of students who do not complete their programmes, and by those who choose not to teach in South Africa, or not to teach at all. International migration figures do indicate a net annual loss of teachers from South Africa, although many who do leave return after a short period abroad, often as better teachers.
- By contrast, since the end of Apartheid, there has been an increasing interest among foreign teachers, especially from elsewhere in Africa, to teach in South Africa which strengthens the supply.
- A further variable is the number of qualified teachers who are not currently employed in education. (DoE, 2006:11)

Furthermore, a survey of early childhood teacher production at higher education institutions in South Africa in 2009 indicated the urgent need for more African mother-tongue teachers, that is, Black teachers speaking one of the nine official languages of the Black population (Green, 2010), and also that only 13% of teachers in Foundation Phase who finished their studies in 2009, were Black. In this regard Robinson, Paccione and Rodriguez (2003:202), highlight the importance of Black teachers when maintaining that they promote positive cultural understanding in racially mixed schools. According to these authors they function as “cultural brokers” for the growing number of diverse learners while playing a critical role in the lives of all learners when attempting to banish the “...myth of racial and ethnic inferiority in the minds of White students and students of colour”.

As stated previously, the South African Department of Education (2009) indicated that presently 4147 Foundation Phase teachers are needed annually to meet the growing enrolment of children, yet only 1275 graduates were expected to emerge during 2009. Of these expected graduates, only 168 were Black teachers speaking African languages which underscores the critical shortage of Black teachers in predominantly Black areas (Green, 2010). In 2010 a mere 7.92% of the student population in the Early Childhood Education Department at the higher education institution under study was Black (Faculty of Education, 2010). This disheartening statistic becomes even more disturbing when taken into account that higher education institutions experienced an impressive growth in student numbers during the same year (Gbadamosi & De Jager, 2009) and historically White universities experienced a dramatic shift in demographics. The results from a survey on Foundation Phase teacher production done by Green (2010) further reveals that only 1.5% (2 out of 135) Black students at the higher education institution under study were expected to progress to the final (fourth) year of study. In conclusion, Green (2010) states that Foundation Phase teacher production by public higher education institutions in South Africa confirms the view that the number of new Foundation Phase teachers being produced by the public higher education institutions falls short of national and provincial needs, and also that the production of African language Foundation Phase teachers (Black teachers) is particularly problematic, especially in the context of mother-tongue instruction in the early years.

Hobson-Horton and Owens (2004) comment that teacher education programmes should be proactive and aggressive in attempting to attract Black students in order to promote racial dialogue. They add that teacher education programmes should elevate the levels of sensitivity of professors in order to recruit and retain students. Furthermore, Black learners in schools are more successful when taught by teachers who reflect their home cultures (National Education Association, 2002). It therefore remains imperative to recruit adequate numbers of people into the profession to fill the growing need for teachers, particularly in rural areas (Steyn *et al.*, 2011).

### **2.2.1.3 Demand for Black teachers**

According to the National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa, "...the basic determinants of demand is the number of

teachers leaving the system and needing to be replaced, and the number required because of increased or decreased learner enrolment” (DoE, 2006:10). Two noteworthy variables influence the teacher requirements per province:

- the unusual mortality rate, especially among young women teachers, which varies considerably by province; and
- the large-scale migration of families from rural areas to urban and metropolitan centres, which reduces teacher demand in some provinces (or parts of provinces) while increasing it in others (DoE, 2006:10).

Moreover, especially pertaining to Black learners, to have a teacher who had personal experience as a member of a marginalized group helped them because that teacher understood the importance of academic achievement from “another” perspective (Robinson *et al.*, 2003). When these Black teachers were present there were greater gains for Black learners, fewer placements in special education, decreased absenteeism, greater involvement in school activities, and increased parental involvement (National Education Association, 2002).

If it is so important to attract more Black teachers into the ECE profession, it seems pertinent to enquire about the reasons for the low registration rate. “Whatever the fine detail, there is clearly a lack of fit between overall demand and supply, and also between demand and supply for particular skills in particular schools” (DoE, 2006:11). The National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa reports shortages in the Foundation and Intermediate Phases of the system (DoE, 2006). In exploring the possible causes for the disinterest and low registration rate in the Foundation Phase, this study would likely reveal that there are no simple, one-sided explanations for the disinterest in teaching in Foundation Phase, but rather that the issue is more complex and should be considered from a specific context in order to comprehend the number of interactions of the various factors that play a role in the dilemma.

#### **2.2.1.4 Recruitment of Black student teachers**

The National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development reports the following:

*There has been a significant decline in the enrolment of student teachers over the past decade. The perceived causes of diminishing interest in the*

*profession are the poor public image of the profession and its status, particularly among young people, uncertainty about where new teachers would be placed after qualification, a competitive employment market, challenging working conditions, and changes with respect to the award of service linked bursaries to student teachers. The result has been especially evident in the low enrolment of African student teachers. The situation is especially serious in the Foundation Phase where learners require teachers with mother-tongue competence (DoE, 2006:12).*

Steyn *et al.* (2011) report that the lack of recruitment for Black student teachers in ECE, particularly in rural areas, is largely due to the higher prestige of other career options, the linguistic challenges that students face, the costs associated with university education and early teacher education in particular, as well as issues of access to transport and resources. Similar to this finding, Robinson *et al.* (2003:202) point out that in the United States, the under-representation of Black teachers reflects the broader array of opportunities and incentives to enter other fields.

South Africa's problem of recruiting more Black students into primary education is part of an international challenge (Santoro, 2007). According to 2007 figures the demographics of teachers has changed little since 2000, and little growth is reported in the number of students entering teacher education programs (Planty *et al.*, 2009). It seems that other countries encounter similar situations. In the United Kingdom, Basit *et al.* (2007:280) note that "...the under-representation of some ethnic groups in the teaching profession continues to present a challenge both to policy-makers and schools". In the United States, Hobson-Horton and Owens (2004) claim that with the scarcity of minority teachers, the need for minority teachers in public schools, and the small numbers of minority students enrolled in colleges and universities, it is essential that teacher education programmes recruit and retain minority students in their programs. Moreover, Delpit (in Santoro, 2007:92) believes that one should strive to make the teaching force diverse, for teachers who share the ethnic and cultural backgrounds of our increasingly diverse student bodies may serve, along with parents and other community members, to provide insights that might otherwise remain hidden.

In general, qualified Black teachers' under-representation is a problem in South Africa and elsewhere in the developed world. Griffin and Allen (2006:538) attest that much of this under-representation is rooted in Black students' preparation or readiness for university, as well as their eligibility. Research has consistently demonstrated that the number of Black recruits to teacher training programmes at higher education institutions is lower than would be expected in relation to the Black constituency of the country (Basit *et al.*, 2007). Moreover, the attrition rate of Black students is significantly higher than that of their White counterparts.

In considering the approaches that must be taken to attend to the shortfall of Black student teachers in ECE, I will explore the perceptions and experiences of Black ECE student teachers who are among the very few who contemplate ECE as a career. In doing so, I will make use of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory, which consists of the following systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986): microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and the chronosystem. Subsequently Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory will be used as theoretical framework and the literature will be discussed in accordance with the various systems.

### **2.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: BRONFENBRENNER'S ECOLOGICAL THEORY**

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory perceives an individual's development within the context of the system of relationships which constitutes his environment (Paquette & Ryan, 2001). According to Allen (2010:3) Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory is based on the premise that "...all individuals are part of interrelated systems that locate the individual at the centre and move out from the centre to include all systems that affect the individual". An individual therefore, does not operate in a vacuum, but is shaped by surrounding circumstances, events, timeframes and so forth which link with with the hypothesis of Bronfenbrenner (1995) which states that human development is the product of an interaction among process, person, context and time.

Utilising these systems to understand the perceptions and experiences of Black student teachers of ECE appears to be the most appropriate theoretical point of departure for this study since it explains the interaction and mutual relations between

various systems which affect ECE in South Africa. According to Bronfenbrenner (1986), these interactions are reciprocal, with the student influencing the systems and each system having an effect on the student. Furthermore, since the ecological model considers and incorporates factors inherent both within the student as well as the student's educational institution, family and community, it provides a contextual map which aids in understanding the many different factors contributing to the student's perceptions and experiences of ECE, including broader social, cultural, and historical forces (Abrams, Theberge & Karan, 2005). As such, the model offers a useful framework for identifying appropriate themes that influence Black students' perceptions and experience of ECE (see chapter 4 for a discussion of data analysis).

Furthermore, the ecological approach to human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986) explores the interaction between an individual and the social and physical environment. This approach is based on the belief that "...human development is the process through which the growing person acquires a more extended, differentiated and valid conception of the ecological environment, and becomes motivated and able to engage in activities that reveal the properties of, sustain, or restructure that environment at levels of similar or greater complexity in form and content" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:27). Moreover, Leonard (2011:991) infers that "Bronfenbrenner's theory is an attractive one because it is expansive, yet focused; one eye is trained on the complex layers of university, family and community relationships, and the other eye is sharply focused on the individual". It may hence be assumed that the relationships of students with one another, the lecturer, and the environment within the context of the university are reciprocal and interconnected. In this study, the actions of all role-players in the context of the university can affect the behaviours of everyone in that environment, creating a dynamic context and culture (Allen, 2010). Subsequently, the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem will be discussed.

According to Santrock (2002:41) the microsystem in Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory is the setting in which the individual lives and includes contexts such as the person's family, peers, school, and neighbourhood. Furthermore, Paquette and Ryan (2001) assert that the microsystem is the layer closest to the individual and contains the structures with which the individual has direct contact. The most direct interactions with social agents take place in this system and the "...individual is not

viewed as a passive recipient of experiences in these settings, but as someone who helps to construct the settings” (Santrock, 2002:41). For the purpose of this study, the microsystem, which involves the core of ecological systems theory, will constitute the profile of the Black student, their perceptions of education, and various factors that serve to inhibit or invite Black students at higher education institutions.

Berk (2000) explains that the mesosystem is the layer that provides the connection between the structures of the individual’s microsystem, which may include the relation of family experiences to educational experiences, educational experiences to religious experiences, and family experiences to peer experiences. (Paquette & Ryan, 2001:2). For the purpose of this study, the mesosystem will refer to the academic and cultural relevance of higher education in South Africa and the impact thereof on Black students’ perceptions and experiences.

Santrock (2002:41) asserts that “...the exosystem is involved when experiences in another social setting – in which the individual does not have an active role – influence what the individual experiences in an immediate context”. Therefore, the exosystem defines the larger social system in which the individual does not function directly (Paquette & Ryan, 2001). For the purpose of this study, Black students socio-economic status as well as the financial barriers affecting Black students, will be considered.

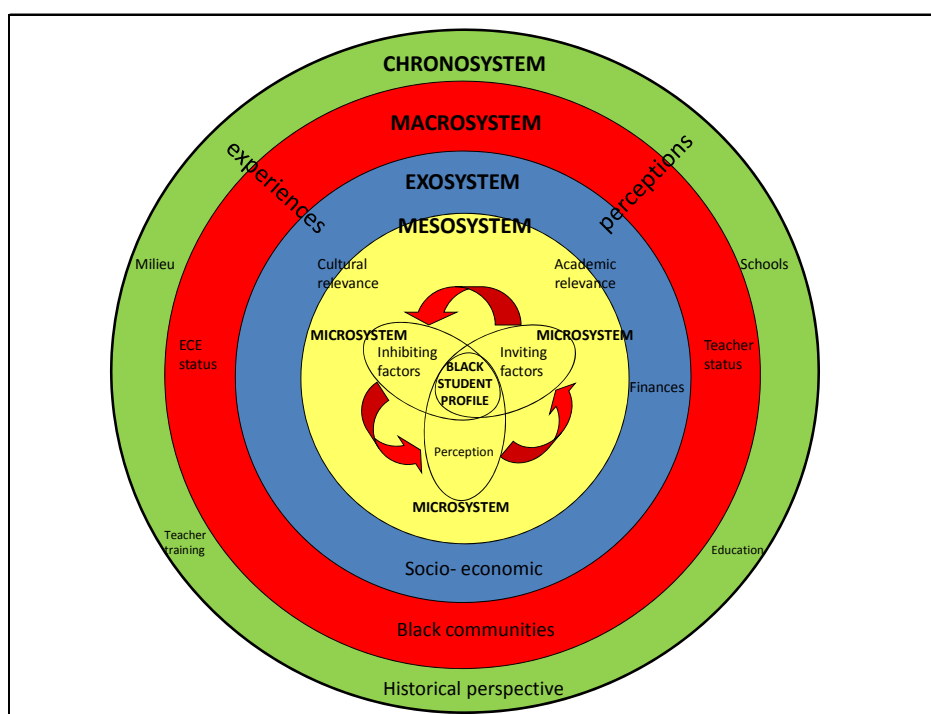
The macrosystem is considered to be the outermost layer in the individual’s environment and involves the culture in which individuals live (Santrock, 2002:42). The macrosystem in Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory involves the culture in which individuals live which refers to the behaviour patterns, beliefs, and all other products of a group of people that are passed on from generation to generation (Santrock, 2002:42). In this study, broader influences from the macrosystem, for example the status which Black communities ascribe to ECE and the ECE teacher, must be addressed in order to understand the complex interactions between various role players in ECE.

The outer system, which is the last, is the chronosystem which Paquette and Ryan (2001:3) define as the system that encompasses the dimension of time as it relates to an individual’s environments. It involves the patterning of environmental events



and transitions over the life course, as well as socio-historical circumstances (Santrock, 2002:42). For the purpose of this study, the chronosystem will involve the historical trends of education in South Africa as a contextual timeframe to understand Black student teachers' perceptions and experiences of ECE.

Bronfenbrenner's model may graphically be represented as follows:



**Figure 2.1: Graphic representation of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory according to the literature of this study** (Adapted from Swart & Pettipher, 2005)

## 2.4 LITERATURE ON BRONFENBRENNER'S SYSTEMS THEORY IN THE CONTEXT OF SOUTH AFRICA

Swart and Pettipher (2005) assert that the way individuals perceive their circumstances influences the way they respond to their human and physical contexts. Therefore, in considering the approaches that must be taken to build capacity in number and quality within the ECE programme, it is imperative to examine the various systems as they comply with the aims of this study. For the purpose of this study, I will provide a literature review that is relevant for the topics under study in each of the subsystems. I will begin each subsequent section by describing the theory under each of the systems, followed by a literature review in



the context of each system. This will take place consecutively from the outer layer to the core (i.e. chronosystem to microsystem) as I believe the historical events which shaped the current education system (which constitutes the chronosystem) forms the backdrop for the interpretation of the perceptions and experiences of Black students in ECE.

## **2.5 CHRONOSYSTEM**

Bronfenbrenner (1994:40) defines the chronosystem as encompassing developmental time-frames over the life course of an individual in family structure, socio-economic status, employment, place of residence or the degree of pressure and ability in everyday life. In this study, the chronosystem will focus on the historical background of education in South Africa, which may have a contributing impact on Black student teachers' perceptions and experiences of specifically ECE. This will include the schooling within the educational milieu, historical background of teacher training, the structure of government post-1994, and the history of higher education institutions, in order to illustrate a general exploration of the environment from which the Black students come.

### **2.5.1 HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA**

During the Apartheid regime (1948–1994), segregation in terms of education for Whites, Indians, Blacks and Coloureds was enforced via laws and policies. According to Swart (2004:233), "...this education system constituted a complex organisational structure of 17 departments, all under central state control". Moreover, there were reproduction in functions and services which created major inequalities of finances and materials between the departments, and especially, between racial groups (Swart, 2004:234).

#### **2.5.1.1 Schooling within the educational milieu**

During the pre-1994 period Black learners did not have access to mandatory basic education and were consequently subjected to disadvantaged services. Stevens (1997, in Lemon & Battersby-Lennard, 2009) states that differences in the quality of education due to decades of unequal state funding during the Apartheid era are

confirmed by the enormous disparities in the types of buildings, equipment, books and teachers available to these children.

Furthermore, school segregation according to Apartheid categories of White, Indian, Coloured, and Black, with separate education departments for each group and for each Black homeland, created and perpetuated huge inequalities. According to Lemon and Battersby-Lennard (2009), desegregation in the provinces disadvantaged Blacks in socioeconomic terms and consequently left the racial composition of both Black neighbourhoods and Black schools unchanged. Per capita spending was still nearly four times as much for Whites compared to Blacks when Apartheid ended in 1994 with the majority of Black schools possessing little beyond the shell of their buildings, whereas many White state schools were comparable with the best in the developed world (Lemon & Battersby-Lennard, 2009:2). Lethoko, Heystek and Maree (2001:311) posit that political and social instability over many years have led to a crisis in the South African education system.

One of the crucial challenges that the post-Apartheid South African democracy faced, was to reconstruct, against many odds, a society and education system that would create excellent conditions for teaching and learning (Masitsa, 1995:111). Yet schools in South Africa, especially Black schools, are still characterised by poor Grade 12 results, high absenteeism, pupils being late for classes, and irregular attendance of classes by both teachers and students (Nxumalo, 1995:55). Many of the current Black students enter higher education with an academic background typified by these conditions.

### **2.5.1.2 The history of teacher training in South Africa**

Teacher training in South Africa evolved from the country's system of Apartheid. With regard to how teacher training was organised under this system, Sayed (2004: 247) summarises the following inventory of events:

*As a consequence of the 1910 Constitution, White teacher training was located under the control of the then four provinces. The introduction to the Bantu Education Act in 1953 necessitated a system for training Black teachers. A racially stratified teacher education system emerged, with separate teacher education colleges for coloureds, Indians, and Black*

*people. As the 'homelands' policy took root in the early 1960's, each 'self-governing' and later 'independent' Black homeland took control of teacher education in its own area.*

Furthermore, in the 1960's, many fragmented and disconnected means to teacher education were established as teacher education colleges were racially and ethnically divided and by the early 1970's, teachers were trained at colleges and universities that were also separate in terms of race and ethnicity (Sayed, 2004).

"In 1979, there were no White teachers without a matric-level (Grade 12) qualification, while one third of African teachers (32%) had no matric and not many had degrees" (Christie, 1994:130). According to Steyn, Steyn and De Waal, (1997:24) the qualification structure for Whites was a School Leaving Certificate, with or without matric exemption at the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> year of schooling, after Standard 10 (currently Grade 12). On the other hand, Blacks could also obtain the School Leaving Certificate in Standard 10, but were provided with the option of obtaining a Junior Certificate after completing Standard 8 (currently Grade 10) (Steyn *et al.*, 1997). In an account of teaching in South Africa from 1692–1960, Coetzee (1963), mentions that provisions were made for three types of teaching training courses. With regard to this study, a two-year course to obtain a Lower Primary Certificate catered to those Black students who obtained Standard 8 as an admission requirement. Adikhari (1993:33) adds to this by stating that the "...T3 certificate, which had been the basic professional qualification for all teachers, was differentiated into two categories. The one obtained by Whites was designated '*Senior*' and the corresponding one for Blacks, '*Junior*'".

In addition, Sayed (2004:248) posits that for the Black population, educational opportunities were extremely limited, with very few Blacks completing basic education, and even fewer completing secondary schooling, which resulted in many students enrolling in teacher education programmes in order to obtain higher educational opportunities. To add, 90% of Black teachers did not obtain the minimum 3-year post-school teaching qualification in 1986 (Steyn *et al.*, 1997:36).

As a consequence of the above-mentioned, "...most currently serving teachers received their professional education and entered teaching when education was an

integral part of the Apartheid project and organised in racially and ethnically divided sub-systems” (DoE, 2006). The National Teacher Education Audit in 1995 which took place just after Apartheid ended, found 281 institutions offering in-service and pre-service teacher education to some 481 000 students (Teacher Education in South Africa (TESA), 2005). Teacher education was under the control of 18 education departments, which consisted of 32 “autonomous” universities or technikons, and roughly 105 colleges of education during Apartheid (Sayed, 2004: 248). According to TESA the above-mentioned audit also concluded that:

*... the quality of teacher education was generally poor, inefficient, and cost-ineffective. Synchronous with international trends, colleges of education were incorporated into existing universities and technikons as faculties or schools, and from 120 colleges with some 80 000 student teachers in 1994, colleges were first rationalised to 50 institutions, and then incorporated into higher education institutions in 2001.*

Currently, there are 23 higher education institutions in South Africa, of which 21 public universities offer initial teacher education programmes. However, only 13 of the 21 universities offer Foundation Phase initial teacher education programmes resulting in a short supply of Black student teachers (Green, 2010:4). Therefore, TESA (2005:3) states that “...the incorporation was aimed at ... addressing the gross differences in participation rates between Blacks and Whites. In aggregate, these measures were intended to transform an inefficient and an unresponsive system and make it relevant to the needs of a developing society”.

Due to the aforementioned ineffective schooling and consequent teacher training of Black students, it is possible that the purposeful disparities in education for Black people have contributed to the low status that this population group affords to the teaching profession.

### **2.5.1.3 Education post-1994**

Following the new democracy in 1994, South Africa underwent political as well as educational reform. Kader Asmal, the then Minister of Higher Education, emphasized that the principles of equity, redress, democratization, development, quality, effectiveness, efficiency, academic freedom and public accountability are “not

negotiable” and he furthermore suggested that more inclusive institutional cultures that embrace language and cultural diversity among staff and students were to be built so that “...all our people feel at home in higher education” (DoE, 2001). These institutions attempted to “...provide a system of education that builds democracy, human dignity, equality and social justice” (DoE, 2001) with its primary aim to broaden participation in higher education so as to reduce the highly stratified race and class structure of the country (Fraser & Killen, 2005).

Presently, the current generation of teachers is the first to experience the new non-racial, democratic transformation of the education system (DoE, 2006:6) which also presents a number of challenges. The National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development states that since 1994, “...teachers have had to cope with the rationalisation of the teaching community into a single national system, as well as the introduction of new curricula, which emphasise greater professional autonomy and require teachers to have new knowledge and applied competences and radical change in the demographic, cultural and linguistic composition of our classrooms” (DoE, 2006). However, the Report of the Ministerial Committee on Rural Education (2005) noted a shortage of qualified and competent teachers, problems of teaching in multi-grade and large classes, under-resourced school facilities, and limited access to professional development programmes for teachers (DoE, 2005).

It would be practical to say that the historical perspectives on education would be the main contributing factors towards the current state of expansive underdevelopment in the lives of the Black population in post-Apartheid South Africa, and although “political Apartheid” has been defeated, “educational Apartheid” is still present in the lives of many (Mattes, 2002). Furthermore, in his historical analyses of Apartheid and education in South Africa, Abdi (2003:1) found that the “...systems of ‘mislearning’ have situationally, or more appropriately, deliberately thwarted the environmentally based social development of indigenous populations” with the result that education is still seen as a location of resistance where the quest for liberation in all spheres continue. A particular view about formal education became deeply entrenched in the psyche of the Black community, which will be discussed in the macrosystem.

## 2.6 MACROSYSTEM

Bronfenbrenner (1994:40) describes the macrosystem as consisting of the belief systems, bodies of knowledge, material resources, customs, life-styles, opportunity structures, hazards and life course options that are embedded in each of these broader systems. The macrosystem therefore constitutes the underlying mind-sets of communities regarding a specific phenomenon. In this study, the macrosystem will be regarded as the contextual factors within the Black student teacher's life world which influence their thoughts (decisions), attitudes and behaviour in response to their particular approach to education. In order to explain the macrosystem in relation to this study, the relationship between culture and education will be discussed with particular reference to Black communities and their regard for the status of ECE and the status of the ECE teacher.

“Regardless of the demographics, each society has unique value systems within its culture that are imbibed by the people who form part thereof – the way they perceive their environment and that they derive from the conventions within that community” (O’Hagan, 1997, in Chabilall, 2010:22). According to Halliger and Leithwood (1998:132), the defining features of the environment will determine the characteristic relationships within the educational culture or climate and society that such a culture emanates from. Education is ingrained in communities and it resonates the cultures of the families and communities as well as their values and beliefs, which reflects the cultural and social practices of that community. “Culture shapes education while education can serve as a medium to preserve and promote culture” (Chabilall, 2010: 8). Accordingly, while a particular culture is recognisable by its unique values, beliefs, climate, ethos, atmosphere, character and tone (Elbot & Fulton, 2008:18), certain characteristics from the community it serves are absorbed by this culture.

In view of the aforementioned and for the purpose of this study, a discussion of the dual relationship between culture (which is represented as the Black student teacher) and the various role-players in education that contribute to Black student teachers perceptions and experiences of ECE will be provided below.

### 2.6.1 THE STATUS OF ECE IN BLACK COMMUNITIES

During the Apartheid years, Black preschool education was not high on the government's list of priorities. As previously mentioned, there were inequalities between White and Black schooling that were visible in the widespread differences in the "...types of buildings, equipment, books, and teachers available to each group" (Morrow, 1990). Furthermore, Gallie, Sayed and Williams (1997:462) confirm that "...perceptions of the system's overall lack of legitimacy reinforced and fostered poor management practices and the consequent undermining of basic expectations such as punctuality, teacher preparation, and learner participation".

Before the mid-1990s ECE programmes were almost unheard of in Black communities (National Planning Commission, 2011). UNICEF (2009) mentions that in 2000 only 13% of young children were enrolled in some form of ECE programme and the "...vast majority of young children were not enrolled in ECE programmes and their development and stimulation was left to the discretion and the capacity of their parents and caregivers (UNICEF, 2009:46, 47). Stevens (1997) asserts that Black communities stepped in and organised preschools called "Educare Centres" in the rural areas and townships which were catered for by "...teachers' – many of whom did not complete secondary schooling" (Stevens, 1997:396).

Since then, the introduction of Grade R for five-year-olds and the expansion of ECE have resulted in a notable increase in learner numbers. Today, about 80 percent of all learners aged five are enrolled in grade R and about half the children below this age receive some form of preschool education (National Planning Commission, 2011). This report laments that "...the quality of early childhood education and care for poor Black communities is inadequate and generally very poor. Early childhood development is underfunded by government and is largely provided through support provided by donors to nongovernmental organisations" (National Planning Commission, 2011:14). Furthermore most ECE centres are found in urban areas, and the lowest access rates in remote rural areas where the majority of the Black population reside (Prochner & Kabiru, 2008).

Although it has been recognised that ECE has the ability to counteract the many factors which contribute to the poverty and vulnerability of young children in South



Africa such as high rates of unemployment among caregivers, lack of interest and support within families regarding children's education and migrant labour which takes parents away from their children (Ebrahim, 2009:52), children in rural Black families are of particular concern as they are likely to adjust poorly to school, experience increased repetition and drop-out early from school (Education White Paper 5 on Early Childhood Development, 2001). It is therefore crucial that teachers who are dedicated to ECE enter the system to uplift the status of ECE in Black communities.

## **2.6.2 THE STATUS OF THE ECE TEACHER IN BLACK COMMUNITIES**

Prochner and Kabiru (2008) state that enrolment rates of ECE teachers are low which may be attributed to many African governments, including South Africa, who do not employ preschool teachers. As a consequence a large proportion of the teachers are not trained. Furthermore, UNICEF (2009:53) suggests that according to anecdotal evidence from rural communities and informal settlements, ECE programmes are run by dedicated women, for example retired teachers, who care for the young children and help prepare them for schooling at no pay. Ackerman (2006) offers the following analysis of the low professional status of ECE teachers:

*ECE teachers' abilities to increase their policy capital and address their status are constrained by the very problem that needs to be addressed. Because of low wages teachers cannot afford the kinds of postsecondary education that could give them both higher status and the knowledge base to articulate why the field needs a skilled, well-paid workforce. The regulatory and economic systems that bring about low wages will not change unless they are addressed through policymakers' agendas, but teachers pay – and the facts that the work itself is considered to be part of the women's sphere – hinders access to the very mechanism and dialogue that could potentially rectify the situation (Ackerman, 2006:101).*

According to Steyn *et al.* (2011: 583) since 2003 "...the attrition rate of teachers has steadily increased due to contract terminations, resignations and morbidity". As a result of the availability of job prospects in other sectors, many South African teachers below the age of 30 are inclined to resign in greater numbers than older teachers (Steyn *et al.*, 2011). Also, many teachers have left to take teaching posts in



other countries (De Villiers & Degazon-Johnson, 2007). In addition, Hall, Altman, Nkomo, Peltzer and Zuma (2005) discovered that more than half of the 20,000 teachers they surveyed opted to leave teaching because of its inferior professional status and low job satisfaction related to a heavy workload and insufficient wages (in Kruss, 2008). Furthermore, Steyn *et al.* (2011) found that many Black students were influenced in their decisions to pursue careers that are more profitable or at least dissuaded from initially studying ECE due to low regard for the teaching profession by peers, community members, and particularly their former teachers.

Although provision for ECE is lagging behind the rest of the world, Africa gradually becomes more aware of the value of investing in the education of their young children (Garcia *et al.*, 2008). It is thus important to have trained and qualified ECE teachers to empower the young children of our country since “...there is a clear imbalance between the graduate profile and the need for the ECE teachers” (Green, 2010:8). Pertaining to Black students, it seems as if this is not always the case when they receive their education in early childhood. Instead, they are exposed to insufficient resources, overcrowded classes and inadequately qualified teachers (Fiske and Ladd, 2006; Stevens, 1997). These circumstances may adversely affect the quality of their education as well as their regard for this stage of schooling. Being part of a particular culture and belief system, it may be assumed that the perceptions of their communities regarding ECE together with their advantageous political position with regard to other career opportunities that are available to Black students, may influence the value that Black student teachers attach to this phase. The abovementioned could influence the low registration rate of Black student teachers in ECE. Subsequently, the financial resources, or lack thereof, affect Black student teachers’ perceptions. Their experience of ECE will be discussed as part of the exosystem.

## **2.7 EXOSYSTEM**

The exosystem comprises the connections and processes that take place between two or more settings, at least one of which does not contain the developing person, but in which events occur that indirectly influence processes within the immediate setting in which the developing person lives, such as the relationship between the home and the parents’ workplace (Bronfenbrenner 1994:40). For the purpose of this

study, the exosystem will refer to the context in which Black student teachers do not participate in directly, but which has an impact on their perceptions and experiences of ECE, such as the social context in which they find themselves interacting with the economic settings that are associated with the Black student teacher. In this study the exosystem will refer to the impact of Black students' socio-economic status on their choice whether or not to study ECE, with specific reference to the financial barriers that Black student teachers experience in ECE.

### **2.7.1 BLACK STUDENTS' SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS**

UNICEF (2009:9) confirms that “living standards and race are closely correlated, with poverty being concentrated amongst Black Africans”. It seems that poverty still abounds in the communities where Black students originate. Finchelescu, Tredoux, Mynhardt, Pillay and Muianga (2007: 721) posit that recent research indicates for the most part that a racially segregated character has been preserved in residential neighbourhoods. Breier (2010) claims the following with regard to the socio-economic status of Blacks:

*South Africa is regarded as a middle-income country in general but it is also one of the most unequal in the world. There are pockets of extreme wealth and a significant middle class, but the majority of the population is very poor, with the extent of poverty still mirroring the patterns of racial discrimination under Apartheid when the National Party government privileged Whites and discriminated against Indians/Asians, Coloureds and Blacks, in that order of severity. Blacks achieved the worst quality and least financed education and were—and still are—the poorest, despite a rapidly growing elite (Breier, 2010: 660).*

Black students come from educational impoverished backgrounds but also from different cultural, social and language backgrounds (Hay, 2008; Ngidi, 2007) and more specifically, different socio-economic backgrounds (Oloyede, 2009). Black students form part of an “...organized system rooted in an ideology of White superiority that categorizes, ranks and differentially allocates societal resources to the citizenry” (Oloyede, 2009:430). Therefore, it can be assumed that Black students' socio-economic status stemmed from an unequally governed political standpoint.

Similarly, the urban geography of Apartheid still shapes present day cities and while middle class suburbs are becoming more integrated as the Black middle class relocates from former Black townships, poorer students are only able to afford accommodation in the Black (African) townships (Walker, 2005:138). Smith (2008:150) considered the intersection of race and socio-economic status and found that young people from impoverished backgrounds have the potential to succeed at university, but they are often derailed by the perception that the cost of tertiary education far exceeds the financial abilities of their families which causes them to explore more tangible, realistic options. According to a study of African American students in teacher education done by Hobson-Horton and Owens (2004:95), Black students were confronted with financial concerns since "...either they had to work while attending school, spent excessive amounts of money for class projects and practical assignments, travelled away from the university to complete practicals, and incurred transportation costs relating to travel to practical sites".

The majority of studies on Black students highlight the challenges of Black students at higher institutions (Gbadamosi & De Jager 2009; Kamper & Steyn, 2009; Santoro, 2007; Griffen & Allen, 2006; Davis *et al.*, 2004; Sedlacek, 1999). These barriers are consistently identified as "lack of finances, language barriers and being exposed to inner-city conditions, which hamper achievement on tertiary level, thus continuing the social inequity and educational imbalances from the past" (Kamper & Steyn, 2009:118).

More specifically, the literature reviewed on Black students perceptions and experiences consistently exposed financial difficulties as a contributing factor to their negative regard for ECE (Hobson-Horton & Owens, 2004; Kamper & Steyn, 2012; Steyn *et al.*, 2011; Steyn & Harris, 2011). Moreover, potential teaching students seem to be discouraged to study teaching due to the low salaries, low regard for the profession by family and home community, and the attraction of jobs with more status (Steyn & Harris, 2011). Teaching young children is regarded as the work of grandmothers and young girls rather than a professional pursuit worthy of university study, and it moreover receives little respect from students and their families (Steyn, Harris & Hartell, 2011).

The above-mentioned may also contribute to the teaching profession which continues to remain predominantly White, middle class, and female and there are few signs that this state of affairs is changing in teacher education programmes (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010). Wallet (2006:34) adds that the majority of ECE teachers in almost all regions and countries are female, and that low salaries are attributed to the caring aspect of teaching young children which is often judged to require minimal skills because it is viewed as an extension of women's familial role in rearing children (Ackerman, 2006:99).

### **2.7.2 FINANCIAL BARRIERS AFFECTING BLACK STUDENTS**

According to a study done by Breier (2010:669) on the reconceptualisation of the role of finances in higher education "...finances play a very important role for those in the lower socio-economic groups, not only in choice of institution and study programme, but also in leading to premature departure after registration, either because of unexpected financial demands or because the student underestimated the full cost of higher education". Similarly, in their study on recruitment and retention of Black students in ECE, Steyn and Harris (2011) found that the limited financial resources of Black students meant that they had to learn to balance the funds they might receive from home and the bursaries which were earmarked for tuition, books, accommodation, and food. Black students therefore often look for ways to economize by skipping meals, sharing books, or walking long distances to campus to attend classes (Steyn & Harris, 2011).

According to Crosser (2009) academically successful students have enhanced opportunities, but more noteworthy is that they are supported by their own communities to enter more esteemed careers rather than teaching. This seems to be the case in South Africa where a government-funded aid scheme provides only partial costs to students, while a family's economic status, which is connected to racial entitlement or hindrance, also determines the type of education a student is likely to receive (Breier, 2010). Moreover, for Black student teachers, this is possibly due to the fact that they face "...challenges of accessing financial assistance, limited bursaries, or bursaries paying out too late, challenges with accommodation and the institutional barriers such as language and cultural alienation (which) further disadvantage potential candidates" (Steyn & Harris, 2011).

The issue of financial implications therefore seems to be a double-edged sword. On the one hand, Kamper and Steyn (2012) postulate that the programme seems to be very expensive, but on the other hand the low numeration of teachers erodes the status of ECE – especially in the Black communities where success is measured in terms of financial rewards.

## **2.8 MESOSYSTEM**

The mesosystem comprises the connections and processes that take place between two or more settings containing the developing person, such as the relations between home and university, and university and workplace (Sekopane, 2012). For the purpose of this study, the mesosystem will constitute the academic and cultural relevance of an institution and how it impacts on the academic adjustment of the Black student that emerges from a very particular cultural and academic background. For instance, pertaining to Black students it seems that there is a relationship between the academic and cultural influences from home, and the academic and cultural influences from the university. These relationships will be discussed below.

### **2.8.1 ACADEMIC AND CULTURAL RELEVANCE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA**

With globalisation and subsequent migration, diverse learning settings are becoming the norm (Gbadamosi & De Jager, 2009). Societies are becoming more and more culturally diverse and as education institutions reflect the societies they are part of (Smith, 2008), the implications are that more and more students are receiving their education from institutions and teachers who represent unfamiliar cultures and learning material (Ladson-Billings, 2001; Gay, 2010; National Education Association, 2002; Sedlacek, 1999; Stevens, 1997). Given the fact that the university and the individual student may represent two different cultures, it may result in universities and students often not sharing the same vision with regard to how education should take place and who should primarily be responsible for their education.

With specific reference to ECE, Basit *et al.* (2007) points out that although the student population in South Africa is becoming increasingly diverse, the teaching profession, and particularly ECE, is still dominated by White females (Basit *et al.*, 2006; Green, 2010). Teacher preparation often conserves the abovementioned and

Ladson-Billings (2001:37) aptly remarks that the “...cultural makeup of the teacher education profession is embarrassingly homogenous”. When teachers represent their home culture, learners experience more success (National Education Association, 2002), and on the other hand, students experience barriers when they find the content irrelevant or culturally foreign (Gay, 2010). Subsequently education institutions are confronted with a unique set of challenges for establishing meaningful teacher-student relations.

Culture has been defined as “...shared beliefs and values...”; as well as “...rules and traditions, norms, and expectations that seem to permeate everything” (Deal & Peterson, in Leonard, 2011:989); and it is reflected in the language (both oral and written) and choices of the group (Leonard, 2011:990). Furthermore, Leonard (2011:990) suggests that multiple cultures can exist and compete, side by side “...among student groups, in the teachers’ lounge or in the administrators’ offices”, thereby implicating that the Black student teacher at a former White university must adapt to the culture of the higher education institutions, the lecturer and the learning content in order to experience success. In this regard Van Wyk (2010:250) cautions that Black students have not necessarily adjusted to “...Western forms of knowledge...” which is evident in their low throughput and completion rate.

In view of the aforementioned, “...there can be no doubt that issues of diversity form the crux of what may be one of the biggest challenges yet to face those of us whose business it is to educate educators” (Delpit, 1995:105). It is therefore “...(a) challenge for South Africa to implement a programme of teacher education designed to prepare a teaching force to address the needs of its increasingly diverse student body” (Ball, 2006:4). It remains a question whether current former White higher education institutions in South Africa are equipped to accommodate the academic and cultural needs of the diverse student population.

Since Black students have not always been welcomed in the formal educational system due to Apartheid, they have developed ways of learning outside the system. Sedlacek (1999) maintains that these ways are often creative and culturally relevant and Blacks who were able to demonstrate knowledge they gained in non-traditional ways, were more likely to succeed at university compared to those who could not. Implicit in this understanding, is knowing how students’ ethnicity, race and social

class shape and construct their lived experiences, both within and outside of higher education institutions (Santoro, 2007:82). The increase in student retention associated with demonstrating knowledge in this way was more than twice as great for Blacks compared to Whites (Sedlacek, 1999:544).

In relation to the mesosystem, the Black student teachers targeted in this study interact with this system from a particular academic and cultural background, which in turn influences the choices that they make and the experiences that they encounter in ECE.

## **2.9      MICROSYSTEM**

Bronfenbrenner (1994:39) defines the microsystem as "...a pattern of activities, social roles and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given face-to-face setting with particular physical, social and symbolic features that invite, permit or inhibit engagement in sustained, progressively more complex interaction with an activity in the immediate environment, such as a family, university, peer group and workplace". It is an environment in which the developing person spends a good deal of time engaging in activities and interactions (Jasnoski & Scharz, 1985:473). In this study the microsystem will constitute the Black student with emphasis on his particular perceptions and experiences as influenced by ecosystemic factors.

### **2.9.1    PROFILE OF THE BLACK STUDENT**

The Black student in South Africa is a product of an education system with a history of atrocities which created a particular profile of the Black student. As previously mentioned, the education system under the Apartheid government was racially unequal by design prior to the first democratic elections in 1994. Whites were serviced by schools with an abundance of resources, qualified teachers and all the required teaching aids whereas Blacks were "systematically deprived" of the latter. (Fiske & Ladd, 2006: 96) (see also 2.5.1)

According to the Department of Education (2001:4) educational reform focused on providing "...a system of education that builds democracy, human dignity, equality and social justice". The main objective of this transformation was to provide



unconditional access in terms of race to higher education institutions in order to minimise “...the highly stratified race and class structure of the country” (Fraser & Killen, 2005:26). Brüssow (2007) maintains that 72% of the South African student population was Black in 2007, yet their throughput rates were lower than their White counterparts. The higher education participation rate amongst Black students was 14.1% while it was 59.1% for White students (Snyman, 2012:501) due to the majority of Black students failing or not completing their tertiary studies. The following question subsequently arises: What may be the reason(s) for the low success rate of Black students at higher education institutions?

Students in South Africa enter university based on the results that they obtain at the end of grade 12, expressed as a score (Application Point System), which is awarded according to a rating scale where points are allocated in line with the marks obtained in each Senior Certificate subject passed. The sum of these points determines an individual’s Academic Point Score (APS). Kamper and Steyn (2012) state that although Black students comply with the prescribed APS, remnants of a past characterized by social deprivation and mediocrity in the provision of education still remain.

Zulu (2008:43) labels Black first year students as “underprepared” for university learning due to factors singled out by Griffin and Allen (2006) such as cultural differences, peer influences and socioeconomic status. Similarly Tait, Van Eeden and Tait (2002:178) describe students from challenged backgrounds as “ill-prepared” for the demands of studying independently at university level. Bradbury and Miller (2011:294) further posit that the notorious history of Apartheid Education resulted in the majority of Black students being underprepared for university study. Accordingly Griffin and Allen (2006) define academic preparedness as students’ comprehensive experiences with developing academic skills, acquiring knowledge, and gaining access to university information in an effort to facilitate university choice and readiness. These inequities can be expressed succinctly as a “lack of access” to successive educational levels whereby a disproportionately small number of Black students exit the school system with capabilities that qualify them for entry into higher education (Bradbury & Miller, 2011:294).



In describing the profile of Black student teachers, these preparatory skills, knowledge and access to information indicate that South Africa's Black education system has numerous disadvantages, such as the low level of skills and training among teachers, insufficient infrastructure and lack of equipment and books which renders it incapable of preparing learners for further studies. Bradbury and Miller (2011:300) believe that the significance of "underpreparedness" is that it is a distinct systemic phenomenon rather than "failure" simply called something else. In other words, "underpreparedness" provides the grounds for distinguishing between different kinds of academic failure, i.e. failure associated with lack of motivation, laziness, or aptitude for academic work. "Underpreparedness', then, is not simply a failure, or lack of aptitude, on the part of individual students but rather reflects a systemic failure by the educational system to initiate these students into the world of academic study and its implicit rules of enquiry and knowledge construction." (Bradbury & Miller, 2011:301).

Likewise, learning through the medium of a second language is another disadvantageous factor. Steyn and Harris (2011) found that the academic demands of the language were particularly gruelling for Black students given the amount of compulsory reading required by modules in their university studies. Furthermore, the trend of high failure rate of first year students at South African universities may be attributed to "the disadvantaged background of these learners, which includes school education of an inferior quality" (Dlamini, 1995:44). These factors may inhibit Black students in their tertiary studies and may additionally divert their career focus from ECE to a more lucrative field. A study field that is more financially and socially viable may be the logical choice for these Black student teachers.

### **2.9.2 STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF EDUCATION**

Perception is a very complex cognitive process that yields a unique picture of the world, a picture that might be quite different from reality (Tait *et al.*, 2002:177). With regard to this study, these attitudes, perceptions and expectations could impact on the approach to, and the success of, the studies of Black students in ECE.

Meier (2010) asserts that teachers' perceptions are shaped by a complex and extended process of socialisation. This author furthermore notes that teachers'

personal experiences and professional education are structured and outlined by their beliefs, values, prejudices, and generalisations which may be at odds with the culture in which they find themselves. This leads to differentiated perceptions and expectations of students belonging to a specific race in terms of achievement, treatment and stereotypes. In a study of student teachers' perceptions, Meier (2010) found that both Apartheid and post-Apartheid experiences contributed to the forming of student teachers' perceptions in South Africa. With regard to Apartheid experiences, Van Zyl (in Meier, 2005:170) comments that "...years of deprivation, segregation and violence effectively destroyed any hope of establishing a viable culture of learning..." among Black students. Furthermore, the historically inferior education offered by most formerly Black schools were continued in the post-Apartheid era which left the learners with intellectual backlogs compared to their peers in former White schools (Fraser, 1995:43).

Mosia (2010) agrees with Meier (2010: 160) who further claims that "...in the new desegregated education system, these perceptions were supported by manifestations of cultural differences, the perceived lack of discipline and learning culture in Black schools, educators who are often unmotivated because they lack knowledge and skills, the Africanisation of learning content, and overcrowding in classrooms."

### **2.9.2.1 Factors that inhibit Black students' retention at higher education institutions**

Sedlacek (1999) states that Black students' perceptions are also influenced by the way they feel about themselves, which is related to their adjustment and success at former White institutions. In terms of a "sense of belonging" this aspect of self-concept is concerned with seeing oneself as part of an institution, or at least identifying with it. Davis *et al.* (2004:437) note that the theme of "isolation/connection" denotes a perceived barrier which participants need to overcome in order to achieve academic success and they add that the inability to develop a connection with some aspect of the university will generally result in failure. Hobson-Horton and Owens (2004) also comment that Black students drop out of university not because they do not value education, but because they do not identify with the institution they attend. There is evidence that identification with an

institution is a more important correlate of retention for Blacks than for other students, and in addition to the usual pressures of an institution a Black student “...must typically handle cultural biases and learn how to bridge his or her Black culture with the prevailing one at the (former) White university.” (Sedlacek, 1999:539).

Students perceive the need to prove their academic worth and engage in behaviours to do so, while they also have the goal of invalidating negative prejudices about the academic ability of Black students (Davis *et al.*, 2004:439). These authors report on a study with Black students which indicate that although, in one sense, they do not wish to be spokespersons for the Black race, they want to do all they can to improve negative perceptions the university community might hold concerning the ability of Black students to succeed.

In their study on recruitment and retention of minority students in the United States of America, Hobson-Horton and Owens (2004:94) found that White students’ expectations and conceptions of minority students amounted to them being “...less competent or tokens.” Black students perceived that it is necessary for them to prove themselves to the lecturer by doing more than what was required. These students noticed that some White lecturers awarded lower marks to Black students than they deserved (Hobson-Horton & Owens, 2004). Davis *et al.* (2004:439) claim that having to prove one’s worthiness represents a potentially serious barrier to success for Black students in a predominately White university. “Expectations and perceptions also extended to minority faculty who... believed it necessary to be tougher on Black students” (Hobson-Horton & Owens, 2004:99).

In addition, Black students also perceive economic barriers such as acquiring finances to study, insufficient value of bursaries awarded, or bursaries that do not pay in time (Steynet *et al.*, 2011) which hamper their engagement in their academic studies (see 2.7 for a more detailed discussion). The abovementioned examples of perceived difficulties represent factors which may be viewed by students as obstacles in the learning process and subsequently colour their perception of the learning process negatively (Tait *et al.*, 2002:179). These factors are deemed important since both levels of satisfaction and perception of quality will likely determine students’ retention at higher education institutions (Gbadamosi & de

Jager, 2009: 877). However, it may be assumed that Black students also recognise aspects which may positively influence their retention at universities, as outlined below.

### **2.9.2.2 Factors that invite Black students' to higher education institutions**

What determines the preference for a specific higher institution? Gbadamosi and De Jager (2009:880) highlight various factors that influence the choice to study at a specific tertiary institution, including location, reputation of academic quality, course specifics, geographical location and career opportunities. Their findings are echoed by a study done by Steyn *et al.* (2011) which indicated that Black students choose former White universities because of their reputations as good academic institutions which by implication increases chances for better job opportunities. Black students also have positive experiences at White universities, for example the enjoyment of the status attached to attending a university with a high reputation. Bitzer (2010:308) reiterates so eloquently when stating that "...the positional aspect is not the only consideration in the minds of prospective students, but to them it is more important than teaching quality. Institutional reputation is known, teaching quality mostly not." The international reputation and ranking attached to former White universities and the effect it has on student access is a major attraction for Black students (Bitzer, 2010). Similarly, in her review of literature, Griffin (2006:387) concluded that Black students' academic choices and behaviours were motivated by the positive career, social and societal outcomes that awaited them if they were academically successful.

## **2.10 CONCLUSION**

The lack of ECE teachers in the Black community is reaching critical dimensions. The Bronfenbrenner's Ecosystemic framework (1979; 1994) was used to explore possible reasons for this dilemma. The literature overview revealed that several factors within the context of Black students affect their perceptions and experiences of ECE. It became evident that ECE is considered a global foundation for future learning and that the history of South Africa has contributed to a demand for teachers which outstrips the supply, especially among Black ECE student teachers at higher education institutions. It was therefore essential to conceptualise this study in the chronosystem according to the chronological events, which resulted in a

specific historical perspective of education in South Africa. Thereafter the status of ECE as well as the ECE teacher as perceived by Black communities, was the focus of the macrosystem. This highlighted the low regard that these communities have for this profession which added to the poorly qualified and insufficient number of teachers in ECE. A contributing factor which manifested in the mesosystem, is that most Black students come from an impoverished background and they subsequently face financial difficulties when studying. The exosystem emphasized the need to implement a teaching programme that meets the diverse needs of both the student teachers, as well as the diverse population it serves. Finally, in the microsystem the Black student was placed in context by exposing their perceptions of ECE which shed light on certain factors that invite and alienate them at higher education institutions. In conclusion it seems that these various ecosystemic factors have a determining effect on the low enrolments and perceptions of Black student teachers toward ECE.



## CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter ecosystemic factors from the literature were identified which may contribute to the low enrolment rate of Black student teachers in ECE. In this chapter, I discuss the research methodology that I want to utilize to investigate the topic under study. This chapter will therefore explain the research approach, design and context, the sampling method and participants, the data collection techniques and strategies for analysing the data, as well as the ethical considerations, that directed this qualitative case study. The main aim of this chapter is to highlight the role that methodology played in guiding the exploration of ecosystemic factors that influence Black students' perceptions and experiences of ECE.

### 3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

Since my research intends to gain a deep understanding of Black student teachers' perceptions and experiences of ECE in the context of the Higher Education Institution (HEI) in which they find themselves, I selected a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research uses a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomena in context-specific settings, for example Black student teachers at a particular former White university which presents a "...real world setting [where] the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest." (Patton, 2002:39). This approach typically studies people or systems by interacting with them and observing the participants in their natural environments (in situ) and focusing on their meanings and interpretations (Holloway & Wheeler, 1996). Nieuwenhuis (2007a:51) further explains that qualitative research focuses on describing and understanding phenomena within their naturally occurring context with the intentions of developing an understanding of the meaning(s) imparted by the participants – a "seeing through the eyes of the participants" – so that the phenomena can be described in terms of the meaning that they have for the participants. By making use of photographs, the meaning participants ascribe to their perceptions and experiences of ECE is visually presented.

According to Cohen *et al.* (2005:137) the paradigm of this research approach includes that humans actively construct their own meanings of situations and that meaning arises from social situations which are subjected to interpretive processes. In this regard, my study aspires to investigate the perceptions and experiences of Black student teachers regarding ECE within the context of a particular university. Qualitative research is therefore a research methodology which is concerned with an understanding of the processes and the social and cultural contexts which underlie various behavioural patterns, and it is mainly concerned with exploring the “why” questions of research (Nieuwenhuis, 2007a:51).

Nieuwenhuis (2007) also posits that unobtrusive data gathering techniques, for example interviews conducted in real-life situations, are dominant in the naturalistic (interpretive) paradigm (see 3.5.1 for a more detailed discussion). Consequently I also made use of narratives, individual interviews and a focus group interview to gain insight into Black student teachers perceptions and experiences of ECE in order to guide my study and find answers to my research questions.

I opted to work in the interpretive paradigm (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006:275-276) which provides the perfect conceptual domain to deal with in-depth investigation and ‘*verstehen*’ of participants’ life worlds, as experienced on a day-to-day basis. This implies that my research attempted to understand and relate to the everyday experiences which influenced the participants’ perceptions and experiences of ECE. This paradigm optimally accommodates my interest in “...the concern for the individual...” (Clasquin-Johnson, 2011:78). (see 3.5.2 for a more detailed discussion). The research design, context, sample, participants, data collection and analysis, credibility and trustworthiness, as well as the ethical considerations of this study will be discussed subsequently.

### **3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN**

This research employed a case study research design. Yin, 2011 (in Nieuwenhuis, 2007b:75) defines the case study research method as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident and in which multiple sources of evidence are used. This design is particularly appropriate for my



study as reasons for the low enrolment in ECE could only be hypothesised and are not known yet. Therefore, several instruments are utilised to gather relevant data. Furthermore, case studies “...strive to portray ‘what it is like’ to be in a particular situation, the close-up reality and ‘thick description’ of participants’ lived experiences of, thoughts about and feelings for, a situation” (Cohen *et al.*, 2005:182). Participants are Black students studying ECE at a former White university and hence they possess the relevant knowledge to shed light on the topic under study. Furthermore, Creswell (2012:465) describes a case as an in-depth exploration of a bounded system based on extensive data collection - “bounded” meaning that the case is isolated for research in terms of time, place or some physical boundaries.

The abovementioned definitions are pertinent to answering my main research question on how ecosystemic factors influence Black student teachers’ perceptions and experiences of ECE, since answering it requires an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. Similarly, the case study illustrates a study of five Black student teachers in ECE in a bounded system (i.e. a university). I enquired into the personal perceptions and experiences of ECE of each individual Black student, as well as of the group of five participants by conducting an in-depth examination of the five participants through the different data collection techniques (see 3.8 for a detailed discussion of data collection techniques).

This approach is appropriate since my aim was to discern and pursue an understanding of the issues that are intrinsic to the case itself (Schwandt, 2007:28). The case study allowed me to answer “how” and “why” questions offering a multi-perspective analysis in which the researcher considers not only the voice and perspective of participants in a situation, but also the views of other relevant groups of actors as well as the interaction between them (Nieuwenhuis, 2007b:75).

My case study focussed on five Black student teachers in their particular context of being 4<sup>th</sup> year university students at a historically White university. According to Cohen *et al.* (2005:253) case studies are conducted in specific temporal, geographic or institutional contexts. In addition, the context of this study was bounded by the higher education institution that the participants attended. With reference to this study, the participants’ background information will be elaborated on in section 3.7.



### **3.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The following questions guided this study:

#### **3.4.1 PRIMARY QUESTION**

- How do ecosystemic factors influence Black student teachers' perceptions and experiences of Early Childhood Education?

#### **3.4.2 SECONDARY QUESTIONS**

- Which ecosystemic factors influence Black students' perceptions and experiences of Early Childhood Education?
- How do ecosystemic factors influence Black student teachers' enrolment in Early Childhood Education?
- How do ecosystemic factors influence Black student teachers' perceptions and experiences of the relevance and appropriateness of Early Childhood Education?

A research question serves to direct the researcher to the appropriate literary resources, as well as to provide the study with a focus for data collection (Jansen, 2007:3). The abovementioned questions correspond with the aims of the study which seek to provide insight into the low enrolment of Black student teachers in ECE, and subsequently to provide recommendations to support and strengthen the ECE programme by exploring the perceptions and experiences of Black student teachers.

### **3.5 RESEARCH CONTEXT**

#### **3.5.1 INTERPRETIVE PARADIGM**

According to Nieuwenhuis, (2007a:47) "...a paradigm is a set of assumptions or beliefs about fundamental aspects of reality which gives rise to a particular world-view – it addresses fundamental assumptions taken on faith, such as the beliefs about the nature of reality (ontology), the relationship between knower and known (epistemology) and assumptions about methodologies." Furthermore, a paradigm denotes that which we think about, but cannot provide proof for (Lincoln & Guba,

1985:15). The abovementioned suggests that a paradigm serves as the lens through which one makes sense of reality. The main reason for the distinction “objective” (positivist approach “concerned with the discovery of general laws”) versus “subjective” (constructivist and interpretive approaches “concerned with the uniqueness of each particular situation”) emerged when qualitative research was contrasted with the scientific quantitative method and subsequently gained recognition from the 1970’s onwards.

Being cognisant of the abovementioned, I opted to work through the lens of the interpretive paradigm to make sense of the reality of the study which focussed on Black student teachers’ subjective perceptions and experiences rather than objective, numerical and scientific data. The epistemology of this study will therefore be based on the interpretive paradigm which endeavours to “...understand the subjective world of human experience.” (Cohen *et al.*, 2005). Similarly Livesey (2006:3) states that “...society does not exist in an objective, observable form; rather, it exists subjectively because we give it meaning by the way we behave.” However, the subjectivist approach of the paradigm assumes that “...by positing a reality that cannot be separate from our knowledge of it (no separation of subject and object), the interpretive paradigm posits that researchers' values are inherent in all phases of the research process and that truth is negotiated through dialogue.” (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006:1).

As a result, choosing to work within the interpretive paradigm was a logical choice for this study. It allowed me and guided me to work within the specific framework of a particular research methodology, as well as to understand the data collected from the participants and to give meaning to the exchange of ideas that took place. From the methodological perspective of this study, interpretivism maintains that knowledge is always relative and therefore, the best way to study behaviour is to portray it from the viewpoint of those involved (Livesey, 2006:3). Making use of photo-voice and interviews allowed me to get insight into the lived experiences of the phenomenon (Giles, 2007:6). Furthermore, Cohen and Crabtree (2006:3) states that naturalistic methods, such as those employed in this study, “...ensure an adequate dialogue between the researchers and those with whom they interact in order to collaboratively construct a meaningful reality..”, which generally emerges from the research process.

In relation to this study, the interpretive paradigm served as a lens through which I explored the “...assumptions, intentions, attitudes, beliefs and values...” of Black student teachers and recognised that their “...way of knowing reality is by exploring their experiences in an attempt to see how they have constructed reality.” (Nieuwenhuis, 2007a:55).

### **3.5.2 THE ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER**

Nieuwenhuis (2007) explains that in qualitative research, the researcher is seen as the “research instrument” in the data gathering process and it is accepted that researcher subjectivity is something that cannot be eliminated. In other words, the researcher is the primary research instrument for data collection and analysis during the qualitative research process, as the researcher examines and questions the positions or assumptions taken for granted (Wellington, 2000:41-43). My role as researcher in this study is especially significant as I fulfil a dual role, i.e. both researcher and lecturer. This could present a conflict of interest as the participants know me as a lecturer for one of their modules. I thus addressed this apparent “conflict of interest” by assuring participants that this research would not influence their marks and that they are under no obligation whatsoever to participate in the research. It was therefore imperative to consider ethical measures throughout the research as the researcher was the primary research instrument for data collection and analysis (see 3.11 for an in-depth discussion of ethical considerations).

Being familiar to participants as a lecturer addressed the issue of trust that usually arises in qualitative research. I had already established a relationship of trust through engaging with them during teaching contact time of the module. To further ensure their full participation in this study, I explained the nature and intent of the study to them and additionally mentioned the potential outcomes of the study. I ensured then that no incentives or rewards were used and that the participants felt safe and comfortable to withdraw from the study at any time, should the need arise.

Most of the participants rely on public transport to travel to and from. Hence I resolved to subsidise their transport costs to and from the central meeting points to avoid any financial stress on their part. I also made all equipment (e.g. camera), writing tools (e.g. stationery for narratives), and essential resources available to the participants,

thereby ensuring that no external factors influenced their engagement in the study. Their only contribution to the study was their time and valuable information.

### 3.6 SAMPLE SELECTION

De Vos (1998:191) explains sampling as a subset of measurements drawn from a population in which the researcher is interested. Creswell (2012:205) maintains that purposeful sampling is used in qualitative research to identify our participants and sites with the focus on people and places that can best help us to understand our central phenomenon. Moreover, Cohen *et al.* (2005) posit that the selectivity that is built into this type of sampling method allows the researcher to target a particular group in the full knowledge that it does not represent the wider population; it simply represents itself. Patton (2002:169) states that the logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in representing information-rich cases from which one can learn a great deal.

In this study, I chose to select representative individuals in order to communicate findings of the study to the wider population. More specifically, homogenous sampling was used to select all fourth year Black student teachers (7 students) enrolled in the ECE programme at a Higher Education Institution. Babbie (2004:183) maintains that this type of purposive sampling is selected on the basis of knowledge of a population, its elements, and the purpose of the study. This sample was selected based on the fact that participants "...possess a similar trait based on membership in a subgroup" (Creswell, 2012:209). Similarly, these participants could communicate their lived experiences, were all located at the same site and had all experienced the phenomenon being explored (Creswell, 2012:125).

For the abovementioned reasons I selected this method of sampling, as well as the specific sample of all Black fourth year student teachers at a former White university in order to gain a deeper understanding of Black student teachers' perceptions and experiences of ECE once they had completed the the programme. The seven Black students were invited to participate in the study (see Letter of Invitation: Appendix A) but only five participants were available for the duration of the study. The objective of using a small sample in this research was to present the complexity of the information provided by the participants (Creswell, 2012:209).

### 3.7 PARTICIPANTS

**Table 3.1: Background information of participants**

Participant	Gender	Race	Home language	Year of study	Age
Participant A	Female	Black	isiZulu	4 <sup>th</sup> year	25 years
Participant B	Female	Black	Ndbele	4 <sup>th</sup> year	20 years
Participant C	Female	Black	Sepedi	4 <sup>th</sup> year	21 years
Participant D	Female	Black	Sepedi	4 <sup>th</sup> year	24 years
Participant E	Female	Black	Sepedi	4 <sup>th</sup> year	20 years

### 3.8 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

With reference to qualitative research, Creswell (2012:212) posits that the researcher poses general, broad questions to participants and allows them to share their views relatively unconstrained by the researcher’s perspective. The researcher collects multiple types of information in order to answer the question and establish the complexity of the central phenomenon. Against this background, the data collection techniques will next be discussed.

#### 3.8.1 PHOTO VOICE METHOD

As mode of investigation, I decided to make use of the “photo voice” method (Olivier *et al.*, 2009), which is also known as “reflexive photography”. I chose this method, among others, for its strengths in gaining optimal commitment in participants’ involvement in the research project (Olivier *et al.*, 2009). The method involved that participants were issued with cameras and then prompted to take pictures of people or things which have an intimate connotation with the research topic. In other words, Black student teachers were asked to take photographs that depicted their perceptions and experiences of ECE at their university. Similar to photo voice, Paulo Freire used visual ethnography (“coded situations”, depicted by sketches or photographs) to stimulate communities in critically analysing their own situations (Kamper & Steyn, 2011:286). Moreover, Banks (2001, in Kamper & Steyn, 2011:286) believes that photographs set off a “chain reaction” which causes people to remember, reflect and (to) gain new perspectives”.

Schulze (2007) indicates that, theoretically, reflexive photography is embedded in the theory of *symbolic interactionism*, a sociological perspective that places emphasis on micro-scale social interaction. Blumer (1969) who was the first to use the term *symbolic interactionism*, set out three basic premises on which it is based:

1. Humans act toward things on the basis of meanings they ascribe to those things.
2. The meanings of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with others and society.
3. These meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he/she encounters.

In the context of this study, the three basic premises of symbolic interactionism can be explained as follows:

1. Black student teachers photographed certain symbols or things that they identified with ECE based on a personal connotation and meaning that they associate with those specific objects.
2. The explanation of the abovementioned symbols or things stemmed from the connection that the Black student teacher had with various individuals or the community.
3. The same explanations derived from a process of personal interpretation that Black student teachers had when they experienced these symbols or things.

Symbolic interactionist researchers essentially investigate the meanings which individuals ascribe to symbols and things through, and as a consequence of, their social interactions (Kamper & Steyn, 2011:285). For example, the Black student teacher is almost constantly in a mode of social interaction with other people, symbols and things, and their actions – all of which are viewed and treated as symbolic objects.

Reflexive photography gives participants the opportunity to in fact “zoom in” on these symbols (such as a photograph of an assignment, money or their family depicting their experience in ECE), which will almost certainly elicit rich descriptions of the meanings attached to those symbols (Banks, 2001). Accordingly, Kamper & Steyn

(2011) agree that the opportunity to present a “photo voice” ensures an optimum level of participant involvement and dedication and commitment to the research project, as well as an effective means to capture the meanings attached to the photographs.

While implementing this method, I made use of a step by step guide to facilitating a photo voice project, as compiled by Olivieret *al.* (2009). The steps were incorporated into three sessions as follows:

- **Session 1: Orientation**

Five fourth year Black ECE student teachers were purposively selected in a homogenous sample and requested to participate in the project. I explained and motivated that the research project was based on their perceptions and experiences of ECE within the context of the programme, and I moreover emphasised their critical role as participants. The photo voice method was introduced to the participants and it was emphasised that visual investigation is a powerful mode of learning and creative work. I then issued them with the following prompt for taking the pictures: *Take pictures that depict and describe how you perceive and experience ECE at the university.* The participants were given three days to take a maximum of 10 photographs, with a free hand, of anything that they associated with the topic at hand. The session ended with a practical exercise when a disposable camera was given to each participant on the 30<sup>th</sup> March 2012. They were sent off to take the pictures and arrangements were made to collect the cameras and simultaneously plan for the next session on the 10<sup>th</sup> of April 2012. I then developed the films and printed the photographs.

- **Session 2: Exhibition**

During the second session, on the 18<sup>th</sup> of April 2012, the participants displayed their pictures individually in a boardroom. The discussions with students which followed focussed on their reasons for selecting certain photographs to express their perceptions and experiences of ECE at their university. As a starting point, the discussions emphasized the abovementioned reasons for the photographs to elicit in-depth responses to how the participants perceived and experienced ECE. Each participant was asked to pick one picture which best depicted their perception and/or experience of the ECE, be it positive or negative. They were requested to write a



narrative of about 300 words about the selected picture. The participants were asked to submit the narratives within one week.

- **Session 3: Wrap-up**

I arranged to meet with the participants again on the 25<sup>th</sup> of April 2012 when they were given the opportunity to present their written narratives to me. The participants were given the assurance that they would be allowed to scrutinise the data of the photo voice method, should they wish to do so.

### 3.8.2 NARRATIVE INQUIRY

“Narrative inquiry is a methodological approach of understanding people’s representations of the world, their actions in it, through the stories they tell. Narrative researchers aim to understand why people think and act as they do in the situated contexts in which they live and labour.” (Gomez, 1997:195). Furthermore, Gomez (1997:195) states that “...narrative inquiry is a methodological approach of understanding people’s representations of the world, their actions in it, through the stories they tell.” The word “narrative” is generally associated with terms such as “tale” or “story” and every person has his or her own personal story (Nieuwenhuis, 2007b:102). In the context of this study, the narrative was developed from the written story that each of the five Black student teachers had to tell in response to the photograph which represented their perceptions and/or experiences of ECE. Furthermore, narrative inquiry was chosen to elucidate the Black student teachers’ personal and social experiences from the story and the subsequent themes that emerged from it (Creswell, 2012:507).

According to Walker (2005:131) “...the idea of the voice of the situated contributor is central to narrative...”, which is why I regarded the stories of the participants as crucial to explain responses that were essential in order to answer my research question: *How do ecosystemic factors influence Black student teachers’ perceptions and experiences of Early Childhood Education?* Walker (2005:132) further explains narrative inquiry by stating:

*“The point then is that qualitative narrative inquiry can generate fruitful insights not only in relation to the lives being investigated, but also about the wider context in which that life is lived. At the same time the stories told will*



*be mediated by the time and conditions of their telling; they are not realist copies but a version of experience. They are above all socially located, so that telling one story is also telling the story of many lives, and telling the story of the individual in relation to these other lives”.*

This research study was designed accordingly and I collected and analysed the stories of the participants in the wider context of their social experiences.

### **3.8.3 INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS**

The reason for conducting interviews in this study is to collect data and learn about the experiences, ideas, perceptions, beliefs, views, opinions and behaviours (Nieuwenhuis, 2007b:87) of Black student teachers. Creswell (2012:217) asserts that a qualitative interview is the art of asking one or more participants general, open-ended questions and recording their answers. In this study, I chose to make use of semi-structured interviews with five 4<sup>th</sup> year Black student teachers. The interviews were held in an office of their higher education institution at a time and date that was suitable to each individual participant (Wholey, Hatry & Newcomer, 2004:35). Denzin and Lincoln (2000:649) state that in semi-structured interviews the interviewer asks all respondents the same series of pre-established questions, while De Vos (1998:299) endorses the fact that pre-formulated questions are carefully arranged and put to all the interviewees in a fairly similar sequence (see Appendix B: Semi-structured interview schedule).

Interviewing benefited this study as it allowed the participants to best voice their experiences, while the interviewer asked specific questions thus allowing some measure of control over the information received (Creswell, 2012:218). Over and above the basic questions that were included in the interview, I asked probing questions which enabled me to converse more freely with the participants, and also to delve into issues that arose during the interview process itself (Berg, 2001, in Clasquin-Johnson, 2011:87).

The respondents granted permission beforehand to use a voice recorder to record the interview and to take notes (see Appendix E: Informed Assent). The interview was concluded by thanking the participants and assuring them of the confidentiality

of responses, and by informing them that the results of the study will be made available to them (Creswell, 2012). In order to establish themes from the data and contextualise my study within the theoretical framework, I transcribed the interviews shortly after they had taken place and analysed the responses accordingly.

#### **3.8.4 FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS**

According to Nieuwenhuis (2007b:90) focus group interviews are based on the assumption that group interactions will be productive in widening the range of responses, activating forgotten details of experience, and releasing inhibitions that may otherwise discourage participants from disclosing information. These interviews also produce data rich in detail which is often difficult to achieve with other research methods (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). I assumed the role of moderator whose task it was to introduce the focus of the group (e.g. guided by the response to the photographs that were taken by the participants and the subsequent written narratives), to gently steer the group, to prompt group members to respond to issues raised by others or to identify agreements or disagreements among group members (Willig, 2001:30).

I opted for the focus group interview with the participants since this technique “...collects in-depth qualitative data about a group’s perceptions, attitudes and experiences...” on the topic under study (Nieuwenhuis, 2007b:91). The focus group interview allowed me to ask a small number of open-ended questions that gained responses of a shared understanding of the perceptions and experiences of ECE from all five Black student teachers in the group. Two interviewers, an assistant and I, were present during the interview. I put the questions while the assistant recorded the responses. The interview was recorded with a voice recorder and students were asked to supply their first names at the beginning of the interview so that the different voices may be identified and transcribed accurately. They were however assured that their names would not be used in the study and that they would remain anonymous. It was moreover beneficial to use this type of interview since the participants were similar and cooperated with each other, which promoted interaction and yielded the best information possible (Creswell, 2012:218).

### 3.9 DATA ANALYSIS

During the data analysis phase, I remained particularly mindful that my data analysis should be rigorous, disciplined, systematic, carefully documented, and methodical (Schwandt, 2007:7). My data analysis began by breaking down the sets of data (photographs, field notes, narratives and transcriptions) by categorising and coding the individual segments and establishing a pattern for the whole by relating the codes to one another (Schwandt, 2007:7). I opted to analyse each set of data according to each participant to highlight the various categories derived from participants' photographs, narratives, individual semi-structured interviews, and focus group interview (see Chapter 4 for an in-depth analysis of data).

### 3.10 ADDRESSING CREDIBILITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

According to Bogdan and Biklen (in Cohen *et al.*, 2005) qualitative research reliability is regarded as a fit between what researchers record as data and what actually occurs in the natural setting that is being researched, i.e. a degree of accuracy and comprehensiveness of coverage. To enhance the quality of this study, I endeavoured to explain and generate an understanding of Black student teachers' responses through authentic and detailed data. Golafshani (2003:601) explains that the most important test of any qualitative study is its quality.

On the other hand, validity, referred to as trustworthiness in qualitative research, might be "...addressed through the honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data achieved, the participants approached, the extent of triangulation and the disinterestedness or objectivity of the researcher." (Cohen *et al.*, 2005:105). Creswell (2012:259) describes triangulation as "...the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals, types of data, or methods of data collection in descriptions and themes in qualitative research." In relation to this study, trustworthiness was addressed through a "...constant search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information..." (Nieuwenhuis, 2007b:81) which accompanied my attempt to remain impartial and enhance the trustworthiness of the data by establishing the truth through the use of numerous data collection processes. Furthermore, the data gathering process was triangulated by obtaining photographs, narratives and transcriptions of individual and focus group interviews.

It seems that when Nieuwenhuis (2007b:80) mentions research “validity and reliability”, he usually refers to research that is credible and trustworthy. Nieuwenhuis (2007) asserts that it is generally accepted that the use of multiple methods of data collection, which is the case with this study, increases a study’s trustworthiness.

### **3.10.1 CRITERIA FOR TRUSTWORTHINESS**

Schwandt (2007:299) outlines four criteria for the trustworthiness of research studies, namely that the data should be credible, transferable, dependable and confirmable. The four abovementioned exemplars will be briefly discussed below to indicate how I addressed the credibility and trustworthiness of data in my study (see Table 3.2).

First, according to Merriam (in Shenton, 2004:64) credibility refers to the qualitative investigator’s equivalent concept of internal validity and it deals with the question: “How congruent are the findings with reality?” Furthermore, Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that ensuring credibility is one of most important factors in establishing trustworthiness. Second, transferability refers to external validity and the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be generalized or transferred to other contexts or settings (Trochim, 2006). Shenton (2004:71) relates dependability to reliability, where it is explained that if the work were repeated in the same context, with the same methods and with the same participants, similar results would be obtained. In addition, Lincoln and Guba (1985) stress the close ties between credibility and dependability, arguing that in practice, a demonstration of the former goes some distance in ensuring the latter. Finally, the concept of confirmability is the qualitative investigator’s comparable concern with objectivity (Shenton, 2004:72). Trochim (2006) refers it to the degree to which the results could be confirmed or corroborated by others.

In this study, I sought to accurately reconstruct and represent participants’ perceptions and experiences of ECE. The following table illustrates how the four criteria were applied in establishing trustworthiness in this study (Poggenpoel, Nolte, Dörfling, Greef, Gross, Muller, Nel & Roos, 1994:131-136, in Ellis, 2012).

**Table 3.2: The application of the four criteria to establish trustworthiness**  
(Adapted from: Poggenpoel *et al.*, 1994:131-136 in Ellis, 2012)

Strategy	Criteria	Applicability
<i>Credibility</i>	Prolonged engagement	The researcher made herself familiar with the potential participants, prior to data collection, by contacting them and discussing the aims of the study.
	Reflexivity	Field notes were taken to clarify personal bias of the researcher to best voice participants experiences, by being able to assess her own background, perceptions, assumptions, feelings and role regarding the research process.
	Triangulation	Multiple methods of data collection were used, namely photo voice, narratives, individual and focus group interviews to converge data and produce a "...rich and comprehensive picture..." (Creswell, 2012:536).
	Member checking	Both narratives and interviews were reviewed accurately by the students themselves and a tape recorder. This was triangulated with the available literature.
	Participants' review	Participants were requested to confirm that the comprehensive descriptions were fair and representative.
	Peer examination	My supervisors reviewed the comprehensive descriptions of all the data collected.
<i>Transferability</i>	Sample	A homogenous sampling method was used as represented in 3.6.
	Dense description	A comprehensive description of the data collection techniques was provided in 3.8.
<i>Dependability</i>	Audit trail	Participants reviewing the report on the narrative of the themes validated data.
	Methodology triangulation	Data collection, methods, data analysis and literature were used to corroborate evidence and verify findings identified during the data analysis process.
	Peer examination	The supervisors reviewed a comprehensive description of all the data analysed.
	Evaluation	A consensus discussion of the comprehensive descriptions of the data was held with the researcher's supervisor.
<i>Confirmability</i>	Audit	The supervisors reviewed the comprehensive descriptions of the data gathered.

Marshall and Rossman (2011:54) note that case studies rest on the worldviews of both the researcher and the participants. Since I am directly involved in the ECE programme as a lecturer, I need to be cautious that this should not bias my study in any way. Cohen *et al.* (2005:116) advise that one should attempt to avoid subjective interpretation and the selective analysis of data. Methods of data collection are used in combination to view the same phenomenon from different angles – thus constituting a form of triangulation (Willig, 2001:32). Using photo voice, narratives, and focus group interviews as multiple data collection methods served as crystallisation of data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:5). Crystallisation refers to the practice of “validating” results by using multiple methods of data collection and analysis. Likewise, the term is interchangeable with triangulation because it is a “...better lens through which to view the components in qualitative research...” (Maree & van der Westhuizen, 2007:40). Therefore, reliability of the analysis was demonstrated by using triangulation of methods to show how different perspectives converge and thus confirm one another’s observations and interpretations (Willig, 2001:154).

My analysis of themes was not used for generalising beyond the case under study, but rather for understanding the complexity of each individual case (Creswell 2012:75). The consistency of data was achieved when the “...steps of the research are verified through examination of such items as raw data, data reduction products, and process notes...” (Campbell, in Golafshani, 2003:601). I also made use of prolonged engagement in the field, peer reviews and debriefing of data by my supervisors and the participants, member checking, thick descriptions during data analysis, detailed field notes to record the data collection process, and high quality tape recordings and transcriptions during the individual and focus group interviews (Schwandt, 2007:229) to ensure credibility in the study.

### **3.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

According to Cohen *et al.* (2005:49) ethical issues could arise from problems that are usually investigated by social scientists and the methods that are used to obtain valid and reliable data. This implied that each stage in the research sequence was a potential source of ethical problems or dilemmas (Clasquin-Johnson, 2011:93). With this in mind, I applied for and received ethical clearance from the University of Pretoria before the data collection phase of this study (see Appendix F).

Furthermore, ethical issues were faced at every stage of the research process and it was therefore imperative to apply ethical measures to avoid harming the participants (Flick, 2009:36). Ethical issues were observed such as informed consent and assent, anonymity and confidentiality, safeguarding of participants privacy and ethical rights as well as ensuring that no deception took place (Laerd, 2011). I had to apply for ethical approval from the Ethics Committee at the University of Pretoria which involved a rigorous process of ethical scrutiny. Approval was obtained from this committee (see Appendix F). The following aspects were covered in the application:

### **3.11.1 INFORMED CONSENT**

Informed consent constitutes the foundation of ethical procedures (Cohen *et al.*, 2005:50). Therefore, preceding data collection, I sent a letter to the Head of Department Early Childhood Education (see Appendix D) as well as the Dean of the Faculty of Education (see Appendix C), to request informed consent to conduct this study. Furthermore, I sent letters of invitation and informed assent to the participants of the study. I obtained informed assent from the participants by (a) explaining the purpose of the study, (b) explaining that participation is voluntary, and (c) assuring them that they may withdraw from the study at any time (Clasquin-Johnson, 2011) (see Appendix E).

### **3.11.2 ANONYMITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY**

Berg (2001:56) advises that research should be free from any form of deceit, duress or unfair inducement or manipulation. I made sure this was possible by emphasising to the participants that their anonymity and confidentiality were assured and access to the results and findings could be requested. Similarly, although I know who has provided the information and may thus identify the participants from the supplied information, I undertook to keep it confidential (Cohen *et al.*, 2005:62). Finally, the data from this study will be stored in a password-protected file at my university for a period of 15 years.

### **3.11.3 DECEPTION AND PRIVACY**

Diener and Crandall (1978) have considered privacy from three different perspectives (in Cohen *et al.*, 2005:61) which are the sensitivity of the information



that is being given, the setting being observed, and dissemination of information (Cohen *et al.*, 2005:61). I informed the participants that I would protect their privacy and that their identities would not be disclosed in the dissemination of data. Similarly, since participants could take photographs of themselves or family members during the photo voice method, I assured them that the faces of individuals who wished to remain anonymous would be blurred out. Furthermore, Berg (2001:58) advises the exercising of extreme caution when referring to participants and their respective settings. In order to minimise interference with the normal activities of the participants (Creswell, 2003b:65), data collection took place at the higher education institution that the student teachers attend thus ensuring familiarity and accessibility.

### **3.12 SUMMARY**

The aim of this chapter was to give a detailed discussion of the methodology I utilized to investigate and analyse the topic under study. Therefore, a qualitative approach was employed to explore the reasons, from the standpoint of Black student teachers, for the low enrolment in ECE at a particular higher education institution. In order to complement the literature review, data was collected by means of the photo-voice method, narratives, individual interviews, as well as a focus group interview. Subsequently the collected data will be analysed in relation to each individual participant's contribution to reveal various categories and themes that will be discussed in Chapter 4.





## **CHAPTER 4**

### **DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS OF FIVE BLACK STUDENT TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter I present and discuss the data analysis strategies as well as the findings of the study which explored five 4<sup>th</sup> year Black student teachers' perceptions and experiences of ECE. As mentioned in Chapter 4, participants had to take photographs that depicted and described their perceptions and experiences of ECE at the university, and moreover set off a "chain reaction" that causes people to remember, reflect and (to) gain new perspectives" (Banks, 2001, in Kamper & Steyn, 2011:284). This method allows participants to generate rich depictions of the meanings assigned to the photographs (Kamper & Steyn, 2012). Together with narratives, individual interviews and focus group interviews, the photo voice technique effectively captured the meanings from the participants. Initial analysis of the data of each individual participant revealed several categories, such as perceptions of career, status and programme; financial implications; support; and current experiences. Thereafter, further interpretation of the data explicated the following themes: 'history', 'it's all about money', 'community', 'cultural relevance' and 'me, myself and others' which will be discussed in Chapter 5.

#### **4.2 ANALYTICAL STRATEGY**

"Qualitative data analysis tries to establish how participants make meaning of a specific phenomenon by analysing their perceptions and experiences in an attempt to approximate their construction of the phenomenon." (Niewenhuis, 2007: 99). Creswell (2012:238) maintains that "...there is no single, accepted approach to analysing qualitative data, although several guidelines exist for this eclectic and interpretive process." I therefore base my analysis on the six steps commonly used in analysing qualitative data as described by Creswell (2012:237) below:

1. I prepared and organised the data for analysis by categorising the data according to type (i.e. the photographs, narratives, and interviews). I then

transcribed the audio recordings from the five participants' interviews and the focus group interview into text data.

2. I engaged in an initial exploration of the data through the process of coding it. This was done by reorganising the data according to each of the five participants. Thereafter, I read the narratives and transcripts whilst making notes to record my first impressions thereof. In order to make sense of the data, I then labelled and segmented the text to form descriptions and broad themes (Creswell, 2012).
3. I used codes to develop a more general picture of the data, descriptions and themes. I re-examined the narratives and transcripts guided by the question: "What in the responses of the students provide answers to my research questions?" (Creswell, 2012:236).
4. The findings were represented through narratives (see 4.3) and visuals (see 4.4) by sorting the responses about their perceptions and experiences of ECE into categories.
5. I interpreted the results by reflecting on the impact of the findings and on the literature that might inform the findings. This was done by summarising the themes and reflecting on the similarities and/or differences between my findings and those reported by others in the literature (see Chapter 5).
6. Finally, strategies to validate the accuracy of the findings were employed. Triangulation of different data enhanced the accuracy of this study. In addition, I also consulted my supervisor as well as the participants to establish whether I accurately interpreted and portrayed the participants' (Black student teachers) perceptions and experiences of ECE.

The above-mentioned implies that I made "...a personal assessment of a description that best fit the situation and themes in order to capture the major categories of information." (Creswell, 2012:238).

### **4.3 DATA ANALYSIS ACCORDING TO PARTICIPANTS**

Homogenous sampling was used to select all fourth year Black student teachers enrolled in the ECE programme at a higher education institution and 5 participants were able to take part in the study. In order to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants, their names are not disclosed and they are referred

to as participant A, B, C, D and E (see Table 4.1). Similarly, data that was collected was organised and identified by these pseudonyms so that it could be recontextualised (Nieuwenhuis, 2007b:104). The aim of the subsequent section is to discuss the data according to each participant to highlight the codes and give a more detailed description of the data that was collected (see Tables 4.2 and 4.3). First, I will give a short description of each participant according to their background information. Thereafter I will supply a title for each photograph that depicted the participant's perceptions and experiences of ECE at the university. And finally I will explain what the photographs symbolised with the aid of the interpretation of the participants' narratives.

The photographs and narratives presented data that was both interesting and of great value in eliciting responses to the ecosystemic factors that influenced participants' perceptions and experiences of ECE. Surprisingly, the duplication of themes that was derived from this data was minimal as each participant chose a different focus to discuss in their narrative (see 4.3.1 - 4.3.5). Finally, I discussed salient points that were extracted from the individual semi-structured interviews and the focus group interview. The data that was generated from the two different types of interviews was enlightening and served as a source of rich information that contributed to the subsequent categories (perceptions of [career, status, programme], financial implications, support, current experiences) of this research. I present this analysis in the form of a synopsis of the categories in an attempt to provide a coherent interpretation of the data (see Table 4.4).

**Table 4.1: Background data of participants**

Participant	Gender	Race	Home language	Year of study	Age
Participant A	Female	Black	isiZulu	4 <sup>th</sup> year	25 years
Participant B	Female	Black	Ndbele	4 <sup>th</sup> year	20 years
Participant C	Female	Black	Sepedi	4 <sup>th</sup> year	21 years
Participant D	Female	Black	Sepedi	4 <sup>th</sup> year	24 years
Participant E	Female	Black	Sepedi	4 <sup>th</sup> year	20 years

**Table 4.2: Coding of Participants**

Participant	Code
Participant A	PA
Participant B	PB
Participant C	PC
Participant D	PD
Participant E	PE

**Table 4.3: Coding of data type**

Data Type	Code
Narative	NA
Semi-structured interview	SSI
Focus group interview	FGI
Line-number of interview	1 - ...

### 4.3.1 PARTICIPANT A

#### 4.3.1.1 Background information

Participant A is a 25-year-old isiZulu speaking female student teacher. She was raised in Newcastle, Kwazulu-Natal. She did not receive any pre-school education and attended a government school from Grade 1-7. Thereafter, she went to complete her matric at a multiracial former model C school<sup>1</sup> with *both White and Zulu language teachers* (PA;SSI;10).

After completing her matric, she started her studies in Eco Tourism and after approximately two years she became disinterested. She then changed to study Early Childhood and Foundation Phase, *something she's going to do for the rest of her life*. (PA; SSI; 22).

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<sup>1</sup> Formal model C schools, primarily staffed by White teachers for White children, although they opened their doors to all South African children in 1994, were formally tasked with the promulgation of White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001) to include all children “regardless of ability, gender, language or disability, so that all learners can belong in school and have access to the educational outcomes that schools offer: (Swart & Pettipher, 2011 :4)

#### 4.3.1.2 Data analysis



**Photograph 4.1: Participant A’s perceptions and experiences of ECE, titled “Career choice”**

##### ***Narrative:***

Participant A chose a photograph of a school to portray her perceptions and experiences of ECE. She explained in her narrative that this photograph signified that she was never part of a crèche or pre-primary school, yet her brother was and this developed her interest in ECE. The photograph further illustrates her eventual choice of career (workplace) where she realised that there were few Black students in ECE. Her university career developed her passion for working with children and prepared her to become a teacher, hence the choice of the title “career choice” for this participant’s contribution.

##### ***Interviews:***

The participant’s initial perception of ECE, after having made her career choice, was that it was more inclined to White females:

*I started Foundation Phase, I remember my first class, I didn’t know anyone... then they took me there and there was only one Black girl. And it was like okay... alright. In my High School, it was only Black students but it was a multiracial type of school but I was never in class with like White students. So I got there and I saw only one Black girl there and so I was like ok I can be a bit comfortable with it, but I thought oh it’s a White course type*

*of thing, you know, because there were not a lot of Black students and it was only girls. (PA; SSI; 43-50)*

Even though she was part of a minority who chose to study ECE she felt that:

*I didn't want to go to a office and I wanted to do something that's gonna make me happy. So it happened that ECE actually fit the shoe. (PA; SSI; 40-41)*

Furthermore, this participant has a positive opinion on the suitability of the programme:

*So being in ECE... it gets you to be exposed properly to the environment that you need to create in your class. (PA; SSI; 66-67)*

On the other hand, she continues to explain that although you are exposed to what ECE ideally should be, it seems that within the reality of our diverse country teachers are not always equipped with the necessary skills to meet the current demands of diversity and multicultural teaching. She feels that these needs were only addressed through language-based modules which would not be sufficient in all contexts. In other words, she will be able to cope if she teaches at home in her mother tongue, but possibly not if she teaches in a school with White learners. For this reason she feels that she is not prepared to teach in former model C and private schools:

*To a certain extent, because there's this module which we did this year... where you need to teach the kids with different languages in one class, but they're telling us that we need to at least know the (different) languages a bit. With our diverse South Africa, it's actually impossible to teach in one mother tongue unless, where I come from I can actually do that. Yes. (PA; SSI; 94; 99-101)*

Therefore she would prefer to go back home to teach after completing her degree:

*Okay, when I finish my studies, I'm going back home. Yes, to Newcastle. (PA; SSI; 105; 107)*

Another barrier that the participant pointed out in the interview, was the financial burden of ECE given that the programme is expensive and therefore difficult to afford:

*It's costly. Because you need to be creative and then you end up not having material that you need to do your presentations. You need to have a laptop to prepare the presentations, the nights, if you don't stay at Res, you need to have money to print stuff. You need to go to other schools to do research about certain programmes and you need to take a taxi, when you need to go there. (PA; SSI; 78-81)*

Despite not feeling supported in all of her experiences in ECE, she does feel that she obtains support from certain role players:

*Uh, it depends with the lecturer, I guess, yes. They're always available for you to actually help you when you're struggling. (PA; SSI; 85-86)*

*... from the Department of Education, if you need some stuff, you get them there. (PA; SSI; 90)*

With regard to how community members view ECE and the status thereof, this participant explains:

*Yes, I think people, most people if you tell them you are a foundation teacher, they always think of old people. That you're going to be teaching Foundations Phase already, that's an old people's job to do... (PA; SSI; 124-125)*

Although it seems as if this participant holds a negative view towards ECE, her current experiences and her present opinion was:

*No, to me, it's a perfect job for me. I love it and I feel comfortable, I've studied, I've been an assistant before, I started teaching now. I still feel the same... this is what I want to do. (PA; SSI; 129-130)*

## **4.3.2 PARTICIPANT B**

### **4.3.2.1 Background information**

Participant B is a 20-year-old Ndebele speaking student teacher. She grew up in Mpumalanga and did not attend any formal pre-primary schooling. She started Grade 1 at a former model C school. Thereafter, she went on to complete her schooling at a former model C junior primary school. Her first option was to study



ECE because her mother is a Grade 2 teacher and she believes that ECE is a better phase since *kids are very interesting, and they listen to everything you say*. (PB; SSI; 18)

#### 4.3.2.2 DATA ANALYSIS



**Photograph 4.2: Participant B’s perceptions and experiences of ECE, titled “Financial statements”**

##### ***Narrative:***

The photograph that best depicted Participant B’s perceptions and experiences of ECE was that of three different bank notes (R100, R50, R10). According to her narrative, the reason for her choice of photograph is that ECE is more expensive than other phases in terms of the resources needed to complete the many practical assignments. The money also symbolised the perception of receiving a lower salary compared to teaching in another phase. Finally, the photograph represents the financial support that is given to the student by means of a bursary. Therefore the title “financial statements” was most suitable in this case.

##### ***Interviews:***

Participant B’s initial impression of ECE and her subsequent career choice were given as follows:

*The reason I decided, it’s because of my Mom, my Mom is a Grade 3 and 2 teacher. So, I, I thought teaching Foundation Phase would be much better*



*for me, than High School kids. I find kids very interesting, and they listen to everything you say. Ja, they're more interesting for me, they appreciate everything you do for them and tell them to do. (PB; SSI; 13-14; 18; 20-21)*

In addition, she mentions other people's views and opinions of ECE:

*Oh, they see a lot of work, but mmm, they think, they think it's easy to do ECE carrying those charts, web cards, pictures and they think it's simple, they think ah I should have done it. But it's not simple. Some friends say ECE doesn't pay, we don't get same salary as a FET teachers. Which is wrong. Ja. (PB; SSI; 101-104)*

In line with the amount of practical work that needs to be done in ECE together with the financial challenges that most of the Black students experience, this participant elaborates:

*I think it's because it's the uh, every assignment you have to spend money. Without money, either you fail or you don't get good marks for your assignments. Um... for instance (module name) we had to buy like almost 50 items for the assignment. Ja, it was expensive. I had to get money from my parents... (PB; SSI; 52-53; 55; 57)*

Yet, she does feel supported to some extent by the bursary she received:

*Oh, the bursary, I think the bursary I got it last year and this year. Ja, it helps a lot. (PB; SSI; 62; 64)*

Besides the financial support that she obtained, she feels that there are other types of support in the form of her parents and the library:

*My parents are very supportive. Ja, my Dad and my Mom they are always there if I call and say this assignment they want this and this, they make sure they give me the money... support is financial. Ja, financial, um and the Library. (PB; SSI; 66; 68-69; 73)*

The relevance of the programme to a Black student is often interpreted through the language of learning and teaching, as it is mostly their second or third language. The language of learning and teaching, in this case, presents an obstacle with regard to the Black students' interpretation of ECE:

*I think it's relevant, but though, some of us our home languages were Ndebele, and we had to do some things in English and it's very difficult translating them to our home languages. But, I think... with information, with ECD we know more than the teachers back home. (PB; SSI; 33-36)*

Although she does not come from the town where she studies, she would like to continue studying in ECE and thereafter teach in her mother-tongue by going to a rural area (local to the university) when she completes her undergraduate degree:

*Mamelodi. No, I'm from Mpumalanga. So, I want to be here. I want to register some courses in teaching like Honours. Ja... Um, I feel my knowledge will help much in Mamelodi, so I think I'll be a great help to that school I'm going to. (PB; SSI; 82; 84-85; 87-89)*

Regarding her present views on ECE and her future aspirations in the field she states:

*No, to me, it's a perfect job for me. I love it and I feel comfortable, I've studied, I've been an assistant before, I started teaching now. I still feel the same... this is what I want to do. (PB; SSI; 95-97)*

### **4.3.3 PARTICIPANT C**

#### **4.3.3.1 Background information**

Participant C is 21-year-old Sepedi speaking female student teacher. She grew up in Bushbuck Ridge, Mpumalanga. She attended crèche from 4 years of age and then moved to a private school in the rural area from age 5 until the end of Grade 10. She completed Grade 11 and matric at a private boarding school in Polokwane. All the schools she attended were multiracial and English medium. When deciding what to study further she *didn't want to do education, not at all*, (PC; SSI; 22) and rather opted for Psychology or Social work. Although she was accepted at another institution to study the above-mentioned, she was given the choice of Theology, Education or Information Technology at her current place of study. She chose Education as a second option, specifically ECE because she thought that there was an aspect of Psychology to it.

#### 4.3.3.2 Data analysis



**Photograph 4.3: Participant C's perceptions and experiences of ECE, titled "Teaching and learning"**

***Narrative:***

Participant C's photograph is of a man with two children sitting on his lap. According to her narrative, it symbolises an adult's role with children and the importance of play in learning. It moreover reflects her understanding of ECE where play and an informal process of learning develop the whole child. Furthermore, she is of the opinion that the interaction between an adult and a child is what develops a child. It is therefore suitable for this participant's feedback to be titled "Teaching and learning".

***Interviews:***

In her contribution to the data, Participant C expresses her original disinterest in ECE prior to deciding upon it as her career choice. She explains the change of heart as follows:

*Um, honestly I didn't really want to do education, not at all. I wanted to study Psychology or Social work. I applied by (name of higher education institution), and then they accepted me, but then I didn't know that they did - I only found out recently... let me just do Education. So in deciding which Phase to do, she told me, I decided with FET, so she was no, do the ECD cos the ECD has got Psychology with it and then second semester you can*

*change into Psychology. So I was so waiting for the first semester to go so that I change quickly, change into Psychology, cos I felt so, I don't know, so lost. You know this is not my place, but as I went on um, as time went on, I loved it. I just fell in love with it and then I just started considering it as a calling. (PC; SSI; 22-24; 30-32; 34-36)*

Her initial understanding of ECE which was influenced by members of the community, is outlined below:

*Like old school, like who still does Education and those things, that was my first opinion, who still does Education? I don't know, I just think maybe cos, a long time ago, our parents, it was the main career for our parents, the main one. Nowadays there's Engineering and all that and we're so focussed on money and, instead of passion, the passion and our abilities and skills. We... are money driven. (PC; SSI; 50-51; 53-56)*

Yet, after enrolling in ECE, she had a different perspective and she comments on her experiences thereof, especially on the link between theory and practice, which is also portrayed in her photograph:

*Everything that I've learnt, most of the things that we learn in the University are more... what I'm trying to say, is that sometimes we learn more than the University says we must do like the text books and everything, because when you are in a practical condition. You gain experience and just have to implement some things in your own way, like discipline. Exactly, but then still you're implementing what you have learnt, you just have to add your own initiative. (PC; SSI; 65-69; 74-75)*

She experiences the content of the ECE programme as being relevant and appropriate in equipping her with the knowledge and skills necessary to teach in our multicultural country:

*It has because you know sometimes, there are um, these modules that don't really involve ECE. We just think, okay why do I need to learn about these things. I started in my Grade three class. I talked to them about Freedom Day, because it's the 27<sup>th</sup> but then, I'm thinking again, what if I hadn't done OPV? I wouldn't know really much about Freedom Day, about what happened in the past, because we learnt about that, Apartheid and Bantu*

*Education, everything. Now you have to tell the children what you know about that. Then if the children ask you a question you are able and you have the knowledge, you have more knowledge than them, rather than you knowing nothing. Now you know everything, or most of the things if not everything. (PC; SSI; 127-130; 131-133; 135-137)*

One of the challenges of ECE, as depicted by Participant C, was the cost factor involved. However, her overall positive view also indicates that these costs are necessary and worthwhile to her future career.

*I don't know if this fits in, but then um, having to do materials during my assignments, materials are too, too costly. (PC; SSI; 96-97)*

*But then this one, what I'm going to say now is a strong point, even though we do materials and it costs us a lot of money... it's for your own benefit. Everything you do is for yourself, it's not for somebody else, it's not for the Lecturer to keep or anything. It all comes back to you. Then when you start teaching, one day, during, when you have your own class you don't have to start all from scratch doing everything, you have basically almost everything. (PC; SSI; 97-98; 101-104)*

She also feels that she is provided with support from various sources such as:

*Lecturers, family. Cos then lecturers are available for you after classes, any time for discussions and all that. So I feel the support is there. Also tutors. They provide tutors for us. (PC; SSI; 116-117)*

In general, this participant has an extremely positive outlook of ECE. Her thoughts on her present involvement and choice of future profession are elucidated below:

*Bushbuck Ridge yes. I would like to go home. I know most people say why go home? It's so dull and all that... "you have to develop the schools, you are the new generations who are going to make a difference. That's why you have to come back here and work for your community." That's what inspired me to make a difference in the community. (PC; SSI; 142-143; 146-148)*

Furthermore, she expresses her passion for teaching children and her mission as an ECE teacher as follows:



*Well I, I love children so I learnt to, even though I'm not patient with older people, like people who are my age, to be patient with the younger ones. Try to understand that they are still developing, it's still a process in which you have to plant like a seed, you have to plant it, you have to water it, you have to give it sunlight, you have to do, it's the same thing with the Foundation Phase. You are the, you are the one who is supposed to build them. You are supposed to, you lay the foundation, and if the foundation is not laid properly, the house, for example, the house will not sustain rain, or storm or whatever. (PC; SSI; 165-171)*

#### **4.3.4 PARTICIPANT D**

##### **4.3.4.1 Background information**

Participant D is a 24-year-old Sepedi speaking student teacher. She grew up in KwaNdebele, Mpumalanga. She started crèche at a local school and then went to two different rural government primary schools from Grade 1-7. From Grade 8-12 she was schooled at a former Roman Catholic school which has since become a government school. She developed her love for young children from teaching Sunday school at home - *Sunday mornings was the best day of my life*. Deciding to study ECE was naturally her first option. (PD; SSI; 13-14)

##### **4.3.4.2 Data analysis**



**Photograph 4.4: Participant D's perceptions and experiences of ECE, titled "Recycling"**

### **Narrative:**

Participant D exhibited a photograph of an assignment which required of her to make musical instruments. The picture shows shakers made from bottles filled with corn and bells made from metal bottle tops. Her narrative described the reason for her choice of photograph to depict her perceptions and experiences of ECE as being that of a recycled musical instrument. To explain further, her initial experience of ECE was being amongst many White, female students who could financially afford to complete practical assignments. However, she now feels that, regardless of cost, race or gender, you can always recycle – *use what people have thrown away and create something valuable to children* (PD; SSI; 42). She added that her perceptions and experiences ECE have been ‘recycled’. In light of the above-mentioned, it was apt to title this participant’s views as “recycling”.

### **Interviews:**

The perceptions of ECE as a career choice were rendered as follows:

*Okay, I just love children and I started teaching Sunday School back home, so Sunday mornings was the best day of my life. Just to stand in front of kids and teach them. So I thought I should pursue a career in that. Then finally, we applied they took me, I went for it and I love it. Ja, it was my first choice then, second choice was then Senior Phase, but then around Education. (PD; SSI; 13-15; 17-18)*

Additionally, she mentions that the perceptions held by members of the community differed quite drastically from hers, as they do not hold ECE in great esteem:

*I remember from High School when I was going to do Foundation Phase, oh everyone was just laughing at me. And like even now, when people ask me, so people take it for granted, they really, really despise us... Ag man, teaching kids is just about ABC, it's like nothing, it's for dumb people, or something, I don't know. But, they have a very different perspective about it like, you know. Even at home, they were like oh [participant name], are you really, really going to do that? I mean, [participant name] come on, teaching kids... (PD; SSI; 84-86; 88-90)*

Regardless of the above-mentioned view of the community, this participant would like to return to her home community to start her career as she feels that these

schools are ill-equipped and she can contribute and implement what she has learned:

*I'm thinking of going back home. I'd like to go back home and just implement, I just feel that around here there's everything, like I've been doing my teaching prac in private schools, even the pre-school I was in, so I want to try to go home where there's no resources and try my creativity and see how it goes. So ja, I would love to go back home. (PD; SSI; 75; 77-79)*

In line with what she has learned, this participant feels that the programme is relevant and appropriate to meet the diverse needs of the student population it serves:

*It's very much appropriate. It's not only just about theory, but it has a lot of practical in it. Ja, it really shows, like when doing teaching prac then we can see where we applied these things we do... exist in real life. I think that opened so much... so many opportunities and practical stuff, I must say. (PD; SSI; 34-36)*

*Because it includes JTK when we learn about different languages, like there's a project which we did in [rural area], we had to help learners there, and then otherwise most of the assignments we had to hand in they give us them to learn, we're gonna use that as resources in the working place. So, it was really, really preparing, chalkboard work, we had portfolio about that, how to use the Whiteboards and currently we are using Whiteboards in my school, because I practise here, then I can do it. (PD; SSI; 69-73)*

Despite all the positive experiences with ECE, the financial requirements involved with this phase are especially a barrier to her learning, as she comments:

*Yoh, it's costly Mam, financially. Ja, it's very costly, it requires a lot of you know, internet and all that. So it makes you think, when I'm at home I can't do anything because I don't have access to internet and everything, so, so much of resources, I need to be here to achieve a lot of things, so it's very much costly, I must say. (PD; SSI; 47-50)*

Additionally, she feels that support to help her cope and perform in ECE was lacking, both financially and from various other sources:



*I wouldn't say Mam, cos you know we are applying for bursaries, but then they would reply after June, or, ja mainly after June so it was just difficult to cope. There was nothing much of a support and uh unless when you go to the Student Support Centre, then you get help, they tell you, you have to talk to lecturers in time and if you cannot afford anything, just ask them about books, they might borrow you, maybe make copies, and all that, but eish, it was tough. (PD; SSI; 52-56)*

According to her and in agreement with her current experiences, she feels that being an ECE teacher is special:

*Wow, it's something special, it's really, really important, it's up there. I mean someone has to teach your kids, someone has to teach my children and I want to teach others. So, to me it's very, very vital. It's one of the most important things. (PD; SSI; 92-94)*

#### **4.3.5 PARTICIPANT E**

##### **4.3.5.1 Background information**

Participant E is a 20-year-old Sepedi speaking student teacher. She grew up in Potgietersrus, Limpopo and started school in Grade 1 at a government primary school without attending any preschool. She continued her schooling at a former model C primary school and went on to obtain her matric from a government secondary school. She initially wanted to pursue a career as a police woman, but she was too young to enrol as she was only 16 when she completed matric. As her second option, she applied for Education because of the bursary she could obtain.

#### 4.3.5.2 Data analysis



**Photograph 4.5: Participant E’s perceptions and experiences of ECE, titled “Support”**

***Narrative:***

Participant E chose a photograph of the bookstore to portray her perceptions and experiences of ECE. She believes that, similar to a bookstore, ECE has given her the support, foundation, knowledge and materials to equip her for her future role as teacher. Her narrative discloses that she needs technical support (access to and use of a computer), language support (English as her 2<sup>nd</sup> language), and financial support (resources for assignments, books etc). The appropriate title of “support” was given to her photograph, because ECE is like a bookstore where she gets everything she needs for support in becoming a teacher.

***Interviews:***

Initially, her perceptions of ECE were limited as it was not her first choice of career, but rather a means of financial support:

*Okay, at first I wanted to be a Police woman, but then I didn’t qualify because of my age. I was too young, I was only sixteen, so I applied at uh... and then I applied here because it had the bursary. I thought it was too much work to do, dealing with kids but then in a classroom, it’s not like working with kids at home, like when they are playing you discipline them and stuff, but then in the classroom it’s a different thing. (PE; SSI; 13-14; 16; 23; 30-32)*

Yet, both personally and from the community's standpoint, having a degree in ECE is recognised as a respectable and important in laying a foundation for the nation.

*Oh, okay, for me being involved I feel it is a good thing, I'm proud of myself and then I see it as I do have a status, because it's a degree ECE, the old ones have Diplomas. So I can have a degree, it's a status, especially when I go back to my community, because there isn't any people who have, there's a few who have degrees. So it's a status for me... Ja, I'm a teacher, so a teacher is a person who is respected... but especially Foundation Phase because they are the ones who start the learners from the start. (PE; SSI; 94-97; 99; 105-106)*

She adds that the programme is suitable since it provides her with the necessary experience and equips her with the knowledge to cope with diversity in the classroom situation:

*It's that they give us a lot of information, then the resources, they teach us how to make our own resources. As well, the internships, the teaching practicals, it helps us a lot, because we gain experience. (PE; SSI; 45-47)*

*In the class I have, it's a diverse class, got different learners from different backgrounds. So they teach us in English, here at University, so when we can go out there, we can speak to them. They teach us how to deal with those issues of diversity in classroom. (PE; SSI; 79-81)*

Even though she feels prepared to teach in English, she would prefer to start her career at home, teaching in her mother tongue. Another reason for this choice is the financial strain caused by living away from home:

*In Limpopo... Well, because I want to teach Sepedi. That's where the 'Pedi's are and also that's close to home. I don't have the money for the place and stuff. (PE; SSI; 85; 87-88)*

As she has mentioned previously, she feels that one of the weaknesses of ECE is the financial burden it places on students:

*Ja, cos they make a list and then you find out that the schools that we are close to are not there on the list, cos the schools they are far and we have to use our own money. (PE; SSI; 56-57)*

Apart from all the financial implications that this participant has referred to, she feels that she receives support through other channels:

*Okay, at home, my parents do support me, as well as at the school that we are doing the teaching practical. The teachers encourage me, we plan the lessons, if I make mistakes, she tells me, she encourages me.(PE; SSI; 63-65)*

All things considered, the current experiences of this participant are described briefly as follows:

*Now I've realised that it's a good thing [ECE] and I love it, so I think I've learned.(PE; SSI; 32-33)*

#### **4.4 SUMMARY OF DATA ANALYSIS**

The following table summarises the various categories derived from the participants' photographs, narratives, individual semi-structured interviews and focus group interview:

**Table 4.4: Data analysis according to categories**

BROAD CATEGORIES	PARTICIPANT RESPONSES				
	Participant A	Participant B	Participant C	Participant D	Participant E
<i>Career choice</i>	ECE Education as 2 <sup>nd</sup> choice to Ecotourism	ECE Education as 1 <sup>st</sup> choice	ECE Education as 2 <sup>nd</sup> choice to Psychology	ECE Education as 1 <sup>st</sup> choice	ECE Education as 2 <sup>nd</sup> choice to Police woman
<i>Prior perceptions</i>	Takes ECE seriously (mother a teacher)	Clueless – no idea of what’s going to happen (course as a whole)	ECE old school ‘Who still does education?’ Other career options for money	‘Just about teaching kids’	Working with kids is too much work
<i>Support</i>	Lecturers DoE  Language module	Lecturers Bursary Parents Library	Lecturers Tutors	Lecturers  Student support centre Language module	Lecturers Teachers Parents English as academic language
<i>Programme Strengths</i>	Make teaching your career (daily life)	Quality of course very good (methods and assessment)	Choose speciality Practical, resources made	Empowers you, strengthens creativity Practical	Resources Practical
<i>Programme Weaknesses</i>	Costly <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Materials</li> <li>• Transport</li> </ul>	Money / expensive <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assignments</li> </ul> English as academic language	Costly <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Materials</li> </ul>	Costly <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resources</li> <li>• Internet</li> </ul>	Money <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transport</li> </ul>
<i>ECE status</i>	Old people’s job	Lot of work, simple and easy Doesn’t pay	Boring, young children irritating	People take it for granted... just about ABC, for dumb people	Any Degree = status
<i>Current experiences</i>	Enthusiastic about teaching ECE ‘What I want to do’	Feel comfortable, learnt so much and in the right place	‘I’m loving it’ Love of children	Feels good and confident ECE really important, vital.	Teachers respected, especially ECE “A good thing and I love it’

## 4.5 CONCLUSION

The data obtained from the photographs, narratives, interviews and field notes yielded insightful information about the way that Black student teachers perceive and experience ECE. Although each individual participant held very particular views, the data analysed thus far indicates a variety of common categories according to which Black students perceive and experience ECE. The findings were based on categories such as career choices, perceptions, support, programme strength and weaknesses, ECE status and current experiences. These categories will be combined with the various themes of the study and the findings will be analysed and synthesised according to the research questions in Chapter 5.



## CHAPTER 5 RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The literature overview (Chapter 2) revealed that various ecosystemic factors, *inter alia* historical, educational, social, cultural, economic and personal factors, may have an influence on students' perceptions of ECE. Similarly, the empirical study discussed in Chapter 4, further indicated that historical, societal, financial, academic, cultural as well as personal factors determined how the respondents experienced ECE. To summarize my findings from both the literature as well as the empirical study, I shall outline the main results of my study while revisiting my data and the literature surveyed. I shall additionally answer the research questions that guided this enquiry. The results are exposed and organised so as to answer my research questions and at the same time suggest the implications of my study according to Bronfenbrenner's various systems. I shall finally provide suggestions for future research as well as the summary and conclusion of the study.

### 5.2 OVERVIEW

The summary below provides a brief overview of the study. I offer comprehensive summaries of the preceding four chapters of this study which highlight some points that were of significance in this research and precluding to the results. This overview furthermore serves as the basis for the subsequent discussion of the synthesis of the findings and recommendations.

#### CHAPTER 1

In this chapter I presented an overview and background to this study. I provided details on the rationale, research questions, definitions of the key concepts and research methodology of the study. An introduction to the review of literature as well as Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory, was provided in order to introduce some of the factors that influence Black student teachers' perceptions and experiences of ECE.

The preliminary literature review in this chapter exposed the history of South African education with specific reference to the apartheid past which still runs deep in contemporary South Africa (Finchilescu *et al.*, 2007:721). In this context, several ecosystemic factors were identified that portrayed Black students' perceptions and experiences of schooling and higher education, and which subsequently illuminated the shortage of Black student teachers (paragraph 1.6.5). Furthermore, I outlined the theoretical framework of Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory since it served as the compass which guided my research questions, the discussion of Chapter 2 as well as the results and recommendations provided in Chapter 5. The research design, various data collection techniques, the projection of data collection and the ethical considerations in order to represent the qualitative research process that was followed, were also mentioned.

## **CHAPTER 2**

This chapter was unique insofar as it discussed the theoretical framework of the study and the literature simultaneously. The review of the relevant literature focused on studies that provided insight into the ecosystemic factors that influence Black student teachers' perceptions and experiences of ECE. Furthermore, the structure of this chapter was specifically organised according to Bronfenbrenner's various systems to explicate the factors that were under study and in question. ECE in South Africa was discussed with particular reference to the supply and demand for teachers. It was established that South Africa's problem to recruit more Black students into ECE is part of an international challenge (Santoro, 2007).

Subsequently the chronosystem revealed the historical factors that were responsible for influencing Black student teachers' perceptions and experiences of ECE. Similarly, the macrosystem highlighted the status of ECE and the ECE teacher in Black communities pertaining to various cultural and societal factors. A discussion of the exosystem followed which depicted the role of socio-economic factors in contributing to the low status of ECE, as well as the low enrolment and throughput rate at higher education institutions (DoE, 2006; Green, 2010; Hobson, Horton & Owens, 2004; Prochner & Kabiru, 2008; Steyn *et al.*, 2011). The "... challenge... for South Africa to implement a programme of teacher education designed to prepare a teaching force to address the needs of its increasingly diverse student body." (Ball, 2006:4) was acknowledged in the mesosystem of this chapter. Finally, the



microsystem presented valuable information on the perceptions of Black student teachers with ecosystemic factors that inhibit or invite these students into ECE. In my view, the overall consequence of this chapter allowed my study to contribute to the existing body of knowledge.

### **CHAPTER 3**

This chapter discussed the qualitative research approach and interpretive paradigm that was adopted as a foundation to this study. Through engaging in qualitative research methods which were structured within the interpretive paradigm (Creswell, 2012), I was enabled to explore Black student teachers' lifeworlds as well as the ecosystemic factors that influence their perceptions and experiences of ECE. The selection of the participants under study as well as their background information were explicated. This chapter additionally explained the case study research design and data collection methods, such as photo voice, narratives, semi-structured interviews and a focus group interview, which were followed to ultimately provide an explanation to the in-depth data that they generated. Credibility and trustworthiness were also addressed in order to ensure that this study was authentic, accurate and comprehensive. Finally issues of informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality, as well as deception and privacy, were addressed in a discussion of ethical considerations.

### **CHAPTER 4**

In order to present the findings that were produced by this study, this chapter analysed the data generated by each of the five Black student teachers, individually. The background information as well as a subsequent discussion of the findings based on the various data collection methods, was discussed according to each individual participant. To this end, I systematically based my analysis on the six steps commonly used in analysing qualitative data (Creswell, 2012:237). This chapter explains how the data was organised according to type and subsequently coded into various themes in order to answer the research questions in Chapter 5. An analysis of the participants' responses revealed several broad categories, such as career choices, perceptions, support, programme strengths and weaknesses, ECE status and current experiences, which facilitated better understanding of Black student teachers' perceptions and experiences of ECE. This chapter was meaningful

since it supports and contributes to the following discussion of the results of this study.

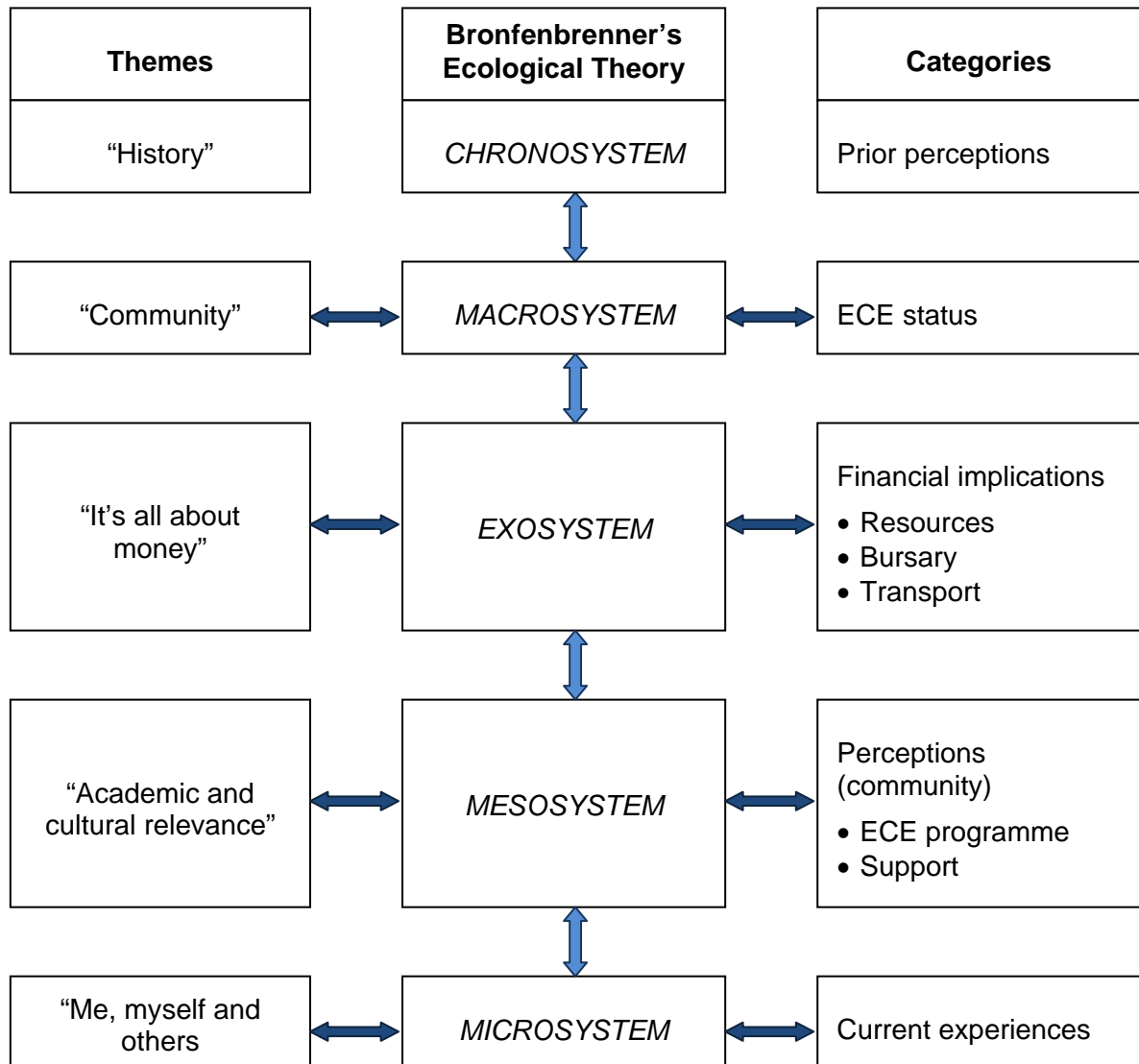
### **5.3 SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS IN TERMS OF THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Guba and Lincoln (1985) maintain that “...interpretation involves making sense of data, or the ‘lessons learned’...” (Creswell, 2012:257). Creswell further states that research creates some larger meaning about the phenomenon based on personal views, comparisons with past studies, or both, in order to make sense of the findings. I will therefore make use of the information gleaned by this study to cohere the literature and data to the ecosystemic factors that influence Black student teachers’ perceptions and experiences of ECE. Having analyzed and discussed the detailed data as in Chapter 4, I will conclude this study by summarizing key findings and discussing them further in the remainder of this chapter.

The importance of exploring Black student teachers’ perceptions and experiences of ECE is undeniable considering the shortage of qualified and well-trained teachers, and more specifically the low enrollment and throughput rate of Black student teachers in ECE. As mentioned in Chapter 2, ECE in South Africa is most seriously affected in township and rural areas (Crosser, 2009) where Black student teachers come from. It was therefore crucial to understand the ecosystemic factors of Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory from a Black student teacher’s perspective in order to contextualize the interpretation of data in this study. For the purpose of this study, I will subsequently draw conclusions and discuss the implications for each question in accordance with my research themes.

Data collected from the participants highlighted various ecosystemic factors that influenced their perceptions and experiences of ECE. The following table highlights the relationship of the main findings of my study according to the categories that derived from the data in Chapter 4, in relation to the ecosystemic factors from Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory. Themes and categories are not portrayed in any specific order of priority, but they are rather discussed when necessary to answer the research questions.

**Table 5.1: Findings according to Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory**



The chronosystem, which refers to the contextual timeframe, was constituted by a discussion of the history of education in South Africa. This theoretical aspect was linked to the findings which revealed that the Black student teachers’ perceptions about education, and specifically ECE, can be associated with the educational past of South Africa. Furthermore, the matter that the Black community influenced the Black student teachers’ perceptions of ECE, specifically with regard to the low status afforded to this phase of teaching, was addressed in the macrosystem. The recurring theme of financial implications brought to the fore by the Black student teachers, was discussed under the exosystem, a broad system in which the individual does not directly function. The mesosystem which interacts with various structures of the microsystem, examined the cultural and academic relevance of the Black student teachers’ perceptions and experiences of the ECE programme and the support they

received. Finally, the current experiences of the Black student teacher were the primary focus of the microsystem, a system that is closest to the individual. In accordance with Bronfenbrenner (Allen, 2010), the abovementioned themes, systems and categories are “interrelated”.

The research questions of this study will be answered from the information that was generated by the literature survey and the data that was obtained with the empirical study. The subsequent discussion of the research findings are guided primarily by the secondary research questions. Thereafter, the main research question will be answered.

### **5.3.1 SECONDARY RESEARCH QUESTION ONE**

*Which ecosystemic factors influence Black student teachers’ perceptions and experiences of ECE?*

From the literature in Chapter 2 it was evident that several ecosystemic factors influence the perceptions of Black student teachers. First, the chronosystem revealed historical factors related to apartheid (Paragraph 2.5.1) which detrimentally influenced schooling (Paragraph 2.5.1.1) and higher education (Paragraph 2.5.1.2) owing to unequal opportunities that Black students experienced. These historical factors ultimately contributed to the perceived low status that this population group currently has of the teaching profession. Second, this particular status of ECE (Paragraph 2.6.1) and the ECE teacher (Paragraph 2.6.1) was affected by social/societal and cultural factors, which were portrayed by Black communities under the macrosystem. Green (2010:8) mentioned in Chapter 2 that “...there is a clear imbalance between the graduate profile and the need for the ECE teachers.”

It was thus concluded that it is important to have trained and qualified ECE teachers to empower the young children of our country and eradicate the low regard that Black communities have for ECE (Paragraph 2.6). Third, in terms of training and qualifying these Black student teachers, the exosystem highlighted economic factors that influence the current state of ECE. According to Breier (2010:660) “(b)lacks achieved the worst quality and least financed education and were – and still are – the poorest, despite a rapidly growing elite.” Thus, this imbalance made it possible to

question the academic and cultural factors (Paragraph 2.8.1) that were revealed in the mesosystem. Considering the influence of apartheid that still affects Black students, the lack of respect that ECE receives from Black communities and the financial struggles that these students experience, it became evident that the higher education institutions need to reflect the societies that they are a part of (Smith, 2008) instead of remaining “embarrassingly homogenous” (Ladson-Billings, 2001:37). Finally, personal factors that influence Black student teachers’ perceptions of ECE (Paragraph 2.9.2), such as cultural differences, peer influences and socioeconomic status (Griffin and Allen, 2006), were brought to the fore under the microsystem. These factors are discussed in more detail below.

### **5.3.1.1 Implications according to personal factors**

The microsystem focuses on the individual and it is therefore described as an environment in which the Black student teachers spend a good deal of time engaging in activities and interactions that influence their perceptions and experiences of ECE. The theme derived from the data gathered was hence aptly named “Me, myself and others”.

The literature from Chapter 2 concentrated on the perceptions of Black students, whereas results from the data highlighted the current experiences of the participants. Some international authors acknowledged in Chapter 2, i.e. Davis *et al.* (2004:439), report that even though Black students do not wish to speak on behalf of the Black race, they still want to do their utmost to eradicate the negative impressions the university community might hold concerning the ability of Black students to succeed. Regardless of her financial situation, race or gender, Participant D felt that her perceptions of ECE were “recycled”, which was portrayed by her photograph of recycled instruments (Paragraph 4.3.4.2). In answering the question of whether or not they cope and perform academically in the ECE programme, the participants agreed during the focus group interview that their experienced self-motivation and self-discipline reflected on their performance, and not on their race or any preconceived perceptions which the university community may hold.

### 5.3.1.2 Implications according to social factors

Furthermore, viewing Black student teachers in relation to others in their immediate environment provided feedback on the support that they received. Although most of them mentioned financial aid as being crucial, there were specific relationships that provided them with the suitable support they deemed necessary. Amongst others, the main responses were that parents and lecturers assisted them to cope and perform academically in the programme (PC; FGI; 48-49, PB; SSI; 66, PC; SSI; 116-117, PE; SSI; 63). Contrastingly, literature from Chapter 2 suggests that expectations and perceptions also extended to Faculty which believed it necessary to be tougher on Black students (Hobson-Horton & Owens, 2004). Also in dissonance, Davis *et al.* (2004:439) claim that having to prove one's worthiness represents a potentially serious barrier to success for Black students at a predominantly White university.

Chapter 2 (Paragraph 2.9.1) further pointed out that Black first year students are “underprepared” for university learning (Zulu, 2008:43) due to such factors. Hence, to Black student teachers support and academic performance are intertwined. The participants have different cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds than the majority of White students studying ECE. Both “underpreparedness”, and the different circumstances contribute to the weak throughput rate of Black student teachers.

The participants revealed that a few Black students dropped out of the programme (PB; FGI; 75) due to a lack of finances which impacted negatively on their academic performance. More notably, one participant commented that,

*Because of funds my academic (whatever) status was affected. So I would say yes, it does have a very serious influence (PA; FGI; 90-91).*

Participant E's photograph, titled “Support”, of a bookstore highlighted her need for various forms of technical, language and financial support (Paragraph 4.3.5.2). Nevertheless, participants in this study were of the opinion that their performance is also dependent on individual intrinsic factors (*Interviewer*; FGI; 66-67). Such factors included the amount of time and dedication devoted to studying, their internal motivation to succeed and their ability to be resourceful. These factors were reinforced with encouragement from parents and lecturers. Sedlacek (1999) aimed

to understand Black students' experiences and mentioned that the availability of a strong support person is critical in the lives of these students in determining success or failure. Yet again, the empirical study disclosed that various ecosystemic factors, mostly congruent with the literature, influenced Black student teachers' experiences.

### **5.3.2 SECONDARY RESEARCH QUESTION TWO**

*How do ecosystemic factors influence Black student teachers' enrolment in Early Childhood Education?*

International research (Hobson-Horton & Owens, 2004; Prochner & Kabiru, 2008), as well as South African (DoE, 2006; Green, 2010; Steyn & Harris, 2011; Steyn *et al.*, 2011) all cite the urgent need to increase the enrolment rates of ECE teachers. However, the data as well as literature could not provide evidence to suggest that the Black student teachers were encouraged by fellow peers or community members to enroll in ECE. A discussion of the manner by which various ecosystemic factors influence Black student teachers' enrolment in ECE follows.

#### **5.3.2.1 Implications according to historical factors**

For the purpose of this study, the chronosystem involved a historical perspective of education in South Africa which provided a contextual timeframe to understand the perceptions and experiences of ECE (Paragraph 2.3). Against the background of the historical perspective and with regard to the theme, "History", the participants of the study revealed their prior perceptions of ECE in their responses that pertained to the history of education for Black students (PA-PE; FGI, 125-133). This was particularly evident from the fact that three of the five participants did not initially choose to study ECE, which may be attributed to the negative influence of the community's low regard for the career resulting from the inequalities of the past. Sayed (2004:248) posits that educational opportunities were extremely limited for the Black population, with very few Blacks completing basic education, and even fewer completing secondary schooling, which resulted in many students enrolling in teacher education programmes in order to obtain higher educational opportunities.



Similarly, participants agreed that “...*the standard of Education kind of dropped*” (PA; FGI; 161) since the most accessible career to their parents’ generation was Education, which only required minimum qualifications. Participants mentioned that ECE teachers in their communities were ‘*old ones*’ (PE; SSI; 95-96) and they deem it therefore necessary to change the status quo. Likewise, it was evident that ECE, specifically pre-Grade 1, is not viewed as imperative for children in Black communities and hence the majority of the children only start formal schooling in Grade 1 (PD; FGI; 99-104,109).

However, Participant A’s photograph of a pre-primary school illustrated her desire to follow ECE as a “Career Choice”. More specifically, she realised the need for Black student teachers in ECE. In support of this view, the literature in Chapter 2 (Paragraph 2.6.1) revealed that ECE redresses the multitude of factors which contribute to the poverty and vulnerability of young children in South Africa, specifically the lack of interest and support within families regarding children’s education in rural Black families (Ebrahim, 2009:52). Similar to historical factors, Black student teachers’ enrolment in ECE is influenced by the Black community’s perception of this phase of teaching as mentioned below.

### **5.3.2.2 Implications according to societal factors**

When enquiring about the low enrolment of Black students in ECE, the following reasons emerged from the participants. Firstly, one participant revealed that the Black community believed “...*that it’s not really important for us to take our kids to pre-schools at an early age – they just go when they go to school [Grade 1]*” (PD; FGI; 103-104). As a consequence, these students were under the impression and in agreement that “...*there won’t be enough jobs available...*” (PD; FGI; 108, 112) in ECE. This view resonates with the National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development which reports a decreased interest in the teaching profession (especially among Black students in ECE) caused by “...the poor public image of the profession and its status, particularly among young people, uncertainty about where new teachers would be placed after qualification, a competitive employment market and challenging working conditions” (DoE, 2006:12).



The participants felt that most people “...do not have the patience for small children...”(PC; FGI; 114)and they rather opt to study another phase. Teaching as a career was also a second option to the participants and their peers due to certain factors which complicated their choice to study ECE at a predominantly White higher education institution. More specifically, these factors were the ability to adjust to a White culture of teaching and learning, and also to develop the ability to use English as an academic language. International authors, Robinson, Paccione & Rodriguez (2003), emphasize the importance of Black student teachers having teachers who had firsthand experience as members of a previously marginalized group. These teachers would be able to better assist them because they would be able to understand the importance of academic achievement from a different perspective. Participant C took a photograph titled “Teaching and Learning” of a man and two children, which symbolised the importance of an adult’s role in a child’s life. Furthermore, this indicated the value of the ECE teacher for Black children in her community.

### **5.3.2.3 Implications according to cultural factors**

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the relationship between culture and education with particular reference to Black communities and their regard for the status of ECE and the status of the ECE teacher, encompassed the macrosystem. In this system, and in relation to the theme, “Community”, which was derived from the data collected, the participants’ personal responses about the cultural background that they come from and the status of ECE, were varied and inconsistent (Paragraph 2.2, Paragraph 4.3.1.1 - 4.3.5.1).

Included in Chapter 2, Chabilall (2010:8) states that “...culture shapes education while education can serve as a medium to preserve and promote culture”. Participants’ experiences were rather congruent with regard to the relationship between their cultural background and the education that they received in early childhood. The data revealed that all the participants came from rural areas removed from the city that they study in (PA; SSI; 105-107, PB; SSI; 82-89, PC; SSI; 140 & 142, PD; SSI; 75-79, PE; SSI; 85-88). Furthermore, only two of the five participants were exposed to some form of schooling before starting with Grade 1, and with the exception of one, they all attended various local government schools until they

completed matric. Prior to the mid-1990's, ECE programmes were almost unheard of in Black communities (National Planning Commission, 2011), which corresponds with the period during which the participants of the study would have attended some form of early childhood education. The community from which Black student teachers come from influenced their education further drawing the correlation between culture and education.

#### **5.3.2.4 Implications according to personal factors**

However, there are also several factors worth mentioning which the participants experienced as favourable. Chapter 2 (Paragraph 2.8.1) mentioned that students experience barriers when they find the content irrelevant or culturally foreign (Gay, 2010). On the contrary, participants felt that the content of the ECE programme was, for the most part, relevant and appropriate. They were of the opinion that the programme and the practical aspects in particular, were beneficial to them as future educators. Overall, students felt that it has given them a wider spectrum of knowledge, encouraged them to think outside of the box and use their creativity, as well as empowered them through the quality of the course. Further research across multiple sites would be needed to confirm the above-mentioned, since this study only explored one higher education institution in South Africa. Another factor that was apparent was the love and passion that developed over time and through experiencing ECE. All of the students were enthusiastic about their future careers, noting the importance thereof, and describing their love for children and teaching.

To add, Black communities' disregard for ECE is generally discouraging as their perspective on the profession is coloured by the inequalities of the past. By implication the previous generation only accepted teaching as a career since it was one of a few study options available, thus creating a circumstance which further tarnished the image of the teaching profession among Black student teachers. Kruss (2008) and Steyn *et al.* (2011) stressed that teaching enjoys an inferior professional status and lack of respect in Black communities. The participants' initial perceptions of ECE, as mentioned previously (Paragraph 5.3.2.1), confirmed this view. However, their experience of ECE after 4 years in the programme produced encouraging responses. All five participants wish to return to their communities as "cultural brokers" (Robinson, Paccione &Rodriquez, 2003:202) "...to develop the schools as

*the new generation that is going to make a difference...*” (PC; SSI; 146-147). The Black student teachers in this study are highly driven and they are inspired to accomplish results such as reaching their career goals, making their families proud, and being positive representatives of the Black community (Griffin, 2006).

### **5.3.2.5 Implications according to economic factors**

Within the framework of this study, the exosystem was presented in Chapter 2 as the social context in which Black student teachers find themselves interacting with their socioeconomic circumstances. This system provided valuable data in reply to the support that Black student teachers received within ECE, which was also one of the categories derived from the data. In the exosystem, the relating category (financial implications) and theme (“It’s all about money”) emerged often throughout the data collection and analysis phases of the study. In particular, Participant B represented money in her photograph titled “Financial Statements”. This corresponded with the responses from all the participants with regard to one of the programme’s weaknesses – its affordability. The affordability of the programme relates to the resources and materials needed for ECE assignments, as well as transport fees since most of them rely on public transport to move to and from the university and teaching practices.

Both international and South African literature on this topic correspond with the abovementioned implications. Hobson-Horton and Owens (2004:95) found that African American students were confronted with economic difficulties because they often had to work while studying, projects and practice were expensive, and they had to pay for transportation costs relating to teaching practices. Similar results emerged from Breier (2010:669) who indicated that South African students experience that “...finances play a very important role in the lower socio-economic groups, not only in choice of institution and study programme, but also in leading to premature departure after registration, either because of unexpected financial demands or because the student underestimated the full cost of higher education”.

In addition, the Black student teachers in this study brought to light the need for financial support in order to complete assignments and do presentations, for access to a laptop or computer, for financial aid to pay for printing, and for assistance to

cover transport expenses to do practical assignments at schools if they do not stay in residence on campus. One participant summarises the above-mentioned by stating that “...*academic status is really depending on the finances*”(PA; FGI; 78). Although bursaries were issued to most of these Black student teachers, they all cited that this was a form of support. (PB; FGI; 69-72). On the contrary, they felt that receiving the bursaries mid-year was too late and often ineffective.

By the same token, a discrepancy is noted between the financial implications of the various phases of teaching and teacher programmes offered. Participants were of the opinion that the ECE programme is more expensive than other phases, not in terms of tuition fees, but rather relating to additional expenses such as the cost of materials and resources needed to complete assignments. Similarly, participants believe that ECE teachers' future salaries are considerably lower than those of teachers in the higher grades (PB; FGI; 95-98).

In answering the question, “Where are the foundation phase teachers for our children?”, Steyn *et al.* (2011) found that post-apartheid national policies that provide Black students with access to higher education have changed, and costs of tertiary education are supported. This is especially true for the students from a low socio-economic background as they receive bursaries that are available for tuition and accommodation (Steyn *et al.*, 2011). However, the findings from this study suggest that finances play an important role in dissuading potential Black student teachers from studying ECE.

Support was offered in terms of time, and more notably for Black student teachers, money. When questioned if support was financial, the following answers, as previously mentioned, summarised the responses:

*It needs to be financial...* (PC; FGI; 57) and

*Academic status is really depending on the finances* (PA; FGI; 78).

Financial considerations in higher education student dropout are increasingly recognised (Breier, 2010:657). Likewise, all the participants in this study referred to money in one or more of their responses. From their experiences, it seemed that finances were directly proportionate to performance. Students felt that higher marks were awarded to assignments that were more “beautiful”, based on the buying of

materials and resources, as opposed to those that were created from recycled materials. The fact that these Black participants were not exposed to these materials as young children since they did not attend pre-schooling, was particularly distressing. To add, Saunders (2000) claims that other tangible problems experienced by some black students included a lack of finances and academic under-preparedness (in Leuscher, 2009: 417).

Pertaining to the cost of assignments, the participants, most of whom study by means of the financial aid of a bursary, felt that their bursary, or at least receiving it late, was insufficient in supporting them.

*The bursaries come late, that's why most students drop out from ECE in June. We have failed from January to June, the whole semester (PB; FGI; 69-70).*

Similarly, two Black students felt that transport costs were the cause of more financial concerns (PA; SSI; 81, PE; SSI; 56-57). These students are dependent on public transport and they felt disadvantaged compared to other students who had cars, especially when they were placed for their teaching practices far away from their places of residence. Finally, participants perceived their future salaries as educators, especially as ECE educators who are "...not gonna get paid like FET teachers" (PB; FGI; 95-96) to be a further financial stress. Findings from Smith (2008) as well as this study suggest that there is an urgent need for financial aid at higher education institutions to reach individuals at all levels of the Black community, most particularly those who are members of a lower economic group.

The above-mentioned reasons contribute to the factors that portray the current shortage of Black students in ECE. The concern about the demand for teachers exceeding the supply in South Africa was evident in the discussion in Chapter 2 (Paragraph 2.2.1.3). Only 168 from the 1275 expected ECE graduates in South Africa in 2009 were Black teachers speaking African languages, which emphasises the shortage and hence the urgent need for Black teachers in predominantly Black areas (Green, 2010). The participants indicated that their parents recognized their pursuit and their potential to work with children and approved their decisions to pursue ECE as a career. However, these participants are in the minority since peers and community members do not value ECE highly. As a result the importance of

seeking a more remunerative profession that holds a higher status, prevails in Black communities.

### **5.3.3 SECONDARY RESEARCH QUESTION THREE**

*How do ecosystemic factors influence Black student teachers' perceptions and experiences of the relevance and appropriateness of Early Childhood Education?*

Initially the decision to become an ECE teacher for these Black students was inspired by a role model or a love for children. In some cases, the decision only became final when once insight and enthusiasm was gained within the programme. Although all remain passionately involved in ECE to date and plan to stay committed in future, the personal and financial cost of these Black students' experiences cannot be negated. On the one hand, Black students felt supported mainly by lecturers, but also by family members (mainly parents) while studying. Within the context of this study, the mesosystem was comprised of the connections and processes that take place between academic and cultural relevance of an institution and the Black student teacher. It remains uncertain whether former White higher education institutions in South Africa meet the current academic and cultural needs of the diverse student population.

#### **5.3.3.1 Implications according to academic factors**

In contradiction to the previous paragraph, most participants generally felt that the programme equipped them with the necessary knowledge and practical skills to teach in the diverse context of South Africa. All of them noted at some point in the data collection process that the most relevant content matter that they encountered were the modules that involved language teaching. This observation may be attributed to the fact that these Black student teachers do not have English as their first language, unlike the majority of their White peers at the university who do. One such participant who speaks Sepedi felt that studying through the medium of English has strengthened her language skills and enabled her to teach a more diverse group of learners, which contradicts the findings that suggest that academic demands of the language were particularly grueling for Black students given the amount of reading required by the modules in their university studies (Steyn & Harris, 2011).

In Chapter 2, Hay (2008) mentions that given the history of South Africa's higher education system up to the present, curricula, textbooks and lecturing have been done predominantly by White lecturers who represent western worldviews and ways of understanding and learning. These historical factors are also present at the higher education institution under study. However, in their responses the participants maintained that the programme is for the most part in harmony with their educational needs. They discussed the programme in general and experienced an increase in knowledge and experience in ECE. Whether or not the programme meets Black student teachers' educational needs, remains questionable. This is in part due to the fact that I struggled to obtain in-depth responses from the participants regarding this question.

### **5.3.3.2 Implications according to cultural factors**

According to a number of authors mentioned in Chapter 2 (Ladson-Billings, 2001; Gay, 2010; National Education Association, 2002; Sedlacek, 1999; Stevens, 1997), the implications of diverse learning settings are that a growing number of students receive their education at institutions and from teachers who represent cultures and learning material that are anomalous. This is due to globalisation and subsequent migration where diverse learning settings are becoming the norm (Gbadamosi & De Jager, 2009). Yet, despite the common satisfaction with the programme, a few issues were apparent in several of the participants' responses. One such point in question is the fact that the bulk of the theory in the course come from international sources (PB; SSI; 33-36). Similarly, another concern communicated was that learning just one language does not necessarily equip these students to go teach in their home communities (PB; SSI; 78-80) on the grounds that South Africa has 11 official languages. The fact that the course does not always represent or serve the heterogeneous population, is a concern when addressing the status of ECE, as well as the recruitment and retention of Black student teachers in the programme.

More specifically, the above-mentioned served to answer the secondary question, "*How do ecosystemic factors influence the relevance and appropriateness of Early Childhood Education for Black student teachers?*". A number of participants' responses overlapped through answering more than one question at a time. The overlapping of answers was experienced in the analysis of the data as participants



provided insight on the strengths and weaknesses of the ECE programme through their feedback.

In accordance with literature and the previously mentioned implications, "...there can be no doubt that issues of diversity form the crux of what may be one of the biggest challenges yet to face those of us whose business it is to educate educators" (Delpit, 1995:105). According to Ball (2006:4), it is therefore "... (a) challenge... for South Africa to implement a program of teacher education designed to prepare a teaching force to address the needs of its increasingly diverse student body". Coupled with the above-mentioned, it is imperative that the institutions training Black student teachers adopt appropriate cultural and academic practices to uplift the current low status of ECE.

#### **5.3.4 PRIMARY RESEARCH QUESTION**

*How do ecosystemic factors influence Black student teachers' perceptions and experiences of Early Childhood Education?*

According to Swearer and Espelage (in Allen, 2010:3) Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory means that "...all individuals are part of interrelated systems that locate the individual at the center and move out from the center to include all systems that affect the individual". Therefore Black student teachers' perceptions and experiences have to be understood across individual, family, higher education institution and community contexts. According to Abrams *et al.* (2005:286) "...the ecological model provides a systematic and comprehensive approach to understanding the 'bigger picture'..." which includes the factors that contribute to Black student teachers' perceptions and experiences from a specific context. This allowed for a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study.

Various ecosystemic factors influenced Black student teachers' perceptions and experiences of ECE. The major findings of the study will be mentioned below. Firstly, the history of education in South Africa has had a detrimental effect on the experiences and perceptions of Black students in ECE, as the low qualifications of teachers in schools and low regard for ECE teachers because of a lack of training had a negative influence on the status of ECE. Secondly, the other side of the coin



relates to students being ill-prepared for their studies at tertiary level, which renders negative academic experiences for the students as well as a high dropout rate. It must be noted however, that this was apparent in the literature surveyed, while the participants of the study seemed satisfied with their programme.

Thirdly, and most recurrently, it was evident that economic circumstances affect Black student teachers in terms of academic status, support offered by the higher education institution and enrolment into ECE teacher training. Fourthly, societal factors such as the communities perception of, and the low regard that they hold for ECE, influences Black students decisions to consider this phase of teaching as a career. Finally, personal factors unique to each individual Black student teacher, influenced their perceptions and experiences of ECE.

## **5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study focused on the ecosystemic factors that influenced Black student teachers' perceptions and experiences of ECE. The findings revealed historical, societal, financial, academic, cultural and personal factors. Subsequently, the following recommendations can be made, based on the literature that was surveyed as well as the data from the empirical study, with the aim to enrich the ECE programme and to recruit and retain Black student teachers.

### **5.4.1 HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS SHOULD ORIENTATE AND PREPARE BLACK STUDENTS FOR SPECIFIC PROGRAMMES (ECE)**

Black students are underprepared to meet the demands at a higher education level due to inequalities of the past, socio-economic status and an insufficient support structure (Paragraph 2.9.1). Furthermore, academic results cannot be regarded as the crucial predictor of academic success – non-academic factors should also be considered. These mainly non-cognitive student features include the following: self-concept, motivation, attitude (Sikhwari, 2007), student satisfaction (Lourens & Smit, 2003), support from families (Dass-Brailsford, 2005), approach to studying, cultural expectations, academic literacy, time management skills, psychosocial factors, the peer culture, the quality of teaching, the interaction between students and the academic and social systems of the university, students' belief in their own ability

and the student support structures offered by the university (Fraser & Killen, 2005:27).

Furthermore, it is questionable whether Black student teachers are part of the “community of practice” which Wenger (2007: 1) defines as “...formed by people who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavour.” In other words, do Black students experience a sense of belonging in a tertiary setting within a particular social domain? Considering the abovementioned, I recommend that specific support mechanisms be put into place to assist students in a process of enculturation so that they become part of the university setting academically, emotionally, culturally and socially.

#### **5.4.2 HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS SHOULD HAVE STRATEGIES TO RECRUIT AND RETAIN BLACK STUDENTS**

It was mentioned repeatedly in the literature, as well as the data, that the recruitment and retention of Black student teachers in ECE is critical. Firstly, it is imperative that higher education institutions examine the methods used to attract these students to ECE. The way in which information is conveyed to Black student teachers should be evaluated and improved. Black students need to be informed about ECE before deciding upon a career by marketing actions of the programme. An option of doing so is to address students at schools by showing them a short video on the outline and experience of the ECE programme. Secondly, higher education institutions should have strategies in place to recruit and retain Black student teachers. Similarly, Black student teachers need to be advised whilst studying about the various support options available to assist them on an academic, financial and social level. Such support can be offered in the form of a student help centre, online support or a mentoring programme.

#### **5.4.3 HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS SHOULD ADDRESS THE CULTURAL RELEVANCE OF THE ECE PROGRAMME**

Moreover, once the Black student teachers have been recruited into the ECE programme, it is necessary to address the content of the programme. Is the ECE programme culturally relevant to meet the needs of these students? (Paragraph 5.5.1) Relating to institutional factors in the ecosystem, “...policy-makers have

accepted the view that Blacks have a positive and affirming contribution to make to education provision... to eradicate racism and counter cultural stereotypes” (Basit *et al.*, 2007:281). Therefore, it is significant to conduct an in-depth examination of the ECE programme at higher education institutions so that future graduates may make a productive contribution to the teaching force in South Africa.

#### **5.4.4 HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS SHOULD EXAMINE THE FINANCIAL SUPPORT OFFERED TO BLACK STUDENT TEACHERS IN ECE**

The participants exposed that the ECE programme, more so than the other phases of studying education, was particularly expensive. Costs involved were attributed to assignments (where materials were necessary to produce high-quality teaching aids), transport expenses to teaching practice sites (as many of the Black student teachers rely on public transport), as well as accommodation (since the majority of Black students come from areas without a higher education institution). In many cases, they receive bursaries to study. Yet, the bursaries pay out late, which leaves them at a disadvantage until they acquire the necessary funds. Similarly, the bursaries only pay for academic fees which does not address the additional expenses of assignments and transport specific to ECE. It therefore, becomes increasingly significant to examine the ways and means that these Black student teachers are financially assisted.

### **5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

Although this study provided valuable insight into Black student teachers' perceptions and experiences of ECE, it was also not without limitations. Therefore, further research on the following is recommended:

#### **5.5.1 DEVELOPING THE ECE PROGRAMME TO MEET THE DIVERSE NEEDS OF STUDENTS**

First, it was anticipated that recommendations to strengthen the ECE programme to meet the needs of the diverse student population it serves could be generated from the findings. The data revealed limited responses possibly due to the fact that a more thorough examination of ECE programmes offered at all the higher education institutions in South Africa would be necessary to yield beneficial results. The implications for future research should therefore include a larger sample of the Black

student teacher population, as well as an extensive document analysis of the various programmes in an attempt to elaborate further on how ECE programmes at South African higher education institutions could be structured to accommodate and encourage Black student teachers.

### **5.5.2 INVESTIGATING THE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF BLACK STUDENT TEACHERS**

Second, the need to strengthen the capacity of Black student teachers that are produced, is apparent, yet more research on the specific strategies that are necessary to recruit and retain these teachers should be investigated in order to meet the growing need for teachers in Black communities. The recruitment of Black students will be highly beneficial in terms of supplying the country with a home-grown workforce, providing a role model for Black students and dismissing myths and stereotypes that exist among the White population, for example that Black people are only capable of entering certain professions (Basit *et al.*, 2007:296).

In addition, an investigation should be conducted to find ways to better inform Black students of the availability and possibility of a future in teaching since:

*Back home most people don't know about the ECE programme. I remember in my matric, the people from the University Career they came, but there were no Education people, only the Engineering students and Marketing students. They're clueless [about Education] back home (PB; FGI; 148-150).*

With the preceding discussions in mind, it becomes pertinent that it is necessary for institutions to conduct appropriate investigations in order to recruit and retain Black student teachers in ECE.

### **5.5.3 ESTABLISHING SUPPORT STRUCTURES FOR BLACK STUDENT TEACHERS**

Finally, as a result of the financial challenges as well as the academic and cultural demands that Black student teachers face, it is crucial to further examine support structures that will attract these students and enable them to successfully complete their studies. It seems that limited financial and academic support is offered to Black student teachers. One of the participants suggested that financial aid that includes

payment for tuition fees as well as making provision for resources, is one way of accomplishing this:

*If someone has a bursary, and the bursary is paying for everything [including resources and materials], it will be no problem for that person...*  
(PC; FGI; 140-141)

The data gathered also conveys the impression that it is increasingly important to capitalise on the students' voices and perspectives to inform and strengthen strategies to support Black student teachers and concurrently market ECE.

## 5.6 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Smith (2008:148) believes that "...education is reflective of the societies that develop them [for example] a White supremacist-dominated society will develop a White supremacist educational system." According to Lethoko *et al.* (2001:311) there has been much emphasis in South Africa since 1990 on the need to shift from "a culture of resistance" (due to the fact that before 1990, schools tended to be political battlefields) to "a culture of reconstruction and development". Van Wyk (2010:251) asserts that perhaps a weakness of access policies is that they have not been linked to equity. The Council on Higher Education (CHE) (2000:10) posits that equity should mean more than access into higher education; it must incorporate equity of opportunity – environments in which students through academic support, excellent teaching and mentoring and other initiatives genuinely have every chance of success. Equity, to be meaningful, should also ensure that students have access to quality education and graduate with the relevant knowledge, competencies, skills and attributes that are required for any occupation and profession (CHE, 2000:10). Although there is equity at higher education institutions where all students have equal access, programmes do not address all students' needs.

There is limited South African research available on Black student teachers' perceptions and experiences of ECE. The results generated were meaningful in providing reasons for the low enrolment and high attrition rates of Black student teachers. The main reasons include a lack of information and, encouragement, insufficient support structures for Black students, the low status of ECE in Black communities and financial barriers with regard to their studies. Similarly, the study

provides a deeper understanding of various factors that influence Black student teachers' perceptions and experiences of ECE. Probably most significantly, the limited data collected with regard to the programme revealed that the Black student teachers are satisfied. However, all the insight gained addressed the need to recruit and retain Black students in ECE.



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## APPENDICES

**APPENDIX A:**  
Letter of Invitation to Participants

**APPENDIX B:**  
Interview Schedule

**APPENDIX C:**  
Letter of consent from Dean

**APPENDIX D:**  
Letter of Consent to HOD

**APPENDIX E**  
Letter of Assent to Participants

**APPENDIX F**  
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**APPENDIX G**  
Declaration of Originality

**APPENDIX H**  
Declaration of Language Edited



**LETTER OF INVITATION**

February 2012

Dear Participant

As a lecturer from the Department of Early Childhood Education, I am concerned with the lack of trained Early Childhood Black student teachers. Given the immense shortages of ECE teachers, especially in township and rural areas, it is essential to investigate the reason(s) for the low enrolment figure for ECE student teachers at universities, and specifically here at the University of Pretoria. It is evident that the majority of black students, so urgently needed for their links with local communities, rather opt for phases other than ECE.

I would, therefore, like to invite you to participate in a study that looks at the perceptions and experience of Black student teachers in ECE, and also why you are one of the exceptions who selected Foundation Phase for teacher training. I, therefore, request you to take part in the data collection (photo voice, narratives and semi-structured interview), where I shall explore your perceptions and experiences of ECE. This information will hopefully assist me in strengthening the programme, addressing the low enrolment of Early Childhood Black student teachers, while giving you an opportunity to voice your opinions.

If you declare yourself willing to participate in this study, your name will not be used, so you can be assured of anonymity and confidentiality. Should you wish to withdraw at any stage, you won't be penalised in any way. I will take notes and audio-record the sessions, as it would help me to listen to it again later and to make a transcript of the interview for data analysis purposes. Since you may take photographs of yourself or family members during the photo voice method, I can assure you that the faces of individuals, who wish to remain unknown, will be blurred out. You may also have access to the results from this study. On request, the findings will be e-mailed to you.

Should you agree to participate, please sign the letter of assent.

Yours truly

---

D M Hannaway (Lecturer)

---

MG Steyn (Supervisor)

**INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

<b>Semi-structured interview schedule</b>
<b>Purpose and instruction</b> <p>In my letter requesting your assent, I indicated to you that I am busy with a research study on the perceptions and experiences of Black student teachers. I would like to reiterate that the aim of this interview is to understand your opinions and experiences of Early Childhood Education (ECE). The information obtained will be used only for research purposes and no names of participants or any identifying data will be made known in my dissertation and/or future publications. Do you have any questions before we start the interview? May I audio-record the interview, as it would help me to listen to it again later and to make a transcript of the interview for data analysis purposes?</p>
<b>Interview questions</b>
1. Why did you decide to enrol in BEd ECE & FP?
2. What were your opinions of ECE prior to enrolment? How do you feel now?
3. Do you feel that the content and teaching of the programme is relevant and appropriate?
4. What are the strengths of the programme?
5. What are the weaknesses of the programmes?
6. Do you feel that you get enough support to cope and perform academically?
7. Do you feel that the programme is relevant and appropriate in preparing you for when you start teaching in the diverse setting of South Africa?
8. Where would you like to teach after completing your studies?
9. How do you feel about the status of the ECE/FP?

LETTER OF CONSENT FROM DEAN

*D Hannaway*  
*M Ed-student*  
*Faculty of Education*  
*University of Pretoria*



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education  
Office of the Dean

20 September 2011

Dear Me Hannaway,

**PERMISSION FOR RESEARCH**

With this permission is granted for you to conduct research on the theme of "*Black student teachers' perceptions and experiences of Early Childhood Education*" as explained in the research proposal dated 12 September 2011.

Best wishes on the successful completion of this important study.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Irma Eloff', written over a circular scribble.

**Prof Irma Eloff**  
**Dean: Education**

## LETTER OF CONSENT TO HOD

8 September 2011

### LETTER OF CONSENT: HEAD OF DEPARTMENT: EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Dear Prof Hartell

I am currently busy with my MEd on the topic: **Black student teachers' perceptions and experiences of Early Childhood Education**

The Department of Early Childhood Education in the Faculty of Education (University of Pretoria) is currently involved in the EU funded project: *Strengthening Foundation Phase Teacher Education*. As a staff member and MEd student, I would like to explore Black student teachers' perceptions and experiences of Early Childhood Education (ECE). This study will be significant in its attempt to provide reasons for the low enrolment and high attrition rates of Black student teachers. Such research aspires to accomplish several main purposes. Primarily, it intends to understand Black student teachers' perceptions and experiences of ECE. Secondly, from the findings it aims to provide recommendations to strengthen the ECE programme to meet the needs of the diverse student population it serves. Lastly, the insight gained will be used to address the need to recruit and retain Black students.

In order to address the research questions, a qualitative approach will be followed which will involve several data collection methods:

1. With regard to why so few Black students enrol in ECE, I will use choose Black student teachers enrolled in the first and fourth year as participants since they represent the entry and exit year of ECE student teachers. I will make use of the 'photo voice' technique, supplemented with narratives from the students, to gain an understanding of *inter alia* how the students experience ECE in terms of strengths and weaknesses of the programme, academic performance and support.
2. Semi-structured interviews will also be conducted with these students, to further understand their perceptions and experiences of ECE.

I shall arrange a convenient time with these students as to avoid infringing on their lecture time.

I do believe that the findings of this study will provide me with guidelines as to strengthen our programme and to align it with the expectations of our students, as well as to contribute towards recruiting and retaining Black student teachers.

Should you agree please sign the letter of consent below. I shall appreciate it if you could return your letter of informed consent back to me, as the ethical committee needs your approval before I can commence.

Yours truly

---

DM Hannaway  
Faculty of Education  
Department of Early Childhood Education  
[donna.hannaway@up.ac.za](mailto:donna.hannaway@up.ac.za)

*PERMISSION FOR RESEARCH*

I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby give permission to D M Hannaway to do her research with students from the Department of Early Childhood Education.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date:

---

Prof CG Hartell  
Head of Department: Early Childhood Education

## LETTER OF INFORMED ASSENT TO STUDENTS

February 2012

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

I am a lecturer and I am also completing my MEd at the University of Pretoria. I need your help because I have chosen to look at how *you* perceive and experience Early Childhood Education as my research focus.

In order to collect my data, I will ask you to do a few things for me.

- 1) Should you give assent, I will arrange to meet you where I will explain everything about the process I'd like you to be involved in.
- 2) I will then meet you again and explain an exciting way for you to express your experiences of ECE. It is called photo-voice and it's a process in which I will give you a disposable camera and ask you to take photos of *how you perceive and experience ECE at the university*. You will have three days to do this.
- 3) I will then collect your cameras and develop the films.
- 4) I will meet you another time and ask you to display your photos and to discuss them with me.
- 5) Then we will meet again. I will ask you, this time, to pick the one picture which depicts your best perception and/or experience of the ECE. You will then be requested to write a narrative of about 300 words about this picture. You will be asked to submit the narratives within one week.
- 6) I will then meet you for the last time where I will interview you and ask you a few questions about everything that you would have done for me.

I want this study to give you the opportunity to voice your opinions about ECE, as well as helping you to identify strengths and weaknesses within the programme.

Please be as honest as you can in everything you do for me. Also know that if you feel uncomfortable and want to withdraw at anytime, you may. Similarly, since you may take photographs of yourself or family members during the photo voice method, I can assure you that the faces of individuals, who wish to remain unknown, will be blurred out.

I look forward to learning with you.

D Hannaway



*PERMISSION FOR RESEARCH*

I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby declare my willingness to participate in the above-mentioned study. I understand that I can withdraw at any stage. I also understand that my identity will not be disclosed.

\_\_\_\_\_

Signed by student

## ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



**UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA**  
**UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA**  
**YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA**  
 Faculty of Education

### RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

**CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE**

**CLEARANCE NUMBER :**

EC 11/11/01

**DEGREE AND PROJECT**

MEd

Ecosystemic factors that influence black student teachers' perceptions and experiences of early childhood education

**INVESTIGATOR(S)**

Donna M. Hannaway

**DEPARTMENT**

Early Childhood Education

**DATE CONSIDERED**

18 September 2012

**DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE**

APPROVED

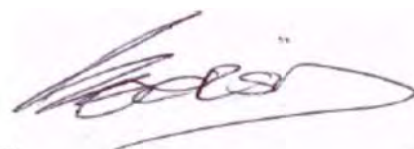
Please note:

*For Masters applications, ethical clearance is valid for 2 years*

*For PhD applications, ethical clearance is valid for 3 years.*

**CHAIRPERSON OF ETHICS  
COMMITTEE**

Prof L Ebersohn



**DATE**

18 September 2012

**CC**

Jeannie Beukes  
MG Steyn

This ethical clearance certificate is issued subject to the following conditions:

1. A signed personal declaration of responsibility
2. If the research question changes significantly so as to alter the nature of the study, a new application for ethical clearance must be submitted
3. It remains the students' responsibility to ensure that all the necessary forms for informed consent are kept for future queries.

Please quote the clearance number in all enquiries.

## DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

### DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

This document must be signed and submitted with every  
essay, report, project, assignment, dissertation and/or thesis.

Full names of student: Donna - Anne Mary Hannaway

Student number: 22272403

#### Declaration

1. I understand what plagiarism is and am aware of the University's policy in this regard.
2. I declare that this *dissertation* (eg essay, report, project, assignment, dissertation, thesis, etc) is my own original work. Where other people's work has been used (either from a printed source, internet or any other source), this has been properly acknowledged and referenced in accordance with departmental requirements.
3. I have not used work previously produced by another student or any other person to hand in as my own.
4. I have not allowed, and will not allow, anyone to copy my work with the intention of passing it off as his or her own work.

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT: 

SIGNATURE OF SUPERVISOR: 

DECLARATION OF LANGUAGE EDITED

**Taalversorger/Language Editor**

Dr Bêrend Badenhorst BA(Ed) Linguistiek en Tale; Hons. Toegepaste  
Linguistiek; MA (Toegepaste Linguistiek); D. Litt. et Phil. (RAU)

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Posadres: CUT, Posbus 1881, Welkom, 9460

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**DECLARATION**

I hereby certify that the following dissertation has been language edited:

**Title of dissertation**

The influence of ecosystemic factors on Black student  
teachers' perceptions and experiences of Early Childhood Education.

**Author**

Donna-Anne Mary Hannaway



Bêrend Badenhorst

Welkom

12 September 2011