Perceptions of Early Childhood Development practitioners regarding professionalisation.

by

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DECLARATION OF AUTHENTICITY

I, Gugulethu Ncube, hereby declare that this M.Ed. dissertation:

"*Perceptions of Early Childhood Development practitioners regarding professionalisation*"

is my original work. More so, the sources consulted have been cited.

Signature: ………………………………….

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RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

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This Ethics Clearance Certificate should be read in conjunction with the Integrated Declaration Form (D08) which specifies details regarding:
- Compliance with approved research protocol,
- No significant changes,
- Informed consent/assent,
- Adverse experience or undue risk,
- Registered title, and
- Data storage requirements.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my late grandmother, Dr Julia Ntini-Dube.

She was my first Mother, then she became my best friend and now she is my angel.

I am forever grateful to her.

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ABSTRACT

Utilising a case study design in the Gauteng Province of South Africa, this study explores the perceptions of ECD practitioners regarding the professionalisation of the ECD sector. With a purposive sample of fifteen ECD practitioners teaching children aged between birth and four years this study sought to find out what is exactly happening in the sector regarding the birth of the new qualification for ECD teachers in the South African education system; which attempts to standardise a B.Ed. curriculum for new teachers in the ECD sector. Adopting the Uncertainty Reduction Theory (URT) as a lens, the study revealed that the Government and the Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) were not giving adequate support to the sector while parents viewed ECD centres as places of play and sleep rather than educational. The study concludes that the ECD sector is indispensable for the South African Education system to perform on par with other world countries and recommends that everyone; not only government; should come to the party to fix this challenge of the education system.

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KEY WORDS

Early Childhood Development Centre

Early Childhood

Early Childhood Development

Professionalisation

ECD Practitioner

Uncertainty Reduction theory

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

B.Ed   Bachelor of Education

DoE   Department of Education

ECD   Early Childhood Education

ECEC   Early Childhood Education and Care

ECCE   Early Childhood Care and Education

ETDPSETA Education, Training and Development Practices Sector Education and Training Authority

NDP   National Development Plan

NQF   National Qualifications Framework

SACECD   South African Centre for ECD

SAQA   South African Qualifications Framework

UNESCO   United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

UNICEF   United Nations International Children's Fund

URT   Uncertainty Reduction Theory

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CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1. Background to the study

The Early Childhood Development practitioners have not been trained adequately as compared to other professionals in the education sector. This perception has had a negative impact on the professionalisation of the Early Childhood Development sector. The Early Childhood Development practitioners are not viewed as being an important element in the achievement of children's educational outcomes in South Africa. Nutbrown (2012) posits that the present Early Childhood Development qualifications do not support professional development and enhance the status of the Early Childhood Development practitioners throughout their careers. Early Childhood development practitioners need to be able to continually develop knowledge, skills and understanding to enhance their effective engagement with other professionals around the globe. They should be trained to view their jobs as a means to earn a living by professionally engaging in tuition of the impressionable, emergent learners.

1.2 Introduction

This study considers ECD practitioners' perceptions of the professionalization of the ECD sector. Specifically, this study aims to explore how ECD practitioners perceive themselves as professionals, the challenges they see with the introduction of the new qualification in ECCE and the challenges they experience working in the ECD sector in general. To do this, I firstly outline the research landscape of ECD professionalization in order to situate the study. This outline not only provides the background to the study but also motivates the rationale as well as the aims, research questions and concept clarification that guide the study. Thereafter, a brief summary of the theoretical framework which was used as an analytical lens is offered. Then, an outline of the research methodology and research design is provided. Following this, the limitations and ethical considerations of the study are considered. The chapter concludes with a layout of the study.

Recently there has been a move towards the professionalisation of the Early Childhood Development (ECD) sector in many countries, which involves the engagement of teachers in ECD to make a living from teaching. This chapter gives an

introduction to the study. Its aim is to give the reader a summary of the study on the perceptions of Early Childhood Development practitioners regarding the professionalisation of the Early Childhood Development sector in the Gauteng province of South Africa. Specifically, the aim of this study is to explore how ECD practitioners perceive themselves as professionals.

The National Developmental Plan (NDP) (2015), states that the focus has now been placed on encouraging Early Childhood Development practitioners to acquire the minimum qualifications. This would be a certificate that is equivalent to NQF level 4, as prescribed by the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and supervised by the South African qualifications authority (SAQA). Large sums of money have been invested in the training of Early Childhood Development practitioners across South Africa both by private and public institutions. Various further education and training institutions have started providing training to Early Childhood Development practitioners at certificate and diploma level. However, there is still limited professionalisation in the Early Childhood Development sector as compared to other education sectors in South Africa.

In the context of the ECD sector, professionalisation would therefore, mean a social process by which the ECD sector transforms itself into a true "profession of the highest integrity and competence" (Joubert & Prinsloo, 2014:171). The findings of the study conducted by Lloyd and Hallet (2010) revealed that "professionalisation was associated with the moves towards creating a graduate early year's workforce which could have implications for training, pay and employment conditions, and the specific body of knowledge and the quality of early years' ECD practitioners." The professionalisation of the ECD sector is a process that requires resources and consideration of policy development and implementation.   For the purpose of this study, I define professionalization as a move towards creating working conditions in the ECD sector that are similar to those of other personnel in the education sector. These include among other factors the qualifications of ECD practitioners and their working environment.

According to the Draft Policy on ECD (2014) the professionalisation of the ECD sector is lacking in the national ECD system and this is a critical element of an effective national ECD human resources strategy. The Department of Social Services (2015) states that there are more than 30 000 ECD centres with each centre having 5 ECD practitioners on average in South Africa. There are 150 000 ECD practitioners in South Africa if we are to go with the statistics from the Department of Social Services. This strengthens the rationale for this research as it reveals the importance of professionalising the ECD sector in an effort to reduce attrition rates and instabilities surrounding quality in the ECD sector.

Professionalisation of the ECD sector could be the long awaited solution to unfair working conditions and labour practices that are encountered by the ECD practitioners who are the very people entrusted with laying a solid educational foundation in children's lives that will allow them to be lifelong learners. Lloyd and Hallet (2010) state that more emphasis has been given in the past years to the delivery of a high standard of ECD in the birth to four-year-olds phase.

Nutbrown (2012) echoes that the government must have a role in the professionalisation of the ECD sector, the professionalisation of the ECD sector must be viewed as a top-down process in which the country's leaders themselves are seen to be valuing and prioritising. More importantly, minimisation of poor working circumstances for ECD practitioners, provision of sustainable jobs and prospects of progression are crucial to ensure the professionalisation and reservation of diverse trained ECD practitioners in the sector (Draft Policy on ECD, 2014:9), and that can be achieved with the government taking the initiative.

Improvement in the ECD sector will lead to the holistic development of any country (UNICEF, 2008). This is because the foundation for lifelong learning is laid in the first 1000 days of children's lives as proposed by (Education White Paper 5 on ECD, 2001). More so, ECD centres are an important starting point for the realisation of children's rights to basic education and should therefore, meet the international standard. According to Van Leeuwen (2015:5) the Early Intervention 2nd world congress which was held at Washington in 1998 proposed that a right to education embraces a right

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to access quality ECD education. Children aged birth to four have a right to quality education like all other children. Furthermore, over the past five years there has been an increased call for the ECD sector to be professionalised and acknowledged that the ECD practitioners are vital to the realisation of quality ECD provision.

Lloyd and Hallet (2010) are of the view that despite the fact that many ECD practitioners have paid attention to professionalisation of the ECD sector, the lack of career paths and a standardised salary caused the phenomenon of professionalisation to be viewed with scepticism and it has even been rejected by some. . Lack of congruency between salaries and qualifications in the ECD sector has led to the practitioners feeling discouraged. They have since shown signs of being discouraged by such inbuilt barriers found in the ECD sector. Others feel that it is a waste of time to even acquire that diploma since they will not be paid 'enough' as compared to what they would have spent on their fees and as a result they do not have any interest in studying.

Most ECD practitioners are often left in the dark, uninformed and uneducated with regard to the professionalisation of the ECD sector. Consequently, ECD practitioners find themselves caught up in the dead end of lack of career paths (Urban, 2014). This view is supported by Nutbrown (2012) when she says lack of professionalisation in the ECD sector might lead to ECD practitioners not seeing any significance to even attain the minimum qualifications as they consider their sector as one that already has a number of inbuilt barriers of poor working conditions and lack of career paths.

Lloyd and Hallet (2010) opine that many ECD practitioners tend to begin their practice poorly as there is not enough support given to them, because of lack of professionalisation of the ECD sector. More attention has in recent years been given only to primary and high school teachers as far as the career path is concerned forgetting that ECD practitioners are on the frontline of the education 'battle'. Van Leeuwen (2015) states that lack of adequate support given to the ECD practitioners has left ECD practitioners feeling dissatisfied and if not addressed may impact on the quality of education given to ECD learners which according to Bipath and Joubert (2016:2) is "critical for the child's developmental trajectory and life course."

Monk and Phillipson posit that professionalisation has received attention, because ECD centres are deemed to be a place for babysitting to support the working parent instead of being regarded as a centre of professional education and training. Ortlipp, Arthur and Woodrow (2011) reveal that not much research has been done on exploring the perceptions of ECD practitioners on their working conditions and lack of career paths yet the policymakers keep dictating policies on to the ECD practitioners who are expected to implement those policies.

The need has emerged to consider the professionalisation of the ECD sector in order to liberate ECD practitioners from harsh working conditions in the ECD sector, whom according to Van Leeuwen (2015) 90% are women. This in my view makes it difficult to implement changes in one's environment without first trying to find out how they feel about the current situation. From the above arguments, it is important that the professionalisation of the ECD sector be studied more in depth and the need for it should be understood in context and time be adopted. The views of the ECD practitioners should be taken into consideration, to arrive at an enriched conclusion about the phenomenon under study. Furthermore, it is necessary to examine the implementation of more practical forms of professionalisation of the ECD sector, by making use of higher learning institutions, in order to facilitate optimal professionalism among ECD practitioners. A study conducted by Coates and Faulker (2016) revealed a significant gap throughout the world in the qualifications and training of ECD practitioners.

A great deal of professionalisation information is aimed primarily at preparing primary and high school teachers in the form of clear job descriptions, workshops, short courses and school support teams according to (Monk & Phillipson, 2016). The majority of literature available for education professionals focuses predominantly on providing information for the primary and high school teachers. Although this information is also available in limited numbers for ECD practitioners to access, many ECD practitioners tend to experience barriers which prevent them from acquiring such knowledge due to time constraints that is a result of long working hours, illiteracy, lack of professional development programmes and financial constraints due to low pay. In

addition, the content is not always applicable to ECD practitioners and often leaves them more frustrated. Ashley-Cooper, Atmore & Van Niekerk (2012) echo that ECD teacher training is needed to offer a learning programme which is conducive to the efficient and caring education and training of emergent learners. The quality and status of ECD practitioners may be improved when they form the centre of debate and transformation.

The perceptions of ECD practitioners regarding the professionalisation of the ECD sector in the Gauteng Province of South Africa are explored in this study.

1.3 Statement of the problem

Laying a solid foundation in birth to four year old children's lives is crucial and thought-provoking and requires that the ECD practitioners be given high quality training. Teaching children aged from birth to four years old requires adequately trained and highly-skilled personnel coupled with adequate learning and teaching resources.

It was pointed out in the Draft Policy on ECD in 2014 that there was no substantial provision made for funding to support professional and quality care of birth to four-year-olds (Draft Policy on ECD, 2014)**.** The professionalisation of ECD is to be realised in South Africa, and resources for teacher training must be provided. Policies on their own cannot be the solution to professionalisation of the ECD sector.

South Africa is confronted with a challenge, and it is a lack of the professional status of ECD practitioners which is very low as compared to other personnel in the education sector. Many believe that ECD practitioners are basically child minders (Van Leeuwen, 2015). The general public is under the impression that teaching ECD learners is a simple process which does not demand any professional and specialised training or cognitively demanding tertiary trained staff, since the perception is that anyone can teach a young child, as it is easy to know more than they do. (Urban, 2008). The worrying aspect is that some student teachers have adopted this view and see it as being true. Lack of common credentials and career paths, long working hours, a poor

salary, difficult working conditions and poor public perceptions of the work of ECD practitioners have led to high attrition rates and instabilities surrounding quality in the ECD sector (Van Leeuwen, 2015).

Vigorous ECD practitioners' education programmes that will train practitioners to implement and construct child development knowledge is long overdue. Bursaries for the ECD practitioners to further their education is urgently needed in the ECD sector (Ashley-Cooper, Atmore and Van Niekerk, 2012). The result will be the attraction of more young people from diverse backgrounds to the ECD sector. The national government ought to take the lead in valuing the ECD sector and educating the public of the important roles played by the ECD practitioners in the education sector and society. The impression of ECD as an insignificant job that can be done by anyone, because young children are involved, should be duly changed.

Currently in South Africa a lot of ECD practitioners only hold ECD level 4 and 5 while in other countries ECD practitioners hold degrees which are equivalent to NQF level 7 and higher (Draft Policy on ECD, 2014). ECD must be an immediate priority for the South African government, because ECD children deserve nothing less, (Ashley-Cooper; Atmore, & Van Niekerk, 2012).

1.4. Rationale of the study

The researcher's contact and informal conversation with a few ECD practitioners well known to her gave rise to the rationale of the study. During these conversations, the ECD practitioners known to the researcher indicated their uncertainty and fears of what to expect in the years to come. They also indicated their frustrations which emanated from long working hours, lack of career paths in the ECD sector and disparities in the salaries of the ECD practitioners. The ECD practitioners made it clear that they were just treated as baby sitters and this discouraged them from carrying out their duties effectively. In summary, there is a need for the professionalisation of the ECD sector to ensure stability and quality in the profession. The researcher hopes that this study's findings will help Higher Education and Training institutions in the

advocacy for the professionalisation of the ECD sector. Further, the government will have to listen to the voices of its people if democracy is something to go by in the country, and fund the activities aimed at professionalising the ECD sector. Very few studies have focused on the exploration of the perceptions of ECD practitioners on the professionalisaton of the ECD sector in South Africa. Exploring the perceptions of the ECD practitioners is of importance as they themselves will reflect on what it means being a professional in the ECD sector in South Africa.

1.5 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this research was to contribute to the body of knowledge in the field of Early Childhood Education on the professionalisation of the ECD sector through the exploration of the perceptions of the ECD practitioners, specifically those that are teaching children aged birth to four years, on the professionalisation of the ECD sector. This will influence the way the parents and the community at large view the ECD practitioners. Furthermore, the study was aimed at influencing the policy developers to listen to the voices of the ECD practitioners and then develop policies that will solve the challenges faced and outlined by the ECD practitioners themselves.

The gap identified was the gap as lack of professionalisation in the ECD sector and aims at putting forward recommendations for professionalising the ECD sector to the Higher Education Institutions, the government and the policy developers. The study was aimed at opening the possibility of the voices of ECD practitioners to be heard in South Africa as there are no unions to represent the ECD practitioners. It is essential to hear about the professionalisation of the ECD sector as any change that will result from the recommendations of this study will impact on the ECD practitioners, after all they are the implementers of the policies in the ECD sector.

1.6 Research questions

There is a need to listen to the voices of the ECD practitioners regarding the professionalisation of the sector before the development and implementation of such policies in the sector. Miller, Dalli and Urban (2012) are of the view that "in recent literature, links are made between improving the image and status of teaching with meeting higher standards."

The following questions guided this study:

How do ECD practitioners perceive professionalisation of the ECD sector?

1. How do ECD practitioners perceive themselves as professionals?
2. What are the challenges perceived by the ECD practitioners regarding the introduction of a new higher qualification of B.Ed in ECCE?
3. What challenges do ECD practitioners currently face with regard to their professionalisation?

1.7 Concept clarification

ECD centre

Any structure in which children aged from birth to four years of age are cared for and educated. This can be in a classroom or in backyards.

Early Childhood

Early Childhood according to the Policy on Minimum Requirements for Programmes Leading to Qualifications in Higher Education for ECD educators (2017) refers to "the period of human development from birth to the year before a child enters Grade R/ formal school". In this study, early childhood refers to a phase from birth to four years of age.

Early Childhood Development (ECD)

"ECD is an umbrella term that applies to the processes by which children from birth to at least nine years grow and thrive, physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, morally and socially" (Education White Paper 5 on ECD, 2001). In this study, ECD refers to birth to four phase.

Professionalisation

Professionalism is linked with the move towards upgrading the training and teaching skills of the ECD practitioners to change the views regarding the fact that ECD is an

easy job that does not require specialists (Lloyd & Hallet, 2010). The term professionalisation is deemed as the engagement of people in an activity to make a living (Joubert & Prinsloo, 2001). For the purpose of this study, professionalisation refers to career paths, working conditions, salary scale, qualifications, quality and the status of the ECD practitioners.

Early Childhood Development practitioner

ECD practitioner refers to "a person working in ECD including those qualified by their experiences and involvement in the sector and providing early childhood services from homes, centres and schools," (The Guidelines for ECD Services in South Africa, 2006).The Policy On Minimum Requirements For Programmes Leading To Qualifications In Higher Education For ECD Educators (2017), holds that: "ECD practitioners are persons who provide ECD services through formal ECD programmes; family services and playgroups; and training, as well as those providing management support services to these workers". For the purpose of this study an ECD practitioner or teacher is anybody teaching more than five children from birth throughout to the age of four years, in a formal or informal centre. The terms teacher and practitioner are used interchangeably in this study.

1.8 Theoretical framework: Uncertainty Reduction Theory

This study was influenced by Uncertainty Reduction Theory (URT). Berger and Calabrese (1975) define uncertainty as having a number of possible alternative predictions or explanations. In the context of this study, the ECD practitioners have a number of possible alternatives to emancipate themselves from a number of de-professionalising factors in the ECD sector. These factors include among others ways of improving their quality and status, challenging the unfair labour and working conditions in the sector, gaining support from the government with a bid to reduce uncertainty in the sector. Berger and Bradac (1982) are of the view that the impetus of the reduction theory can be found in the value of curbing uncertainty by familiarisation with others to predict behaviour which can facilitate an improved understanding of how to deal with others by interpreting their behaviour. Lack of professionalisation in the ECD sector would lead to a feeling of uncertainty among the

practitioners. Once the practitioners start questioning themselves on whether they will retain their positions or not, uncertainty is bound to grip them. Uncertainty could be a result of the introduction of the new higher qualification in the ECD sector which is a B.Ed in ECCE for birth-to-four-year teachers.

1.9 Literature review
1.9.1 Early Childhood Development in South Africa

There has been emphasis of ECD provision by the national government in South Africa. However, there has been lack of emphasis on the training and development of the ECD practitioners who are the providers of the highly demanded ECD services. As noted by Ebrahim (2010) the disparity that existed in the pre-democratic years can be attributed to the government's lack of affording ECD its rightful attention and level of prominence in education. What transpired from the unequal division of funds for ECD centres was the problem of viewing ECD centres as unimportant. The quality of ECD in South Africa has been dependent on the location of the geographical location of the centres with the centres in the township providing low standards of ECD to children. This has been due to lack of adequately trained ECD practitioners in the townships while in the suburbs parents were able to pay high fees that enabled the ECD centres to employ qualified practitioners and in some case primary school teachers who were holders of higher qualifications. Ebrahim (2010) adds that there is lack of policies that support resourcing in the ECD sector in South Africa. Lack of both human and physical resources in the ECD centres have delayed the professionalisation of the ECD sector. In addition, the unfair labour and working conditions in the ECD sector have resulted in the decrease of people willing to join the ECD sector. Surprisingly, the UK is experiencing similar challenges as South Africa within its ECD sector and this is evident from the following literature.

1.9.2 Early Childhood in UK

The ECD sector in the UK is not an exception to the lack of professionalisation in the ECD sector. According to Van Leeuwen (2015) the neglect of ECD centres with regard to funding, maintaining professional standards, remuneration, staffing security and

working conditions have all contributed to the challenges with maintaining professional standards that can be comparable with the best in other countries and the UK. The ECD practitioners are faced with lack of professional standards and low status which impacts on the working conditions in the ECD sector. Lloyd and Hallet (2010) are of the view that children's outcomes are compromised if the state jeopardises any initiative to upgrade the ECD standards by assisting with the professional training of ECD teachers. Lack of professionalisation in the ECD sector impacts on the standard of education and care given to children. This has been the trend in the ECD sector in the UK.

1.9.3 Early Childhood development in Finland

Finland is one of the countries in the world that is viewed as having one of the best education policies. What makes Finland rated as one of the best in the education sector is that their policies are not only one of the best, but are topped with the implementation measures that are backed up by resource allocation. The quality of status of teachers in Finland is high. ECD practitioners are viewed as part of the teaching profession. According to Haywoode (2012) "in Finland, teaching is a highly respected, well-paid profession and even though there are no school inspections or teacher evaluations, children still achieve high results internationally". Despite this world class ranking, Finland recently changed its curriculum to create classrooms that allows for innovative technology use from the early learning years (Haywoode, 2012).

In Finland, there is centralisation of the schools and ECD centres receive funding from the government. Further to that, the Finnish school days are short. The classes in Finland are small and allow for conducive teacher-learner maximum support. Unlike in South Africa where in ECD centres a practitioner is expected to deliver effectively while she or he has a class of children in a class of three year olds. Success has been credited to the teachers' high professional identities and status. Sahlberg (2010) is of the view that though Finland is faced with challenges of financial constraints and growing immigration, allocation of resources to the education sector is still a priority of the national government.

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1.10 Research methodology

1.10.1 Research approach

This study adopted qualitative research method as it is a method that allows for the exploration of the perceptions of ECD practitioners, in their natural environments, regarding the professionalisation of the ECD sector. "The goal of qualitative research is to explore and understand a central phenomenon" (Creswell, Ebersohn, Eloff, Ferreira, Ivankova, Jansen, Niewenhuis, Pietersen, Plano Clark & Van der Westhuizen, 2013:38). Qualitative research involves a smaller sample size, as was the sample size for this study. Qualitative research according to Creswell *et al* (2013) "embraces research based on the collection of people's opinions in terms of words, concepts and constructs which are collected as narratives or stories". Creswell *et a*l (2013:23) further explain that "qualitative research is a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand real world settings". The researcher observed and recorded non-verbal communication of the participants in the ECD centres during the interviews as this was their natural setting.

Lasky (2005) posit that qualitative research is used when a researcher does not really know what to expect and since the interviews were used to gather the data, the researcher did not have an idea of what responses she was going to get from the participants. The gathered data were used to determine what the bigger picture was with regard to the ECD practitioners' perceptions regarding the professionalisation of the ECD sector. It was only after data collection that the researcher knew how the practitioners felt and perceived the process of professionalisation in the ECD sector.

1.10.2 Research paradigm

The study adapted an interpretivist paradigm. Livesey (2006) is of the view that an interpretivist paradigm leans towards the collection of qualitative data. The researcher has selected the interpretivist paradigm as it complements case study research (Lather, 2006). The interpretivist paradigm "is based on naturalistic data collection methods such as interviews and observations" (Maree, 2014) which are the methods used by the researcher to gather data. Chen and Chang (2006) posits that data

generated via interpretivist studies tend to be trustworthy and honest. Trustworthiness is a major distinguishing feature of qualitative data.

The interpretivist paradigm guided the entire study. The researcher interacted with participants with an aim of understanding how the ECD practitioners interpreted and interacted within ECD centres and how they perceive themselves as professionals in the ECD sector. Hussey and Hussey (1997) opine that the perceptions people have of their own activities are better understood when people are in their contexts, hence the use of the observation and field notes used as data collecting strategy.

1.10.3 Research design

The researcher adopted a case study because it is qualitative in nature. Yin (1994:16) views a case study 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 which multiple sources of evidence are used". A case study facilitates the observation of any natural phenomenon that surfaces in the data. The use of multiple sources from different ECD centres allowed for trustworthiness to be ensured. The researcher chose a case study, because only ECD practitioners in the Johannesburg region formed the sample, this means that the geographical area in which the study was conducted was small, therefore suitable for a case study.

Creswell *et al* (2013:65) state that "a case study is defined by the fact that it is a bounded system and that it does not necessarily mean that one site only is studied". This study involved participants from eight different ECD centres hence the choice of the case study. From an interpretivist perspective, the case study allowed for "a holistic understanding of how participants relate and interact with each other and how they make meaning of a phenomenon being studied", (Creswell *et al,* 2013: 65). A case study as a research design does not come without advantages, just like any other designs in the research world. The most noted disadvantage of a case study is that it allows researchers' to influence the direction of the findings and the conclusions. The researcher guarded against this disadvantage by using several data collection methods.

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1.10.4 Sampling techniques

The researcher adopted purposive sampling in this study. Creswell *et al*, (2013:70) view purposive sampling as a non-probability sampling technique… "Purposive sampling means that participants are selected because of some defining characteristics that make them the holders of the data needed for the study" (Creswell *et al*, 2013:70). "Purposive sampling involves the researcher hand-picking the participants based on the exact characteristics specified for the study, in order to develop a sample that is large enough yet possesses the required traits," (Creswell et al, 2013:71).

According to Creswell *et al* (2013) "purposive sampling is most successful when data review and analysis are done in conjunction with data collected". Purposive sampling was ideal for her study because it reduced the costs for the researcher to travel long distances looking for participants who fit into the criteria of the study.

Purposive sampling helped to guide the researcher to select the participants according to the set criteria of the study. The first 15 ECD practitioners who met the criteria formed the sample of the study. I then set up meetings and went to meet with those ECD practitioners and explained the research process to them. The researcher further discussed the consent form contents with each participant and after the discussions the willing participants showed their consent and voluntary participation by signing the consent forms.

1.10.5 Research participants

Participants were selected according to the following criteria as discussed next.

The ECD practitioners who participated in the study were ECD practitioners teaching children aged between birth and four years olds. They were working in any (private, rural or public ECD centre) ECD centre at the time of the study for a period of two or more years. Furthermore, the participants were holders of ECD National Qualifications Framework (NQF) level 5 qualification and were working within the Johannesburg region. Participants were able to read and comprehend English.

1.10.6 Data collection strategies

1.10.6.1 Semi-structured face to face interview

The researcher chose semi-structured face-face interviews as data collecting strategy for this study. Creswell *et al* (2013) describe "an interview as a two-way conversation in which the interviewer asks the participant questions to collect data and to learn about opinions of the participant."

Participants were required and encouraged to answer pre-set open- ended questions to share their experiences and views on their working conditions, career paths in the ECD sector as well as their professional identities and status. The researcher made use of the semi-structured interviews to guide against deviations from the focus and purpose of the study. Semi-structured interviews help the researcher guide participants back to the focus of the interview, (Creswell *et al*, 2013).

Leedy and Ormrod (2001) state that the advantage of conducting face-to-face interviews is that they are conducive to the growth of relationships between the researcher and the participants. This is an important element of a case, since face-to-face interviews also allow for observing the non-verbal cues during the interviews. The audio recorder was used to record each interview. I had the audiotape on throughout each interview recording the interview. I made use of the recorded interviews when transcribing the data. I asked questions one by one and allowed the participant to respond. The following sample questions were used to gather data.

1.10.6.2 Sample questions of the semi-structured interview

1. In your view, what do you think parents see as being your job in the centre?

2. What kind of support do you expect directly from the government?

3. Do you feel that you are a professional?

4. What are your duties as an ECD practitioner?

5. In your view, will the new policy add value to your career?

6. Do you think the new policy is causing any uncertainty amongst ECD practitioners?

7. Describe your working conditions.

8. How much is your monthly salary?

9. What challenges, in your view, hinder the lawful operations of the ECD centres?

1.10.6.3 Observation and field notes

During the interview, the researcher was noting down the non-verbal cues that were displayed by each participant. Creswell *et al* (2013) explain that observation is an everyday activity whereby researchers use their senses and intuition to gather bits of data. This means that when they are observing they take notes of what they hear and see. When researchers are observing, they do not question or communicate what they have observed, rather they record. Observation sessions aided the researcher to increase understanding on the responses being communicated by the participants.

1.10.7 Data analysis

Mayo (2013) describes data analysis as the "process of observing patterns in the data, asking questions of those patterns, constructing conjectures, deliberately collecting data from selected individuals on targeted topics, confirming or refuting those conjectures, then continuing analysis, asking additional questions, seeking more data, furthering the analysis by sorting, questioning, thinking, constructing and testing conjectures and so forth". In qualitative research, data analysis is ongoing and is a collaborative (non-linear) process. The researcher opted to analyse data using the themes that emanated from the responses given by the participants.

1.10.7.1 Thematic analysis

The study adopted a thematic analysis strategy to analyse the data from the field. According to Patton and Cochran (2002, p.23), "a thematic analysis is one that looks across all the data to identify the common issues that recur, and identify the main themes that summaries all the views you have collected." Thematic analysis has been widely used in descriptive qualitative studies. Mayo (2013) used the thematic analysis in an article on teacher development. Neuman (2011, p.509) argues that, "in all data analysis, we place specific raw data into broader categories, we then examine and manipulate categories to identify patterns". These patterns are the themes. The researcher used thematic analysis to carry out data analysis, by organising data into categories based on themes and concepts.

1.10.7.2 Crystallisation

Johnson and Turner (2003:15) view "crystallisation refers to the practice of validating results by using multiple methods of data collection and analysis". Crystallisation according to Richard in Janesick (2000:9), "provides us with a deepened, complex, thoroughly partial understanding of the topic". The researcher achieved crystallisation by means of using the interviews, observations and field notes to collect data thereby enhancing trustworthiness.

1.10.8 Trustworthiness of the study

According to Johnson and Turner (2003:15) view "trustworthiness as the way in which the inquirer is able to persuade the audience that the findings in the study are worth paying attention to and that the research is of high quality". I involved fellow researchers to assist with the interpretation of data and peer scrutiny of the project in order to enhance trustworthiness. I further achieved trustworthiness by choosing her quotes carefully avoiding forcing her own interpretations on the text and data collected. She kept notes of research decisions taken to further ensure trustworthiness.

1.11. Limitations of the study

The predicted limitations included limited literature on the professionalisation of the ECD sector and the ECD practitioners' perceptions on their working conditions and professional identities due to lack of prior research studies on the topic, time constraints, ECD practitioners are already burdened with long working hours and the study was at some points carried out during weekends and after working hours, financial constraints, the analysis of qualitative data is usually a challenge. The researcher requested the assistance from peer researchers and her supervisor and self-reported data were limited to avoid independent verification of data.

1.12. Ethical considerations of the study

Cohen (2013) is of the view that "it is essential that throughout the research process the researcher follows and abides by ethical" considerations. The following ethical considerations guided the study: Informed consent coupled with voluntary participation, protection from harm and privacy, confidentiality and anonymity. Chapter three expands on each of these principles.

1.13. Layout of the study
Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter provided an overview to the research study which includes introduction and the rationale of the study. The chapter further outlined the research problem, research questions, and purpose of the study and the definition of terms.

Chapter 2: Conceptual framework

This chapter provided the conceptual framework for the study by providing a literature exploration with regard to the professionalisation of the ECD sector and the perceptions of the ECD practitioners on their working environments and quality.

Chapter 3: Research methodology

In chapter three, the researcher described the research process and methodology adopted in the study in depth.

Chapter 4: Research results

This chapter consists of raw data, an analysis of the data and the findings of the study. Results were presented in accordance with a case study design.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and recommendations

This chapter summarised the results of the study and presented the conclusions drawn from the study.

1.14 Conclusion

A lot of young and old people join the ECD sector each day, they are becoming keener to furthering their studies. According to Bipath and Joubert (2016) the National Development Plan (NDP) recognises the ECD sector as a priority, evidenced by the implementation of the draft policy on minimum requirements for programmes leading to higher education qualifications for ECD teachers in ECCE. By identifying the perceptions of the ECD practitioners regarding professionalisation, optimal development of ECD teachers and teacher programmes are envisaged.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW
2.1 Introduction

This chapter acknowledges different opinions of various scholars regarding the professionalisation of the ECD sector. The purpose is to 'listen to the voices' of the previous researchers on the professionalisation of the ECD sector as far as the challenges in the ECD sector are concerned. It will argue that a lack of professionalisation of the ECD sector has serious implications on the status and the quality of the ECD practitioners and also on the education outcomes of the children in the ECD sector.

The ECD sector in South African has been viewed as lacking a sense of professionalism. Cohen (2013) views the ECD sector as the "Cinderella of the education system", implying that the ECD sector lacks status as it is viewed as an area of play only rather than a combination of play and learning, especially during the first 1000 days on children's lives. It is also implied that ECD assumes an inferior position in education. The Department of Basic Education, Department of Social Development and UNICEF (2008) acknowledge that there are a lot of modifications that need to be implemented to ensure high quality service delivery in the ECD sector. ECD centres grapple with a number of serious problems amongst others: lack of learning materials, inadequate capital, lack of trained practitioners, and a suitable setting equipped with the facilities needed to provide quality teaching specifically for emergent learners. Security and proper amenities with regard to ablution are also serious challenges. (Department of Basic Education, Department of Social Development, 2010).

South Africa has a record of the ECD practitioners being looked down upon by communities. ECD practitioners are treated as babysitters and child minders. This makes the communities not to have much or any respect for ECD practitioners as being an ECD practitioner in South Africa is regarded as a job that can be done by anyone, regardless of their knowledge and skills. The ECD sector is mainly dominated by women and they work very long hours yet no emphasis is placed on the value they add to the education sector and the community at large. More so, ECD practitioners are faced with lack of professionalisation of the sector which result in them being

treated anyhow and paid anyhow. Urban (2014) asserts that aspects such as a trained ECD workforce, and working conditions that facilitate learning are all of paramount importance. This means that reluctance by any government to address the needs of the ECD practitioners is an indirect refusal to uphold and promote children's right to basic quality education.

The word 'professionalisation' is here akin to building practitioners in ECD that have a degree as a qualification. This study will explore the perceptions of ECD practitioners, who are teaching children aged birth to four years old, regarding the professionalisation of the ECD sector. The literature review will centre on preceding studies on the professionalisation of the ECD sector both internationally and in the South African context in order to know more about what has been done by previous researchers.

2.2 Professionalisation of the Early Childhood Development sector

Joubert and Prinsloo (2014) posit that a "profession is a vocation or calling, especially one that involves some branch of advanced learning". They further define a professional as a person who belongs to or is associated with a profession, who has or manifests the skill of professional competence, and who conducts him or herself in a professional manner. Professionals imply proper training of a high quality (Eraut, 1994). Joubert and Prinsloo (2014) advance that professionalism refers to qualities or typical features of a profession or of professionals, especially competence and skills. This means that professionalisation is therefore, an act of associating a person with advanced learning, training people to conduct themselves in a professional manner and equipping them with skills and knowledge they need to be more efficient in their work stations to earn a proper salary. In the context of the ECD sector, professionalisation is associated with creating degree qualifications for ECD practitioners, creating standardised salaries and work environments that are healthy and conducive for effective learning and teaching.

They (ECD practitioners) all do various things at different times and approach various situations uniquely which makes it difficult to know what their job description is, hence they are taken advantage of and paid meagre salaries that cannot sustain their needs and those of their families. "The professionalisation of the ECD sector may have implications for training, pay and employment conditions, the specific body of knowledge and the quality of the ECD practitioners who are the target of these developments" (Sachs, 2003). Several studies have indicated that a higher qualification in ECD positively influenced the behaviour of ECD practitioners and their work quality (Gibson, 2015). Contrary to this view is the view of Cochran-Smith and Zeichner (2005) who hold the view that remuneration does not influence quality education, since a better pay will not advance educational attainment of preschool teachers and may not of necessity lead to improved ECD centres.

2.3 Professionalisation and Early Childhood Development sector

Traditionally, the word profession emanated from the idea of making an avowal when one joins a religion to affirm commitment to that religion and its ethics (Feeney, 2012). Hargreaves (2000) is of the view that the term profession is related to occupations "that have involved training and formal qualifications".

Taggart (2011) notes that universal standards and codes of practice that guide educators' actions within a performance model of professionalism would vary greatly from an ethic of care orientation. Many scholars (Fenech & Sumsion 2007; Dahlberg & Moss 2005) struggle with what professionalism would entail in an ECD setup. Osgood (2006a: 5) contends that "a normalized construction of professionalism within early years education is subject to a 'disempowering, regulatory gaze in the name of higher standards". McGillivray (2008) is of the view that misperceptions are caused by a lack of understanding that care and education are 'sides of the same coin' in ECD, as opposed to other sectors of education that have play as an option. In contrary, Van Leeuwen (2015) is of the view that "ECD is one of the insecure and areas of precarious work" where professionalisation of the sector is urgently desired. In contrary, professionalisation of the ECD sector may lessen the effectiveness of professionalism with the direct consequence of turning teachers into technicians who might engage in

an artificial manner to deliver national standards (Gibson, 2015). However, for teachers to be productive in their work, they should feel valued first, and their work environment and conditions should align with labour regulations.

Miller (2008b:266) advocates that there are a number of aspects influencing the perceptions of what ECD practitioners are. They embrace the diverse roles and specific responsibilities ECD practitioners hold, the different environments they work in, and the absence of a professional registration frame. The lack of relevant formal pay structures also adds to the confusion concerning the term 'ECD professional'. Lloyd and Hallet (2010) argue that professionalism within the context of ECD "could define a national understanding of the ECD practitioner's role of professional behaviours within that role to promote professional effectiveness". Professionalisation of the ECD sector leads to professional credibility for ECD practitioners within the sector and the public domain. Fenech, Sumsion and Shepherd (2010) note that professionalisation in the ECD sector includes an increase in "teaching places, removal of vocational training fees" and incentives for graduates to work in disadvantaged areas.

According to Feza (2013) ECD practitioners still remain committed to their work regardless of the poor working conditions, lack of quality and low status. It has been observed that ECD attracts women of all walks of life ranging from 20 to 59 years of age. This proves that it holds potential as career path for many prospective teachers irrespective of their age. This observation also holds implications for provision of jobs to the unemployed. It was also detected that males and the disabled are also few and far between when it comes to demographic representation in ECD. (Feza, 2013). Mathebula and Tau (2008) are of the view that professionalism gives pride of place to the specific vocation of each profession. For the ECD practitioner entrusted with laying a solid foundation in children's lives, the quest is to achieve children's greatest level of outcomes.

Athena (2008) states that professionalism refers to being competent, efficient, masterly and qualified. According to Gibson (2015:5), professionalism "means a commitment to an ethic of product and service quality", and a "need to be innovative" (Mafunisa, 2001). Athena (2008) is of the view that the primary indicators of professionalism comprise the three "r"s – responsibility, respect and risk-taking.

2.4 The rationale for professionalisation of the Early Childhood Development sector

Quality ECD provision is dependent on proficient ECD practitioners who are able to work in a holistic context that is aware of care and education as infused aspects of learning in the ECD sector (UNESCO, 2010; European Commission, 2011; European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat, 2014). ECD practitioners do not know how to behave in a manner that gives credit to the sector, as a result more ECD practitioners are sitting with lawsuits resulting from inadequate knowledge and skills on how to deal with children aged between birth to four years old. More so, White Paper 5 is ambiguous on matters that concern children in the birth-to-four-year phase. It only specifies "the development of a strategic plan for inter-sectorial collaboration, focusing… on improving the quality of early learning programmes." (Department of Education, 2001: 11). During the 2013 State of the Union address, President Obama admitted that early childhood influences the rest of the child's life outcomes. It is, however, lamentable that only 51% of this age group are enrolled in full-day pre-primary centres. This shows how much the ECD sector is not only receiving less attention, but also the extent to which the children's rights to education are not being promoted and protected.

According to Urban (2014) ECD practitioners' levels of training, education and experience are positively linked to teacher behaviours in the classroom. This view has been supported by Van Leeuwen (2015) when he says that ECD human resources are fundamental in the achievement of highly accessible quality ECD provision. The Policy on Minimum Requirements for Programmes Leading to Qualifications in Higher Education for ECD Educators (2017:12) identifies a need to professionalise the ECD sector so as to ensure that South Africa has adequately trained teachers and that

learners have access to ECD services. The idea is also that there should be enough teachers to teach the learners and that the classrooms should not be overpopulated. This means that elegant ECD service delivery relies on the availability of a committed cadre of appropriately qualified and passionate employees in the sector. Without well-trained and qualified practitioners, children's rights to quality education is greatly compromised.

Biersteker (2008) notes the lack of defined career pathways and opportunities for ECD practitioners, and that existing ECD programmes are neither producing the number, nor the kind of educators/practitioners needed for the diverse ECD context. There is need for urgent modifications of the training programmes for ECD practitioners that will equip practitioners with skills to deliver education in a society, rather than in institutions only. The state has an obligation to design and offer qualifications that will afford quality, status and recognition to ECD practitioners, standardise the training and qualifications of and provide a career pathway for ECD practitioners and to develop quality programmes to equip ECD practitioners with information, knowledge and skills to support the execution of the National Curriculum Framework for Children from Birth to Four (NCF). SACECD (2016) reports that the professionalisation of the ECD sector is a "high priority as it will bring clarity and dignity to the critical role in care and education to children" aged between birth-to four years of age.

Bellm (2005) maintains that ECD practitioners' competencies, although not universally adopted, are increasingly being used to determine and measure professionalism in the ECD sector. The adoption of competencies would help the ECD sector to better determine goals for children, clarify job descriptions and create career stages that would allow ECD practitioners to explore more diverse career paths. Stott and Bowman (1996) are of the view that although competencies are becoming clearer and more defined, the ECD practitioners' programmes and the content of those programmes are under much debate. Many ECD practitioners' trainers are citing the need to reconsider and analyse the changing base of child development knowledge to incorporate new theory-to-practice issues, reflection and overall processes of ECD

practitioners' education (Vander Ven, 2000). The current systems in South Africa are inadequate to meet the needs of the ECD practitioners.

Education White Paper 5 on ECD, (DOE, 2001: 2) puts forward a number of compelling arguments for investing in ECD, including, among others lifelong learning skills which are cultivated and natured throughout the first 1000 days of a children's lives, hence the importance of having highly knowledgeable practitioners in the ECD sector.

Enhancement and framing of a child into a holistic being lies within the early childhood education. This will in turn instil a life-learning culture in children. ECD practitioners should be furnished with skills that will empower them to deliver lessons in a manner that interests and motivates children to excel. ECD practitioners have a duty to inspire a passion for learning enthusiasm. Palmer (2015) is of the view that the "Love of education- for reading, learning, discovery, nature- takes root during the birth to four year stage", and it will take highly skilled ECD personnel to accomplish it. South Africans' competencies will ensure that the country is ranked highly in the global economy. Such competencies should be cultivated during the first 1000 days of children's lives. Moreover, social and economic differences and race and gender imbalances noticeable in South Africa may only be addressed by the implementation of planned teaching and learning programmes in the early childhood classroom.

Working as a practitioner in an ECD context demands high-level skills and deep knowledge over a wide range of areas. More so, working with children aged birth to four requires that ECD educators possess and are able to demonstrate specific dispositions, including patience, love, care and an intense concern for the welfare, safety and development of children, as well as virtues such as respect for truth, reasonableness, objectivity and fairness. ECD practitioners must be keenly knowledgeable about the domains of ECD, know how to identify barriers affecting early learning and development and how to differentiate learning opportunities for each child in their care. They must also know how and where to refer children when specialist support is required. However, ECD practitioners may only be able to do so if they are trained to do so (Bellm, 2005).

According to Lasky (2005), ECD practitioners define themselves to themselves and others is important in the professionalisation of the ECD sector. Ortlipp, Arthur & Woodrow (2011) echo that when the public is well-versed about what ECD practitioners do, they will more likely see this as a professional practice and this will impact on how the ECD practitioners view themselves which will boost their confidence. This means that the way ECD teachers view themselves and feel about their jobs when comparing their profession to those of others influence the way they perceive ECD practices. Van Leeuwen (2015) acknowledges that, unlike in other education sectors, it is a challenge in the ECD sector to uphold professional standards that are akin to the rest of the workforce in the education sector. Professionalisation of ECD will result in the policy formulation regarding improvement of working conditions for ECD practitioners and earn them respect from the community at large. Furthermore, professionalisation of the ECD sector will result in the realisation of high quality ECD provision, thereby upholding children's right to quality basic education. Professionalisation of the ECD sector will also help reduce attrition rates in the sector. Due to the sense of belonging, the practitioners will be encouraged when receiving positive remarks from the public.

Bipath and Joubert (2016) emphasise that professionalisation in the ECD settings should be "positioned as a technical, standardised applications of top-down expert knowledge that meets objective accountability measures for the purpose of attaining optimal developmental outcomes for children". Professionalisation of the ECD sector should be characterised work-integrated learning (Moyo & Ndlovu, 2012). ECD practitioners ought to be trained to develop and facilitate individual learner support programmes to cater for diversity in their classes.

According to Askell-Williams and Murray-Harvey (2015) to achieve change in intervention practices it is essential that enough teachers are trained, and also supported since knowledge acquisition is not enough and assistance is of the utmost importance. Mishra (2015) reiterates that professionalisation of the ECD sector should

allow for clear identification of objectives, set out learning outcomes, allow for practical work during training and practitioners should be given feedback on their progress timeously.

The changing ECD landscape shows that ECD practitioners need to be fortified with social skills to be able to engage with the learners effectively and to facilitate their learning. Moreover, professional knowledge is a necessity. (Chen & Chang, 2006:1; Goodfellow, 2008:17). Furthermore, ECD practitioners have to exhibit what constitutes professionalism in an early childhood profession, by realising that it is the realm where they will earn their living and behaving ethically in a reputable manner is crucial (Chen & Chang, 2006). The success of the education system in South Africa depends on the foundation laid by the ECD practitioners during the birth to four year phase.

Osgood (2006) proposes that professionalisation of the ECD sector could "challenge policy and practice in a reflective way and provide professional credibility" for ECD practitioners within the education personnel and the public domain. Cochran-Smith and Zeichner (2005) are of the view that policies that increase the educational attainment of preschool teachers are not likely to increase classroom quality without the practitioners. Miller et al (2005) note that professionalisation in the ECD sector should promote professional effectiveness. Whalley (2008) contends that the comprehension of professionalism within the ECD sector may take up to a generation to be accepted. In contrary, Urban (2014) is of the view that "any attempt to define a universal set of skills for an imagined universal ECD practitioner is a chase for a fool's gold."

2.5 Early Childhood Development Practitioner
Policy on Minimum Requirements for Programmes Leading to Qualifications in Higher Education for ECD Educators (2017) defines an ECD practitioner as an individual who holds appropriate qualifications that enable them to "support the delivery of structured early childhood education programmes for babies, toddlers and young children effectively."

2.6 Roles of Early Childhood Development Practitioners

According to Lloyd and Hallet (2010), there is in the ECD sector an absence of "an established job title which clearly identified the role and nature of these diverse ECD practitioners". This means that ECD practitioners do not have a clearly defined job description due to various qualifications that different practitioners are trained in. The result is that the practitioners are then expected to be carers, educators, nannies, cleaners, in loco parentis and leaders at the same time. Their roles are so diverse that they do not know what they are supposed to do and not supposed to do anymore. Liddle (2006) believe that "being an ECD practitioner is the same as being a parent, and dismissive of the need to promote the status and training of the workforce". This view is supported by Ebrahim (No.48, 2010) who asserts that ECD is viewed as the duty of the parents.

2.7. Early Childhood Development Practitioners' Experiences

ECD practitioners' are particularly undervalued and vulnerable to exploitation because their work is equalled to mothering which is natural instinct and not necessarily a professional job (Goodfellow, 2008:21). ECD centres come with the challenges of the territory which comprise problems with dealing with children of all age groups, the difficulty to respect the parameters of care and mothering, the inferior perception of working with younger children, poor salaries which cause a problem with motivation and problems with job satisfaction (Ebbeck & Yoke, 2011; Miller et al., 2012). One of the major challenges noted by the ECD practitioners relates to high salary disparities, lack of benefits, lack of career paths, and lack of bursaries and scholarships (Early & Winton, 2001).

A study conducted by Hallet in Lloyd and Hallet (2010) reveal that the practitioners acknowledge the aim of raising their qualifications by the states with the intention of improving the educational outcomes for children and their quality and status.

2.8. Early Childhood Development in South Africa

2.8.1 Required legal framework regarding Early Childhood Development in South Africa.

In South Africa, the Government's National Integrated Plan for ECD (2005) highlights that the "rights of young children (0–4 years) to basic services, including ECD (ECD)". The government should prioritise ECD investment programmes and projects in order to enhance the quality of early childhood education (National Planning Commission, 2011: 274). A lot of young and old people join the ECD sector each day, and they are becoming keener to furthering their studies. According to Bipath and Joubert (2016) the National Development Plan (NDP) recognises the ECD sector as a priority, evidenced by the implementation of the Policy on Minimum Requirements for Programmes Leading to Higher Education Qualifications for ECD Teachers (2017).

Currently, many ECD practitioners hold ECD NQF level 4 and 5 qualification which is a Certificate and a Higher Certificate, respectively. ECD practitioners who hold the higher credentials of Bachelor's degree, Honours, Master's and Doctoral degrees are a handful in the South African ECD sector. ECD practitioners in South Africa are exposed to low status than primary school teachers who have the advantage of set salaries and standard working hours. (Clasquin-Johnson 2007:80). Research (Biersteker, 2008; South African Institute for Distance Education [SAIDE], 2011; Education, Training and Development Practices Sector Education and Training Authority [ETDP SETA], 2013) highlisghts the lack of defined career pathways and opportunities for ECD educators and practitioners, and hold that existing ECD programmes are neither producing the number, nor the kind of educators/ practitioners needed for the diverse ECD context.

The Policy on Minimum Requirements for Programmes Leading to Qualifications in Higher Education for ECD Educators (2017) states that the education sector, e.g. civil society, government and universities, has a responsibility to design and offer qualifications that will afford professional status and recognition to ECD educators. The Policy on Minimum Requirements for Programmes Leading to Qualifications in Higher Education for ECD Educators (2017) puts in place qualification programmes

for prospective and existing ECD educators who deliver or support the delivery of the NCF in any workplace where public and state-supported ECD learning programmes are delivered.

2.8.2 Challenges in the Early Childhood Development sector in South Africa

South Africa, like all other developing countries, still faces diverse challenges in the ECD sector. These include among others, adequately trained ECD practitioners, low salaries, lack of career paths in the ECD sector, lack of funding for professional development, poor working condition and instabilities surrounding quality.

Petersen and Petker (2012) opine that in the context of South African, the greatest need is for teachers in the Foundation Phase, which includes ECD practitioners, to receive adequate training that will enable them to help children develop holistically. ECD practitioners in South Africa are inadequately trained, their training is short and it does not expose them much to real-life settings, and they often do not get adequate support during their training, for example, the in-school support. The current ECD practitioners' training does not have any requirement for them to carry out research in the sector. More so, the current training does not have examinations, the ECD practitioners are merely requested to complete the portfolio of evidence which their competence measurement is based on. "In 2000, a national audit of ECD was commissioned by the national Department of Education. The findings of this audit reveal that of the 54 503 practitioners working with children in ECD sites, 12% are qualified, 88% require additional training of some kind and 23% have no training at all" (SACECD, 2016). South Africa still has not been able to equip at least 20 000 ECD practitioners per year with a minimum qualification of NQF level 4 (certificate) to enable the practitioners to holistically support children during the critical developmental stage of the first 1000 days.

Most ECD practitioners end up copying from each other without taking time to complete the Portfolio of Evidence by themselves. This does not revoke critical thinking skills that ECD practitioners need to instil in the first 1000 days of children to

ensure that they excel in their lives. These teachers provide the foundation upon which the rest of the schooling sector is built, and they hold the key to unlocking the educational potential of a developmental state. Bipath and Joubert (2016) are of the view that ECD practitioners can be emancipated if high quality programmes for practitioners are implemented. Quality ECD education is branded with adequately trained, standardised salaries, low attrition rate, low child-adult ratios and efficient management.

Ashley-Cooper, Atmore and Van Niekerk (2012) state that ECD in South Africa will not have received enough attention before the challenges faced by practitioners are addressed. This shows that the ECD practitioners must also be given similar attention like their counterparts in the education sector. According to the ECD Policy (2016) there are positive changes that will be introduced in the ECD which include the funding of public ECD centres. This means that private run centres will only receive funding if there is access, this will disadvantage children who attend these centres and most children in South Africa attend private run canters, (Department of Social Services, 2015).

ECD practitioners in South Africa have been for deprived of career paths or professional development opportunities for quite some time. Motlanthe (2011) suggests that ECD practitioners have to take the initiative for their professional development and they should be held accountable for the educational outcomes in the ECD sector. Any reconstructions of professionalisation of the ECD sector demands that the ECD practitioners be involved in the process. It is difficult to hold ECD practitioners accountable in an environment where there are no career paths for them. Accountability can only be effected once the ECD sector has been professionalised. Azam (2014) posits that the ECD practitioners play an important role in in ensuring the children are motivated to reach their full potential in any education system.

Fourie (2013) also indicates that there is a scarcity of well-trained ECD practitioners in South Africa. Those few that are still practising succumb to unfriendly teaching and learning environments. There is a shortage of physical resources and often

practitioners are left with no choice but to improvise. Resources should be allocated to ECD centres as a means of improving working conditions, specifically in the birth to four year phase (Mitchell, Ripple & Chanana, 1998). If the ECD practitioners are not well looked after by the state, the ECD sector is destined to continue experiencing a high rate in attrition due to poor working conditions. Many policies ought to be developed, implemented and backed up with resources in order retain the ECD practitioners in the sector. Such policies should align with desired outcomes and must constantly be monitored whether or not they are yielding results and if not modification of policies may be necessary.

"The ECD sector is very poorly resourced, practitioners are paid low salaries, and there is great inequality in the sector" (National Department of Education, 2001). Wallet (2006:34) notes that the many ECD practitioners across the country are females. Further it is maintained that their low remuneration can be attributed to their inferior status, since caring for you ones is viewed as an extension of the females' familial role and that caring does not really required professional skills. (Ackerman 2006:99). Generally, the price of service is related to the quality of that service. In Africa as a whole, there is a perception that women cannot do challenging and demanding jobs, which applies to the ECD sector too. Because ECD has more female practitioners than male practitioners, the status and quality of the practitioners are bound to be low.

2.9 International perspective on Early Childhood Development
2.9.1 Early Childhood Development in UK

Meluish (2011) asserts that in the UK early childhood education starts at the age of five. "Maintaining professional standards that are comparable to those of other education personnel has been difficult, remuneration, employment security and working conditions have been substandard in many countries and UK has not been an exception" (Van Leeuwen, 2015). Hallet (2008) contends that many ECD practitioners in the UK feel let down by unfulfilled professional recognition. This means

that ECD practitioners are not receiving similar treatment and benefits as compared to other professionals in the education sector.

Lloyd and Hallet (2010: 5) propose that "the diverse roles and responsibilities of ECD staff, the different settings they work in, the lack of a professional registration body and the absence of formal pay structures" cause confusion with regard to what the role of an ECD teacher is. O'Keefe and Tait (2004) are of the opinion that "the roles of ECD practitioners and subsequent career path remained ill-defined even after the attempts at professionalising the sector by means of Early Years Sector-Endorsed Foundation Degree which was the government intended to enable practitioners to be valued as professionals and gain recognition for their achievements." To the contrary, Cochran-Smith and Zeichner (2005) are of the view that increasing the educational qualifications of preschool teachers is not the only solution to reduce uncertainty in the ECD Phase, as it will take much more than to restore ECD to its rightful position.

The level of education of the practitioners is linked to the results they produce. Gibson (2010) views the ECD sector as "an industry in crisis", because communities are not concerned with the low levels of ECD practitioners' qualifications, however they look forward to their children receiving a high standard of care. Thus, there is need for the professionalisation of the ECD sector as both practitioners and children stand to be beneficiaries of this long-awaited process.

According to Coates and Faulkner (2016) "a world class workforce is the single most important factor in achieving our ambitions for children and young people". This means that every country must ensure that all ECD practitioners hold a minimum qualification that gives them the knowledge and skills to help children develop holistically. Melhuish (2013) opines that "investments in early childhood education before the age of five appear to have had long-lasting and positive effects on the children." ECD practitioners have no clear job descriptions which result in them often becoming teachers and carers at the same time. This makes it difficult to classify ECD practitioners as professionals, because communities often view early childhood as an area in which

everyone, with or without training is an expert. This in turn leads to poor or low salaries as no employer is willing to pay more for a job that can be done by anyone.

2.9.2 Early Childhood Development in Finland

Finland's education system is among the most highly rated in the world. According to Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Policy in Finland (2000) almost "all Finnish day-care staff have received training for their work that has prepared them for early childhood education and care". Each ECD class in Finland has an average of 13 children as compared to South Africa where an ECD practitioner in most centres sit with an average of 30 children in a class. This shows that the practitioners are able to effectively address the children's individual needs with ease. According to Sahlberg (2010) each centre has at least one practitioner who holds a Bachelor of Education degree. According to research conducted in Finland, male ECD "teachers account for about 4% of the profession and this low number has been attributed to poor pay and weak status as disadvantages that drive people to change occupations", (Salhberg, 2010).

According to Sahlberg (2010), Finland has excellent teachers and they play a crucial role in maintaining the high standards of education in Finland. The Finish government prioritises investing in its education system, which includes professional development programmes to train teachers. This culture results in the high status and quality of the education personnel in Finland.

Sahlberg (2010) sites that Finns consider the teaching profession as a decent, respected profession that is equal to medicine. This shows that the way society views and thinks of one's job impacts on the outcomes of that sector. Sahlberg (2010) adds that "Finland publicly recognizes the value of its teachers and trusts their professional judgments in schools". This means that Finland's top ranking status is mostly attributed to its teachers. The Finnish teachers are not monitored and inspected; the state trusts their academic decisions in maintaining the high standards (Sahlberg, 2010).

According to Sahlberg (2010) for one to be permanently employed as a pre-school teacher, they must hold a bachelor's degree as a minimum qualification. This shows that all ECD practitioners in Finland are degree holders, unlike in South Africa where we are still thriving for all our practitioners to have a minimum qualification of a certificate. Young Finns do not join the teaching sector, because of wages, rather they join it because of the way it is viewed by society. "Finns see teaching as a career on a par with other professions where people work independently and rely on scientific knowledge and skills that they gained through university studies" (Sahlberg, 2010). Teachers' quality of training and qualifications they hold increase the quality and status of the teaching profession.

2.10 Theoretical Framework: Uncertainty Reduction Theory

McGillivray (2008) observes that uncertainty and ambiguity are aspects that are generally perceived to be part of the early year's practitioners, because of the problem with a specific job title. ECD teachers are experiencing an identity crisis which has to be fixed to ensure confident and balanced staff working with the emergent learners. All other professions are understood and respected by the communities, except for the ECD sector that is not understood leading to anxiety and uncertainty among the ECD practitioners. ECD practitioners have no titles; they are called teachers in some instances while in others they are called babysitters or even child minders, and this further cause uncertainty in the sector.

This study is influenced by the uncertainty reduction theory (URT). Berger and Calabrese (1975) define uncertainty as having a number of possible alternative predictions or explanations. Berger and Bradac (1982) advances that the uncertainty reduction theory stresses that people have a need to reduce uncertainty about others or situations by acquiring more information. Information gained can then be used to predict others' behaviour. Uncertainty is presented as a process in which we consider multiple possibilities in trying to explain or predict something. In the context of the professionalisation of the ECD sector, the ECD practitioners are uncertain on whether they will retain their positions that they have been holding for so many years or they

will all be told to go and upgrade their qualifications if they still wished to remain ECD practitioners. This is a result of the introduction of the new higher qualification in the ECD sector.

With the introduction of the professionalisation of the ECD sector, it is anticipated that the old and experienced practitioners will feel uncertain of their jobs as new highly qualified and young practitioners will join the sector. According to the National Integrated ECD policy (2015: 98) the higher learning institutions will soon be introducing a degree qualification in ECD for those who aspire to become ECD practitioners. McGillivray (2008) advances that "there is a risk of workforce reform policy being imposed on the workforce without their approval or agreement (despite opportunities for consultation) and for ideologies (those of the policy writers and implementers, compared with the workforce themselves) as to what kind of a workforce is needed to be in conflict with each other."

 Once the degree holders acquire their qualifications they will be going to the ECD centres with a higher qualification than those practitioners who have been in the sector which means that the old practitioners might find themselves being supervised by the young, newly and highly qualified personnel. Uncertainty might grasp the old practitioners as people usually find it difficult taking orders from managers that are younger than them.

The introduction of the new ECD higher qualification might lead to the old experienced practitioners to begin to withdraw from the sector as they will be unsure whether or not they will wake up the next morning and there will be a new policy that forbids them from practicing with their NQF level 5 (Diploma) qualification. With the introduction of the new ECD higher qualification and the emphasis on professionalisation of the sector, the ECD practitioners are bound to experience behavioural uncertainty. Redmond (2015) views behavioural uncertainty at the "uncertainty associated with knowing what behaviours are expected of us or predicting our own actions". When ECD practitioners are faced with need for the professionalisation of the sector, they

are bound to seek information on how they can meet the requirements of the sectorial demands. Behavioural uncertainty refers to uncertainty about the predictability of behaviours in particular circumstances. This could be the other person's behaviours or our own. In the context of the ECD sector, the ECD practitioners may be uncertain of how they must behave with the introduction of changes in the ECD that aim to professionalise the sector.

2.11 Conclusion

In this chapter, the researcher has highlighted what professionalisation means in the ECD sector, provided the rationale for professionalising the ECD sector, shared ECD practitioners' experiences, applicable legal frameworks regarding ECD in South Africa and pointed out the challenges faced by ECD practitioners in South Africa. The literature further looked into the international perspectives regarding professionalisation in the ECD sector. The literature also explored the URT as the theoretical framework that has influenced the study.

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CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Introduction

This chapter, describes the methodology and approach adopted in the study. Its purpose is to spell out data collection methods and procedures for data analysis, strategies for trustworthiness and the ethical and political considerations that guided this case study. Its aim is to show how the research was carried out to explore the perceptions of ECD practitioners regarding the professionalisation of the ECD sector.

3.2 Research design

3.2.1 Interpretive approach

The researcher adopted the interpretivist approach as it complements case study research which is a qualitative research method, (Lather, 2006). Livesey (2006), supports Lather (2006) by stating that the interpretivist paradigm leans towards the collection of qualitative data. The interpretivist paradigm allows for data collection in the usual environment for the participants. Furthermore, the interpretivist approach allows for qualitative data collection methods like observations and interviews that the researcher chose for the study. Meyers (2008) adds that data generated via interpretivism studies tends to be trustworthy and honest. Trustworthiness is key feature of qualitative data.

3.2.2 Qualitative approach

The qualitative approach was adopted by the study to explore the perceptions of ECD practitioners regarding the professionalisation of the ECD sector in the Gauteng Province of South Africa. This is because some research situations and topics may be better dealt with using qualitative examination. Qualitative researchers endeavour to describe the context in which the social reality manifest itself and have to understand it from the position of its originator, (Kerlinger, 1987). According to Paton and Cochran (2002: 2), qualitative methods "aim to understand the experiences and attitudes of the community, these methods aim to answer questions about the 'what', 'how', and 'why' of a phenomenon". Thus, the researcher may understand the perspectives and dynamics of ECD practitioners in the Gauteng Province, by engaging with the

practitioners themselves. Neuman (2011:168) argues that "qualitative research tries to acquire intimate, first-hand knowledge of the research setting." Thus the researcher's interaction with the ECD practitioners gives qualitative methods an edge over quantitative methods.

3.2.2.1 Advantages of qualitative research approach

Any research approach where there is the power of words is likely to have merits and demerits. Merriam (2002) argues that the "qualitative researchers strive to understand the meaning people have constructed about their world and their experiences; that is how people make sense of their experiences." Babbie (2007:24) proposes that "qualitative data can be richer in meaning than quantified data." The key merits of qualitative research discussed by Merriam (2002) and Babbie (2007) is that it can give vivid meanings to data. This approach helped the researcher to understand the factors which make it difficult for the ECD practitioners to either accept or reject the professionalisation of the ECD sector in the Gauteng Province of South Africa. Merriam (2002:21) suggests that the result of qualitative inquiry is rich description, which embraces words and pictures instead of numbers. The thick descriptions are used to convey what has been derived from the interviewees' responses. Thus the researcher believes that observations, field notes and excerpts from structured interviews promoted the deeper understanding of the perceptions of the ECD practitioners regarding the professionalization of the ECD sector in the Gauteng Province of South Africa.

3.2.2.2 Disadvantages of qualitative research approach

According to Paton and Cochran (2002: 2) the two primary challenges of qualitative research methods are the problem to stay objective and unbiased which if not adhered to may risk the rigor of the findings. The researcher should stay objective to ensure that the findings are credible and trustworthy. Merriam (2002) suggests that rather than trying to manage the biases it is recommended that these should be avoided and to identify them and monitor them. Cognisance should be taken of how they may be shaping the data interpretation. Neuman (2011:214) counters the above negative views by Paton and Cochran (2002) and Merriam (2002) by declaring that "in most

qualitative studies, we emphasize capturing an inside view and providing a detailed account of how the people we study understand events". Rigor, biases and objectivity were dealt with via the use of several sources of data and different types of data collection techniques.

3.2.3 Case study research

An explanatory multiple case study was adopted by the study to explore the perceptions of ECD practitioners regarding the professionalisation of the ECD sector in South Africa, specifically the Gauteng province. Rule and John (2011)'s view of a case study is that it is a "systematic and in-depth study of one particular case in its context" where the case may be one person like an ECD practitioner, a group of people or a sector like the ECD sector. Yin (1993) adds that a case study is an on-site investigation that involves the study of a phenomenon within its real-life environment. Bertram and Christiansen (2014) contend that the aim of a case study is to understand the routines of the participants from their points of views. In my study context, the aim is to gain a better understanding of the perceptions of the ECD practitioners regarding the professionalisation of the ECD sector.

The study treated different ECD centres in the Gauteng Province as cases. The units of analysis was 15 ECD practitioners who hold an NQF level 5 qualification which is a Diploma and were teaching children aged between 0 and 4 years old, have 2 or more years teaching experience working in an ECD centre. The researcher considered this to being enough to build a strong case on the professionalisation of the ECD sector in South Africa, while avoiding a large sample. It was necessary to consider interviewing ECD practitioners who have two or more years of teaching experience in teaching children aged between birth to four years of age. Putting together observations and the information collected through the interviews strengthened the data and ensured the truthfulness of this study.

The selection of the multiple case study was influenced by the research questions which focus on what, why and how perspectives. Benbasat, Goldstein and Mead (1987:3) propose that a case study explores a phenomenon embedded in its natural setting, involving multiple methods of data collection to obtain information from one or

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few entities (people, groups or organisations). Yin (1993) also suggests "that a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence." Thus I studied the target population in its natural setting and get to appreciate the ECD practitioners' perceptions regarding the professionalisation of the ECD sector. The use of multiple data collection techniques coupled with multiple sources of evidence generally enhances trustworthiness of any study.

Case study designs could be in the form of single cases or multiple cases. Babbie (2007:298) views a single case study as the in-depth examination of a specific social phenomenon in a natural, social setting. Therefore, single cases may be used when they provide unique characteristics and have something special to reveal. However, the threat associated with single case studies motivated the researcher to adopt the multiple case study design.

Multiple case studies focus on studying and comparing two or more cases in order to "create thick, interesting and easily readable description and rich understandings of phenomena in their natural settings" (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). Diverse perspectives into a phenomenon are enhanced by the use of several data sources and multiple data collection techniques. Multiple case studies increase the scope of analysis as many cases were analysed to determine if they produce similar or contrasting findings. However, there is no agreement as how many cases can be selected by the researcher. Vissak (2010) argues that the use of four or participants increase trustworthiness of the study, while less than four participants weakens compromise trustworthiness. Rowley (2002) suggests a maximum of ten participants. However, "with more than ten cases, the volume of data is difficult to cope with" (Vissak, 2010). Gummesson (2003) dismiss the notion of a specific number by arguing "that anything from one case to several, even hundreds, can be justified depending on the research purpose and questions".

The design of multiple case studies could be holistic or embedded multiple case studies. The study adopted an embedded multiple case design. Holistic multiple case studies involve studying and comparing cases in their totality while embedded multiple case studies involve studying various units within identifiable cases, (Rowley, 2002). Holistic multiple case studies examine the different cases as one unit which then give a helicopter view of the cases. Rowley (2002), contends that embedded multiple case designs focus on a number of sub-units, which are explored individually, and the findings arrived at from these units are studied to produce an overall picture. Scholz and Tietje, (2013) postulate that holistic multiple case studies are shaped by a qualitative approach involving overt, narrative phenomenological descriptions.

Multiple case study designs support deeper and more detailed investigation which is driven by the what, why and how questions. These questions require the researcher to explain the phenomenon, thus applying an explanatory multiple case study design. Consequently the 'what', 'how' and 'why' questions were more explanatory as discussed above and influenced the researcher's choice of case studies.

3.2.3.1. Advantages of multiple case study designs

The focus of a case study design is to help the researcher to obtain new holistic and in-depth understanding, explanation and interpretation of a problem, (Riege, 2003). Noor, (2008) expresses a similar view by advocating that a multiple case study equips the researcher to achieve a holistic view of the phenomenon focused on and provide an overall picture through using many sources of evidence. Similarly the other merit of a multiple case study design is that it enables the researcher to obtain deep insight into the problem under study (Andrade, 2009: 4). The use of a multiple case study design was significant in the study, because it contributed to a deep understanding of the professionalisation of the ECD sector. Neuman (2011:177) argues that the intensive, in-depth study of a few cases replace the more complicated surface-level study of many cases which are characteristic of quantitative research. Therefore, the researcher acquired in-depth knowledge and insight into a small number of cases on the professionalisation of the ECD sector.

Multiple case studies may also be useful for advancing theory generation, (Scholz and Tietje, 2013). Babbie (2007) are of the view that case studies provide replication, confirm, refine or refute the findings of the first case. Case studies also allow for finding out whether the results can be expanded to other situations, or to establish whether they can be transferred to similar circumstances. Patterns are studied and the phenomenon's complementary aspects are identified, avoiding chance associations. Similarly, Gummesson (2005) states that case studies were useful "for discovery, description, mapping and relationship building, but may also be used for theory testing, refuting and refining."   Thus multiple case studies allow for the expansion of the knowledge base.

3.2.3.2 Disadvantages of multiple case study designs

Any research design is bound to have weaknesses; hence a case study design is not an exception. Babbie (2007) identifies four problems with a case study design and these are "a lack of controllability, deductibility, repeatability and generalizability" Similarly, Noor (2008) argues that case studies have been criticised for failing to address the issues of generalisability. Babbie (2007:300) proposes that by using more than one case, creating comparative analysis the risk is reduced by using more than one case. Surprisingly, Lee (1989) defends the case study method by proposing that these problems can be overcome, yet they remain relative to other research methods. The researcher utilised a multiple case study to deal with the challenges discussed above. Similarly the use of multiple cases and a variety of sources rendered the study rigorous and the findings trustworthy.

I employed the case study, because she considers the first 1000 days in a child's life as critical and a phase in which a solid foundation must be laid. The ECD sector is also the sector in the education system of South African that is dominated by women who were proud to be in the 'battle front' of the education system. I was interested in the population of ECD practitioners who teach children aged between 0 – 4 years of age and hold NQF level 5 qualification (Diploma) because the researcher considered them to be the personnel that will be highly affected by the immediate introduction of the new and higher qualification which is a degree in ECD.

By choosing a case study, I established a firm research focus and referred to the main research question: What were the perceptions of ECD practitioners regarding the professionalisation of the ECD sector? I used the question to vet what the preceding researchers have written regarding the professionalisation of the ECD sector. ECD level 5 as a qualification and the first 1000 days of a child's life was important in influencing the sample selection of the sites and participants.

3.3 Research questions
This inquiry was guided by the following research questions:

3.3.1. Primary research question
How do ECD practitioners perceive professionalisation of the ECD sector?

3.3.2. Secondary research questions
1. How do ECD practitioners perceive themselves as professionals?

2. What are the challenges perceived by the ECD practitioners regarding the introduction of a new higher qualification of B.Ed. in ECCE?

3. What challenges do ECD practitioners currently face with regard to their professionalisation?

3.4 Sampling technique: Purposive sampling
Babbie (2007) views sampling as a process of selecting observations. Thus in the context of this study, sampling is a process used in selecting the ECD practitioners to participate in the study. Purposive sampling was used as the sampling method for the study meant to explore the perceptions of ECD practitioners regarding the professionalisation of the ECD sector in the Gauteng Province of South Africa. The researcher chose purposive sampling as supported by Welman and Kruger (1999) that "is the most important kind of non-probability sampling."

Babbie (2011:184) defines purposive (judgmental) sampling as a type of non-probability sampling according to which the units to be observed are selected bearing

in mind the researcher's judgment identifying the most useful or representative ones. The researcher has to select a sample from which more information can be obtained. Neuman (2011:267) views purposive sampling as a non-random sample which allows the researcher to use a wide range of methods to identify all possible cases even the ones which involve a population who is difficult to reach. Therefore, I made a point to select ECD practitioners who suit the criteria of the study.

3.4.1. Advantages of purposive sampling

The advantage of purposive sampling motivated this study in using it to select the respondents for the study. Merriam (2002) argues that purposive or purposeful sampling directs the researcher to select participants from whom the data can be extracted which can inform more about the purpose of the study. It is always important for any study to have information-rich sample. In light of this aspect, the researcher chose ECD practitioners that have experience in the sector.

Neuman (2011:268) advances that purposive sampling is the best way to select unique cases that can be informative about the study. The researcher used purposive sampling to identify key informants who hold an NQF level 5 qualification, and who have been teaching children aged birth to four years of age for two or more years and were in the Gauteng Province. Thus the researcher selected the respondents with a specific purpose in mind. Thus the researcher believed that purposive sampling was the most appropriate sampling method for the study. The researcher took advantage of purposive sampling as a sampling technique to select individuals who were envisaged as being the holders of rich responses.

3.4.2. Disadvantages of purposive sampling

Purposive sampling is inappropriate if the goal of the research is to have a representative sample, (Neuman, 2011). However, issues of representative sampling were not applicable in purposive sampling. Those not selected through purposive sampling may question the criteria used to select those who participated in the study. I explained that the study is focused on practitioners who meet the determined criteria of the study.

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3.5 Research sites

I was able to identify the participants based on the main research question: What were the perceptions of ECD practitioners regarding the professionalisation of the ECD sector?

3.6 Participants

The ECD practitioners who participated in the study were ECD practitioners teaching children aged between birth and four year old. They were working in any (private, rural or public ECD centre) ECD centre at the time of the study for a period of two or more years. Furthermore, the participants were holders of ECD NQF level 5 qualification and were working within the Johannesburg region. Participants were able to read and comprehend English.

3.7 Sample selection

The researcher has chosen to go around the ECD centres in the Johannesburg region looking for the individuals that meet the criteria of the study stated above. The researcher asked ECD practitioners that she came across on whether they met the criteria and whether or not they were interested in participating in the study.

3.8 Data collection

Data collection is an imperative stage in the process of qualitative research. Qualitative research may use two major sources of data, which were primary and secondary sources. Primary sources of data were used in this study. Merriam (2002) suggests that the data collection strategy is influenced by the research questions of the study and by deciding which source of data will provide the best information, which can be used to answer the research questions. Semi-structured interviews, observations and field notes, were used as research instruments in this study to gather data.

3.8.1 Semi-structured face to face interviews

Semi-structured face-face interviews were used in this study, because the researcher wanted to get in-depth insights, feelings, attitudes, perceptions and experiences of ECD practitioners regarding the professionalisation of the ECD sector in the South

Africa. Babbie (2007:306) views an "interview as an interaction between an interviewer and a respondent in which the interviewer has a general plan of inquiry, including the topics to be covered". The interaction may be face-to-face or telephonic. Thus the field interview was a joint venture between the researcher and respondents, although the focus was on the participant's perspectives and experience on the professionalisation of the ECD sector. These interviews were done with purposively sampled respondents. The sample was made up of experienced ECD practitioners who were considered by the researcher to be well versed within the ECD sector.

In this study, the key informants were be the ECD practitioners who suit the criteria of the sample determined by the researcher. The researcher is proficient in English, which is one of the endorsed and international languages used in South Africa as a Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT).

3.8.1.1 Advantages of semi-structured face to face interviews

Neuman (2011) is of the view that face-to-face interviews have the most advantages since they are known to provide the highest response rate and allow for the administering of the most sizable and complex questionnaires, since experienced interviewers can ask a variety of questions and are able to use prompts and extensive probes. Babbie (2007) also advances that interviews get more positive responses from participants as compared to mail surveys. The presence of an interviewer reduced the number of 'don't know', 'no answers' and hence improve the response rates. The other advantage of the interview is that if a respondent is clear about the intent of a question or is in the dark about anything regarding what is required and asked, the interviewer can clarify the matter, thereby obtaining relevant responses (Babbie, 2007). The researcher conducted the interview sessions herself to enable her to gain a deeper perception into the perceptions of ECD practitioners regarding the professionalisation of the ECD sector.

Probing for further insights into the problem is another advantage associated with interviews. Babbie (2007) suggests that interviewers can communicate when they do not understand or wish for additional clarification. Neuman (2011) is of the view that

in the case of field interviews, respondents express themselves spontaneously, sharing information about reality in the way they normally speak, reason and organise.

3.8.1.2 Disadvantages of semi-structured face to face Interviews

The major face-to-face interview disadvantage is that it is costly (Neuman, 2011). Face-to-face interviews allow for the researcher to be bias which can negatively influence trustworthiness. However, the interviewer bias may be reduced by the way the interviewer listens, attends, encourages, interrupts, initiates topics and end his interview session. Babbie (2007) argues that the interviewer should act as a neutral medium transmitting information regarding the questions asked. The use of field notes and observations was used by the researcher to reduce disadvantages inherent in interviews.

3.8.2 Observation and field notes

The researcher used observation method to enhance trustworthiness of data collected from the participants. McMillan and Schumacher (2006:273) also point that "observational method relies on a researcher's seeing and hearing things and recording what is observed, rather than relying on a subject's self-report in responding to questions or statements". Data gathered via the observation method ensured capturing of non-verbal cues. McMillan and Schumacher (2006:439) counsel researchers to note some nonverbal cues, embracing "facial expression, tone of voice", gestures and body movements that communicate the subtle meaning and enhance the participant responses. Observation also enables the researcher to engage in holistic interpretation of the topic under study. Filed notes and interviews are used effectively in combination with observations (Henning, Van Rensberg & Smit, 2004:82).

3.9 Challenges encountered during data collection

It would be naïve to have expected that this study was smoothly carried out; there were obviously a number of obstacles that I had to deal with. The sensitivity of the fact that the ECD practitioners were looked down upon by the society at large made it challenging to convince the practitioners that the researcher was not there to judge

them and the ECD sector at large. The participants were afraid at first to participate in the study, however, the researcher managed to gain the participants' trust through assurance of confidentiality and anonymity were going to be compromised.

3.10 Data analysis: Thematic analysis

Merriam (in Engelbrecht et al., 2003:18) observes that "data analysis is the process of making sense out of the information collected, which involves consolidating, reducing and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read". The study adopted a thematic analysis strategy to analyse the data from the field.

3.10.1 Thematic Analysis

According to Patton and Cochran (2002:23) a thematic analysis involves a close look at all the data to gain an overall impression of common issues that recur, and pinpoint the main themes that surface. Thematic analysis is one of the most suitable data analysing techniques in qualitative studies. Mayo (2013) used the thematic analysis in an article on teacher development to great effect. Neuman (2011:509) argues that, when analysing data. Raw data are categorised into broader groups. We then examine and manipulate categories to identify patterns. Therefore, the researcher used thematic analysis to carry out data analysis, by organising data into categories based on themes and concepts. The researcher started by looking for patterns or relationships while collecting data. According to Patton and Cochran (2002) the key stages in a thematic analysis were: read and annotate transcripts, identify themes, developing a coding scheme and coding the data. These key stages are discussed below.

3.10.1.1 Read and annotate transcripts

This is the most basic stage in which the researcher makes a preliminary observation of few transcripts, where the data collecting instruments are tested on whether or not they result in congruent responses (Patton & Cochran, 2002). The data analysis began during data collection, where I organised and made sense of the data. The next stage of thematic analysis was for me to identify themes.

3.10.1.2 Identify the themes

The next step in thematic analysis is for the researcher to identify the themes, (Patton & Cochran, 2002). Neuman (2011) raises a similar view when he argues that researchers start looking for patterns and relationships while collecting data. The data are then explored in order to identify multiple processes, causes, properties or mechanisms within it, looking for patterns, similarities and differences. Thematic analysis aided the researcher in organizing and analysing data into theme based categories. Patton and Cochran (2002:24) suggest that themes are identified when looking through the data gathered.

3.10.1.3 Developing a coding Scheme

These initial themes were then gathered to develop a coding scheme. A coding theme is a list of all the themes, and the 'codes' serve as starting point to initiate transcriptions, however it is important to develop the coding scheme as soon as initial data have been collected (Patton & Cochran, 2002). Neuman (2011:512) identifies three purposes of coding schemes, which could facilitate the identification of emerging themes at glance; they stimulate us to find themes in future open coding; and we can use the list to build a universe of all themes in the study. Although the researcher began coding with a list of concepts, she generated most coding themes while reading the data notes.

3.10.1.4. Coding the data

At this stage data are grouped according to the codes it belongs to. Coding data in qualitative research involves organising the raw data, making use of conceptual categories; themes and concepts are managed to stimulate the discussion, illuminated by the quotations, elicited from the respondents (Neuman, 2011).

3.11. Trustworthiness

According to Babbie (2007:146) trustworthiness deals with the credibility of the empirical measure and whether the data collected serve the purpose of answering the questions. Neuman (2011) views trustworthiness to mean truthfulness and the focus is on achieving authenticity. Creswell and Miller (2000) view trustworthiness "as how

accurately the researcher's account represents participants' realities of the social phenomena and is credible to them". Therefore, trustworthiness implies how well researchers measure social reality using the lens which were congruent to the participants' perspectives.

Trustworthiness may be achieved through pre-testing the data collection instruments, the use of different sources of data, and the different methods of measurement. The interview schedule guided was compiled and pre-tested on a few participants which were part of the target group. This pre- testing was done to improve the trustworthiness of the interview schedule and observation as research instruments. Through pre-testing, vague and irrelevant questions were identified and redrafted by the researcher before the actual study.

The researcher used multiple ECD centres, different sources of data and multiple data collection methods to advance the understanding of the perceptions of ECD practitioners regarding professionalisation of the ECD sector, in order to check for internal consistency in the findings obtained. Neuman (2011:214) argues that to achieve trustworthiness in qualitative studies, the idea is to involve a wide range of data and use multiple measurement methods. Therefore multiple data collection methods and different sources of data were used to improve trustworthiness of the study.

The researcher ensured that the findings of the study were reliable observing the principle of external consistence. Verifying or cross-checking the findings obtained using other different sources of data also improved external consistency of the findings, (Neuman, 2011). For instance I used different methods of collecting data from the same context and checked if the findings were consistent. This was meant to ascertain if the data fit into the overall context. I also established trustworthiness by ensuring that during interviews, all the participants were having two or more years of teaching experience in ECD teaching children aged birth to four years and were holders of NQF level 5 qualification. The credibility of the respondents and their

statements were important in improving trustworthiness of the data collection process and the subsequent data collected.

The credibility of the research findings in qualitative studies is an important element in understanding the notion of trustworthiness. Neuman (2011:169), suggests that validation in qualitative research depends more on reliable, credible researchers and their personal integrity and personal code of ethics. The researcher strived to provide credible, authentic and rich specific descriptions of the perceptions of the ECD practitioners on the professionalisation of the ECD sector by interviewing experienced informants such as, the ECD practitioners that hold a level 5 qualification and have been teaching children aged birth to four years of age for two or more years. There was a deliberate attempt by the researcher to offer unbiased, authentic and balanced account of the perceptions of the ECD practitioners on the professionalisation of the ECD sector in the Gauteng Province of South Africa. This was achieved through use of multiple data collection methods, collecting data from 15 participants. Creswell and Miller (2000) advocate that qualitative researchers use member-checking, triangulation, rich description, peer testing and external audits to ensure trustworthiness.

Creswell and Miller (2000:156) are of the view that "triangulation is a trustworthiness procedure where the researcher search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in the study". Thus the researcher collected research evidence through multiple methods such as semi-structured interviews, observations and filed notes in order to understand the perceptions of the ECD practitioners regarding the professionalisation of the ECD sector. In general triangulation could be across data sources (research participants), different theories, and different data collection methods such as interviews, observation, and field notes among different investigators. The researcher provided substantiating evidence gathered using multiple methods such as semi-structured interviews, observations, and field notes, to pinpoint key themes.

The researcher further utilised member-checking in establishing trustworthiness of the study. "Member-checking is the process of taking data and interpretations back to the participants in the study so that they can confirm the credibility of the information and narrative account" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Similarly, Neuman (2011) calls it member validation, and views it as a trustworthiness method used by researchers to indicate the authenticity and reliability of the study by taking field findings back to members to judge the adequacy of the findings. I convened a session to obtain feedback of the findings when meeting with each participant to review and confirm the preliminary results as being true and to ensure descriptions were reflecting their intimate social world. The researcher then assimilated the participants' clarifications into the final narrative. Thus the participants added trustworthiness of the findings of the study.

I remained in the field until the data were saturated and the themes relevant to the study emerged. Neuman (2011) proposes that the researcher should focus on capturing an inside view and should provide a detailed account of the way the respondents perceived and understood the events. I used semi-structured interviews, observation and field notes in order to capture the inside view and afford a thorough account of what the respondents say about the professionalisation of the ECD sector. Creswell and Miller (2000) argue that with vivid detail, readers get to appreciate the credibility of the findings such that they can find them (findings) applicable to other alike settings.

Debriefing by peers was further adopted by the researcher to enhance trustworthiness of the findings. I made use of my research supervisor and other academics who have written papers on the professionalisation of the ECD sector, to provide written feedback and to serve as a sounding board for ideas. Thus support from peers in the form of peer debriefs enabled the researcher to add credibility to the study.

3.12. Role of the researcher

During the study, my role was to construct the data collection instruments which included the questions for the semi-structured interviews. I had a role of sampling the

participants from the population and tell them about the study and their right to withdraw anytime should they feel like withdrawing from the study. I had to move around the Gauteng Province to collect the data by means of interviewing the participants, observing the non-verbal cues displayed by the participants and take the field notes and more over control the data collection process and monitor the interview sessions by means of asking necessary follow-up questions. I had a vital role of analysing the data and summarising the findings and presenting them. What motivated me during the study is my vast experience as an ECD expert and the keenness to hear the opinions of the ECD practitioners regarding the professionalisation of the ECD sector in the Gauteng Province of South Africa.

3.13 Ethical concerns

Ethics refer to what should be regarded as legitimate to do or to take cognisance of what 'moral' research procedures involves, thus ethical issues and concerns, were taken into consideration when dealing with the challenges that arose (Neuman,2011). I balanced her interest in the study with the respect for the participants' human rights.

Babbie (2007:62) contends that ethical practice is seen as "confirming to the standards of conduct of a given profession or group". Therefore, I remained focused to abide by the ethical codes of conduct such as proper conduct of scientific inquiry. Voluntary participation, no harm to the participants, anonymity and confidentiality, and the right to privacy were ethical considerations which were identified by the researcher.

3.13.1 Voluntary participation and no harm to the participants

A major characteristic in research ethics is that participation must be done out of free will and choice. No one should be forced to participate in a study, (Babbie, 2007). Similarly, Neuman (2011) concurs with Babbie (2007) by advancing that a major ethical tenet is the principle of voluntary consent which warns never to apply force to influence anyone to participate in research. Another related code of ethics is the study should never expose people to harm. Babbie (2007:63) argues that "social research should never inure the people being studied, regardless of whether they volunteer for the study." Thus the researcher guarded against revealing data that would humiliate the participants or jeopardise their lives and those of their families. Informed consent

was a better strategy for dealing with the issues of voluntary participation and avoiding harm to the participants. Patton and Cochran (2002:5) suggest that "everyone who participates in any study should have freely consented to participation without being coerced or unfairly pressurized". Thus it is important that participants should be educated about what participation involves, and reassured that withdrawing from the study may not affect any services. Therefore, the researcher requested participants to sign consent forms to show that they agree to take part in the study and that they were aware that they may withdraw from participating anytime they feel like.

3.13.2 Anonymity and confidentiality

It is important that research study protects the participants' interests and well-being in order to safeguard their identity and dignity. Anonymity and confidentiality were also important ethical considerations to be observed by the researcher. "Anonymity is guaranteed in a research project when neither the researchers nor the readers of the findings can identify a given response with a given respondent" (Babbie, 2007: 85). Thus the use of code names enabled the researcher to conceal the real names of the participants. It is essential that the researcher protects the identity of the persons whom they obtain the information (Patton and Cochran, 2002). Therefore, the identity of the participants was protected at all times throughout the study. Babbie (2007) adds that the information given by respondents must be kept confidential and even if the researchers identify a person's responses they must not disclose these in a public arena.

3.13.3 Right to privacy

Researchers view right to privacy is a significant ethical concern. Babbie (2007:68) advances that "violations of right to privacy occur when researchers identify members of certain groups they have studied, release or show individuals' data or responses." Thus participants' right to privacy being harassed by the law enforcement agents and being ostracized by peers. The researcher had to respect the participants and take precaution to protect the participants' privacy.

3.14 Conclusion

In this chapter, the research methodology was discussed broadly and the researcher specified the research design and data collection methods and instruments used in the study. Trustworthiness and ethical consideration were deliberated on. The next chapter covers the findings of the research.

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CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter the researcher presents findings on data collected through interviews and observations. The study aimed to explore the perceptions of ECD practitioners regarding the professionalisation of the ECD sector in the Gauteng Province of South Africa.

The data analysis was done by coding the transcribed data into themes and sub-themes. The themes that emerged from the data were play and learn and could be related during the phase birth to four years of age. Further ECD practitioners' perceptions of themselves as professionals, practitioners' views regarding the new policy on improved qualifications for ECD teachers and challenges currently faced by ECD practitioners in general form part of the findings that surfaced.

4.2 Biographical information of the Early Childhood Development centres and participants

4.2.1 Biographical information about the centres involved

Twelve centres partook in this study. These centres are all within the Johannesburg region of the Gauteng Province of South Africa. They are situated in various suburbs, and some are in low density suburbs where parents can afford paying up to R1500 per month or more for their children's fees, while others are in high density suburbs where parents can hardly afford paying R300 per month for the fees. In the high density suburbs, practitioners are earning as little as R1000 00 per month, while in the low density suburbs practitioners earn up to R15000 00 per month. All the centres are privately run and all get little or no assistance to run from the government. These centres spawned their income through school fees and various fund-raising events fared by the centre managers and the practitioners.

4.2.2 Biographical information about the participants

Data were gathered from the ECD practitioners that hold NQF level 5 qualification. The sample comprised of nine centre managers and six practitioners. They were all working with children from birth to four years of age. The ages of participants range

from late twenties to mid-seventies. Although some of the participants are somehow inexperienced as the birth to four year old teachers, all have considerable experience in the ECD sector. It was presumed that years of experience and the educational background of the participants should give them a better insight of what a professionalised ECD sector should look like and they were therefore in a good position to provide trustworthy data.

Table 4.1 Biographical information of the participants involved

Centre	Participant code	Gender	Position occupied	Age	Years of experience	Gross Salary per month
A.	AP1 YELLOW	Female	Practitioner	34	5	R3600 00
A.	ACM9 RED	Female	Centre manager	52	27	R5400 00
B.	BCM2 MAROON	Female	Centre manager	37	16	R14000 00
B.	BP5 GOLD	Female	Practitioner	39	6	R3000 00
C.	CCM3 ORANGE	Female	Centre manager	46	20	R1500 00
C.	CP8 BLACK	Female	Practitioner	29	6	R1500 00
D.	DP4 LIME	Female	Practitioner	48	8	R1500 00
E.	ECM6 BROWN	Female	Centre manager	46	9	R1500 00
F.	FP7 BLUE	Female	Practitioner	35	6	R1000 00
G.	GCM10 SILVER	Female	Centre manager	58	11	R1500 00
H.	HCM11 WHITE	Female	Centre manager	42	15	R8000 00
I.	IP12 PINK	Female	Practitioner	24	2	R2200 00
J.	JCM13 GREEN	Female	Centre manager	42	20	R15000 00
K.	KCM14 CREAM	Female	Centre manager	74	33	R10000 00

	LCM15		Centre			R3000 00
L.	Navy-blue	Female	manager	42	6	

The biographical information above is noted by Van Leeuwen (2015) when he notes that "90% of the ECD teachers are women and this is an indication of insecure, precarious employment and inferior salaries and working conditions."

4.2.3 Description of the centres

The centres that partook in the study were spread around Johannesburg. Some were in low density suburbs while others were in high density suburbs. The centres' managers of centres, mostly situated in high density suburbs, refused to have pictures of the centres taken by the researcher. Therefore, I respected their decision, because of the ethical considerations that guided the study. The researcher displayed the few pictures from the few centres that gave her permission to take pictures.

Centre A

Centre A is situated in a high density suburb of Johannesburg. The centre had no proper structures; it used a shack as an office. This office did not have any office chairs, or any office equipment like the phone. I observed that the teaching environment was under resourced. Some of the chairs were broken. The children were fighting over a few toys that were on the floor. The floor itself had no carpets to keep children warm. The practitioners seemed friendly towards the children. Practitioners were neatly and comfortably dressed in flat shoes. One parent who had come in to fetch her child did not seem to be having any relationship with the practitioner as she could not even greet the practitioner. This parent stood by the door and called her daughter. The practitioner did not seem to be moved by this behaviour too and continued with the other children.

Centre B

This centre is situated in a low density suburb of Johannesburg. The centre office was well arranged with office equipment. The Centre climate was similar to that of a

functional school. All children were comfortably seated around their tables. All the practitioners seemed to be 'consumed' in their class activities. The teaching and learning environment was clean and the carpets were clean and tidy. The centre had enough resources to promote the children's rights to quality basic education. The practitioners were friendly towards the children and the staff in the centre seemed to be interacting in a healthy way. In this centre, the playgrounds were well maintained and there was enough space for children to play. Teachers were engaged with children during play time. The centre had thrice more children than most of the centres that participated in the study. The kitchen looked clean, so were the bathrooms. This centre seemed to be prioritising children's health and safety, because there was a security guard at the gate. All visitors were signing in before proceeding to the centre office.

Centre C

This centre is situated in one of the townships of Johannesburg which forms part of a high density suburb. It has a well-structured office that looks very professional. The office has a telephone and seats to accommodate visitors. The centre is spacious. There are other rooms in the centre that are said to be used as board rooms. Children were seen running around freely during play time. The waiting area has carpets and couches.

The practitioners were friendly to the children and the staff seemed to be having professional relationships from the way they were addressing each other. The play areas are tidy and seem safe, the staff walked around during break time playing with and supervising the children. There seem to be enough visible staff members supervising the children. The pictures below were taken in Centre C. This is the centre where CCM3 ORANGE and CP8 BLACK are working. The Centre can afford creating such office environment, yet its practitioners earn not more than R1500 00 per month.

Centre D

This centre was operated from the backyard of the house where the practitioner resides with her family. The centre office was created by only placing a table and a

chair at the corner of the room. This same room was used to accommodate children and was used as a classroom. This office did not have any office chairs or other office equipment. The teaching environment was under resourced. The floor had no carpets and mats for children to feel warm, moreover the floor was not tiled. The practitioner was friendly to the children though. This is the centre that is being run by DP4 LIME, who was also noted as having challenges with compliance.

Centre E

Centre E is located in the high density suburbs of Johannesburg. The centre was run from a house that had been partitioned with boards to form classrooms; one of the rooms was used as an office in which the few teaching and learning materials were stored. This office did not have any office chair; the researcher was brought a small children's plastic chair to sit on. The researcher had an opportunity to attend the parents consultation day and she realised that out of 75 children enrolled in the centre, only five parents turned up for the consultation with the ECD practitioners on their children's progress. The researcher observed that the teaching environment was under resourced. Moreover, this centre is too small to accommodate 75 children. There was no play area, children were playing in their classrooms.

Centre F

Centre F is situated in the high density of Johannesburg. The centre was being run from a residential place that is under construction on one side. Children were playing on a black plastic spread outside the house. The researcher was told that there was no room to sit in and do the interview with the participant. The same learning room is the same place where children's food was being prepared. The centre looked untidy. The teaching environment is under resourced. The practitioners were however, friendly to the children and the children seemed to be happy around their teachers.

Centre G

Centre G was operated from a house. There were only six children in this centre. It is situated in the high density suburbs of Johannesburg. The ECD centre does not seem to be having enough resources for the six children that were there. There were

countable charts displayed on the wall. They looked torn faded with faded colours. The floor itself had old grey carpets that looked dirty. There was only one practitioner in this centre who also happened to be a participant in this study.

Centre H

Centre H is located in a low density suburb of Johannesburg. The centre office was fully furnished with office equipment and learning and teaching resources. The climate of the centre was child friendly. The centre had well maintained swings and artificial grass for children to play on. There were cameras mounted around the centre to enhance children's safety. The entire centre ground is paved neatly. The teaching environment was neat and the carpets were clean and tidy and the centre seemed to be having enough space for children to play. Practitioners are seen interacting with children during play time. There seemed to be a healthy relationship among staff members as they were conversing and laughing.

Centre I

Centre I is situated in the low density suburb of Johannesburg. The centre is operated from a house that was mainly utilised for ECD purposes. The centre office was well arranged with adequate office equipment. The environment was clean and the carpets were in a good condition. There is a play area that is spacious. However, the centre is not fenced. There is no wall around the centre too. The practitioners are friendly towards the children and the rest of the staff seemed to be interacting in a healthy way.

Centre J

Centre J is located in one of the low density suburbs of Johannesburg. This centre is well equipped with teaching and learning materials that are easily accessible to teachers. The interaction between the practitioner and the learners seem to be a healthy one, so is the relationship between the practitioner and other staff members. The children are settled in a clean setting, and learning and teaching seem to be taking place. There is adequate furniture for the children in the centre as all children are seated around their tables. The play area is well maintained, the swings and the slides

seem to be firmly fixed. At the gate, there is a bell that visitors ring. Before being opened for, a visitor is asked to identify themselves by the person inside the centre who is in the front office. The cameras are visibly placed around the centre. At the reception there is a big camera screen that displays what is happening in each class. This centre looks almost identical to Centre B, CK and CH in terms of structure and the resources in the centre.

Centre K

Centre K is located in the high density suburb of Johannesburg. Unlike other centres located in the high density suburbs, this centre is rated at the same standard with the centres in the low density suburb that partook in the study. There is a reception and the principal's office. This centre is fully equipped with teaching and learning materials. There is a library corner that has a lot of ECD materials. The wall has educational and colourful displays. The interaction between the practitioner and the learners seemed to be a healthy one; so was the relationship between the practitioner and other staff members. The centre was clean. The play area is visibly located and spacious. The centre seemed secure as there were cameras mounted all over around the centre to enhance the safety of children.

Centre L

Centre K is located in the high density suburb. It has colourful paintings on the walls that are usually loved by children. The gate is always locked and visitors have to ring the bell to be opened for. There is a front office with waiting chairs where visitors sit and wait for their turns to be attended to. The centre has a well set up, and maintained play area that looks secure. There is enough furniture for all the children in the centre as they are all seated comfortably. Parents sign in a book when collecting children. There is a security guard at the main gate.

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4.3. Research question and themes

The data collected was analysed according to the themes shown in the table below.

Table 4.2 Research questions and themes

Research Questions	Themes and sub-themes
1. How do ECD practitioners perceive professionalisation of the ECD sector?	1. Play-based learning 1.1. Practitioners as glorified babysitters. 1.2. Lack of support from the government.
2. Do you perceive yourself as a professional?	2. Feeling professional 2.1. Experience and age lead to the feeling of being a professional 2.3. No job description
3. What were the challenges perceived by the ECD practitioners regarding the introduction of a new higher qualification of B.Ed. in ECCE?	3. ECCE qualifications 3.1. A meaningless policy 3.2. Significance of the new policy 3.3.Uncertainty
4. What challenges do ECD practitioners currently face with regard to their professionalisation?	4. Challenges currently faced by the ECD practitioners in general. 4.1 Unfair working conditions and labour practices 4.2 Large salary disparities 4.3. Compliance

4.4 Discussion of findings

The analysis of the data gathered reveals the themes and sub-themes as they communicate the perceptions of ECD practitioners regarding the professionalisation of the ECD sector in the Gauteng Province of South Africa. The main evolving themes are play and learn and they are related during the phase birth to four years of age;

ECD practitioners' perceptions of themselves as professionals; practitioners' views regarding the new policy on improved qualifications for ECD teachers and challenges currently faced by ECD practitioners in general. The main themes and the sub-themes are deliberated in the sub-sections below.

4.4.1 Theme 1: Play based leaning

The finding revealed that there is lack of understanding by parents regarding the responsibility of the ECD practitioners and there is also a lack of support from the government in the form of funding, learning and teaching materials, professional and personal development which is evident from the way district officials are not doing regular visits to the ECD centres as is done in schools. This is an indication that there is a lack of understanding that during the first 1000 days of a child's life, learning takes place through play. A large part of the country still sees ECD centres as places of play and sleep without learning, hence the undermining and lack of value given to the ECD sector. These processes are described below.

Question Asked: In your view, what do you think parents see as being your job in the ECD centre?

4.4.1.1 Emerged sub-theme: Practitioners as glorified babysitters

Seven out of fifteen practitioners agreed that parents do not as yet understand what ECD is, about and the importance of ECD, hence the undermining of the practitioners. Ortlipp, Arthur and Woodrow (2011) are of the view that "when others (the public) are better informed about what the ECD educators do, they are more likely to see this as a professional practice and this outside positioning can impact on how the practitioners see themselves". The way practitioners are viewed influences their quality. ECD practitioners are uncertain of who they are in the education sector. This emanates from the way they are perceived by the general public.

According to AP1 YELLOW said:

> *They think that it's just taking the child to me and I play with the child the whole day there is no teaching and there is no writing or any learning.*

ECD practitioners are not regarded as professionals by community members and later on parents. The communities still have the mentality that ECD practitioners are there to babysit their children while they are at work. The communities are bound not to take the ECD practitioners' plights seriously if the way they perceive the practitioners does not change.

ECM6 BROWN cited that:

Even the community that we serve does not understand ECD; they think that we just feed children and send them to sleeping only, they don't understand that children are taught in ECD centres.

They view us as babysitters only not practitioners who are there to teach children, said ACM9 RED.

GCM10 SILVER was of the view that:

The community sees me as a child minder, someone came in here one day and she said 'aahh, but children are learning.

This reflects the false perception that play is not linked to learning.

The community doesn't value and respect ECD practitioners, later on what we do as ECD practitioners. To them it's just people who look after their children, it's more like a nanny in a way, echoed IP12 PINK.

The findings are in line with Lloyd and Hallet (2010) who argue that professionalisation within the context of ECD could help in defining the roles of ECD practitioners. Furthermore, the findings above reveal that the parents do not understand that in ECD children learn through play and the two cannot be separated.

Question Asked: What kind of support do you expect directly from the government?

4.4.1.2 Emerged sub-theme: Lack of support from the government

Fenech, Sumsion and Shepherd (2010) suggests that ECD reforms must include financial investment by every state. This literature is in line with the findings of the study below which revealed that the government does not support the ECD practitioners. This sub-theme is further supported by *Mail and Guardian of 01 June 2011* which wrote that the ECD practitioners marched to the Union Buildings to deliver a memorandum to President Jacob Zuma. In the memorandum one of the demands from the ECD practitioners was that there must be an end to the marginalisation of the ECD sector. Surprisingly, the president has not done much to put an end to the marginalisation of the ECD sector, this is a clear sign of to what extent the government does not take the ECD practitioners seriously. However, there is a newly released Policy on Minimum Requirements for Programmes Leading to Qualifications in the Higher Education for ECD educators which may have come as a result of this memorandum. Vandenbroeck, Urban and Peeters (2016) are of the view that recognising the ECEC workforce as professionals is key. 12 out of 15 practitioners agreed that they were not getting support from the government.

AP1 YELLOW was of the view that:

If the government could be engaged in the ECD centres it would be better, and if we could also get the recognition from the government it could help.

If the government can help, sometimes we don't know the information on where to go and get help, suggested BCM2 MAROON.

CCM3 ORANGE was of the view that:

If the government can subsidise us, we would appreciate it. If the government subsidise us, then we can have extra teachers in the classrooms, you know. It will reduce our workload. Also if the government can provide space for us, most of us are running from our homes and if we have large spaces it will be easy for us.

We need support from the government in the form of workshops where possible, echoed DP4 LIME.

This shows that there is a severe lack of infrastructure in the ECD sector which is attributed to the fact that the ECD sector is neglected. Schools are built daily throughout the country, yet there is no provision made for a pieces of land to build ECD centres and later on equip them.

"We struggle to carry out our duties as ECD practitioners because we don't have materials to use in centres, cried ECM6 BROWN.

The government must at least support us by providing teaching and learning material, providing space in which children will be able to play and explore freely, suggested FP7 BLUE.

GCM10 SILVER posited that: *The Government doesn't give us materials to teach the children, things like toys. They don't bother to check if a certain centre has toys or other materials that will benefit the children.*

I don't know when I last saw our inspector for this area, said JCM13 GREEN in a frustrated tone.

However, the government has no value for ECD practitioners, they just do whatever they want without considering how we feel, exclaimed KCM14 CREAM.

We are not getting the same treatment that the primary and high school teachers are getting, we are being undermined, echoed LCM15 NAVY-BLUE.

The above findings are in line with Ebrahim (2010) who is of the view that "the government viewed early care and education as the domain of parents" hence it (the government) does not offer much support to the ECD practitioners.

4.4.2. Theme 2: ECD Practitioners' perceptions of themselves as professionals

While the findings have exposed that experience and age lead to the feeling of professionalism in the sector, lack of professionalism has been noted from the findings, especially among less experienced practitioners. Furthermore, the findings have shown that the ECD practitioners have no job description. These processes are described below.

Question Asked: Do you feel that you are a professional?

4.4.2.1 Emerged sub-theme: Experience and age lead to the feeling of being a professional

The findings have revealed that most of the practitioners who experienced the feelings of being professionals are above the age of 30 and have many years of experience in the ECD sector working as practitioners. The feeling of being a professional was attributed to the number of years in the sector. Eight out of fifteen participants indicated that they felt like they were professionals.

> *What I can say is that it starts with you, the way you look at yourself and feel and how you present yourself. If you feel empowered and great about what you are holding, it will appear to people that you are a professional. With my level 5 qualification, it feels like a degree, for me. It's an honour…The community raises my standard when it's judging me and this makes me feel professional…I have 16 years of experience now. And I am 37 years old,* noted BCM2 MAROON.

P 3 ORANGE posited that:

> *I do feel I am a professional, but I know that there are other things that I must do like improving on my qualifications, but generally, I do feel that I am a professional…I have 20 years' experience in the sector and I am 46 years old.*

FP7 BLUE commented that:

> *Yes, I feel professional, because I have learned a lot about how to deal with a child cognitively, how to develop their (children's) minds. I am able in a classroom to help children, to teach them and manage them. That qualification makes me feel that I am a professional…I am 35 years old and have 6 years' experience.*

GCM10 SILVER was of the view that her long years' experience in the sector made her feel that she was a professional, as according to her:

> *The fact that I have produced a lot of students from this centre, makes me feel like a professional. I have 11 years' experience and I am 58 years old.*

HCM11 WHITE added that:

Because people don't understand what ECD is actually and then they see us as having degrees, especially in our centre they treat us as professional people…I have 15 years' experience now and I am 42 years old.

A lack of knowledge by the community generally, led to HCM11 WHITE to have a feeling of being a professional. According to her, the community regarded them as 'mini gods' in the education of their children. This led to the professionals feeling valued and professional.

IP12 PINK was noted as saying

I would like to think that I am a professional, because I try to incorporate the skills I have learned to do that in my day to daily activities in the classroom. I am pretty much professional in the way I deal with kids, not to get too attached to the extent that they think that I am their mother but at the same time caring for them… I am 24 years old and I have 2 years' experience in the ECD sector teaching young children.

JCM13 GREEN cited that:

Generally I would say I feel that I am a professional, I am qualified to do my job and I am trained for it; ....I have 20 years' experience this year and I am 42 years old.

I feel like a professional and I am grateful because the parents respect and love us too much and value our jobs as ECD practitioners in this neighbourhood…I am 74 year old and have 33 years' experience, according to KCM14 CREAM.

The above findings have shown that the qualifications that one hold, the experience and the way one is viewed and treated by other people generally contribute to the high level of feeling professional. The findings further indicate that one's salary did not necessarily lead to a feeling of being a professional as indicated in FP7 BLUE's case. She indicated that she felt professional, yet she was the lowest paid of all the practitioners with a monthly salary of R1000 00.

Question asked: What are your duties as an ECD practitioner?

4.4.2.2. Emerged sub-theme: Lack of job description

Fourteen out of fifteen participants indicated that they had no job description. Lloyd and Hallet (2010) agreed that ECD practitioners have diverse roles and responsibilities. ECD practitioners are expected to educate children, play with children, clean their work stations, clean or wash the children and some of them even prepare the children's meals. Unlike primary and high school teachers who have clearly spelt out job descriptions, ECD teachers have to improvise. FET teachers know each day that their duty is to teach Maths, and if they were employed to teach Maths, they are not bound to start being confused on whether to teach Maths or English or any other subject. ECD practitioners even do the administration work which includes collecting the school fees from parents, yet they are not trained finance officers. Some of the responses follow.

According to BCM2 MAROON*:*

I am a teacher, I open the centre each day, I clean and ensure that when parents and children come in the environment is welcoming and everything is ready.

CCM3 ORANGE said:

So as a practitioner we don't only do that, there are other things that we do, we teach them how to use the bathroom, we wash them, and we also feed them.

When asked the question DP4 LIME noted that:

It's teaching, sometimes it's administration, sometimes it's washing the children, playing with them and feeding them, cooking, washing dishes. Basically, I look after the children.

My duties include … playing with the kids, washing them when they mess on themselves, solve the children's problems, teach them language development and writing skills, added BP5 GOLD.

ECM6 BROWN was of the view that:

I make sure that when the teachers arrive everything is prepared for them, their classes have been cleaned, also that when the cook arrives everything is in order, everyday thus my job.

CP8 BLACK noted that:

We are expected to take care of children and ensure that the environment in the classroom is child friendly and it is also welcoming, I am also expected to also smile to parents and be full of love, the parents must feel the love in my classroom before the child feels the love. We are expected to give love and also to do our jobs…so basically we are doing many things at the same time; we feed the birth to two year olds, we wash the children when they are dirty after playing. We make sure that when they leave the centre they are always clean.

According to IP12 PINK:

This is a caring role as well as a teaching role. You make sure that their nose are well cleaned and not running in this winter.

JCM13 GREEN highlighted*:*

I help with cleaning and cooking at times. I am a teacher and a manager at the same time.

4.4.3. Theme 3: ECCE qualificatios.

The finding exposes that there are mixed feelings regarding the new policy, with the majority of the practitioners feeling that the policy is a good thing that was done by the government while others say its meaningless to them and in their context as ECD practitioners hold a level 5 qualification. These processes are described below.

Question asked: In your view, will the new policy add value to your career?

4.4.3.1 Emerged sub-theme: A meaningless policy

The findings reveal that some participants held the view that the new Policy on Minimum Requirements in Higher Education for ECD Teachers released in March

2017 was meaningless to them. They felt that there was no impact that the policy was going to bring in the ECD sector. Two out of fifteen participants felt that the policy was a meaningless policy in the life of an ECD practitioner and in the sector at large.

The researcher explained to them that the new policy had created the career paths in the ECD sector and that they were now able to advance and study for NQF level 6 and 7 in Higher Education Institutions. They however, maintained that the policy was meaningless to their lives. Below are the responses obtained from those two participants.

Having level 6 and 7 for us is meaningless if we are not going to be subsidised, suggested AP1 YELLOW.

ECM6 BROWN felt that:

Even if we go to study further, what are we, as ECD practitioners going to benefit…nothing.

Question asked: **Do you think the new policy will be of any significance to you as an ECD practitioner?**

4.4.3.2. Emerged sub-theme: Significance of the new policy
Thirteen out of fifteen participants felt that the new policy was of great significance in the lives of ECD practitioners. For many, this was the right step taken by the government towards the long awaited professionalisation of their sector. Fenech, Sumsion and Shepherd (2010) propose that professionalisation must encompass nationally consistent quality standards, quality rating system and a streamlining of regulation and accreditation mechanisms. This is the move that was just taken by the government through the release of the policy on minimum requirements for ECD teachers in March 2017. Van Leeuwen (2010) is of the view that policy strategies on the advancement of decent work for ECD workforces will be a consequence of professionalisation. The following were some of the responses gathered from the ECD practitioners.

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I honestly thank the government for that, it means we are not limited as ECD practitioners. We can now study further too just like in other professions, said BCM2 MAROON excitedly.

I think the policy is opening more doors for us as practitioners to improve our qualifications and also I think it will improve our lives as practitioners, added DP4 LIME.

BP5 GOLD said:

I think it's a good policy, as I am right now, I cannot say that I am a qualified teacher because I am underqualified to work in a primary or high school because of my NQF level 5 qualification. SO I think it's a good policy. It opens path for me to achieve my dream of becoming a professional teacher.

I think that it's an excellent thing, we cannot just be in one position, we also need to upgrade ourselves and further our studies so I think it's a good thing, (CP8 BLACK).

I think it will really help because teaching children without any knowledge is very dangerous... With the new policy we have the opportunity to study further. We also want to be like professors, said ACM9 RED smiling.

LCM15 NAVY-BLUE was of the view that:

This is a good move but only if the government can recognise us at our different levels and pay us according to the qualifications that each one of us holds.

The findings indicated that the practitioners are excited with the release of the new policy.

Question asked: Do you think the new policy is causing any form of uncertainty amongst the ECD practitioners? Explain.

4.4.3.3: Emerged sub-theme: Uncertainty

Seven out of the fifteen participants cited that as much as they were excited with the release of the new policy, it was however causing uncertainties in their life as ECD

practitioners. The government recently ordered that 5 year old children must go to Pre-Grade R in schools. This move will leave the ECD centres with less children which may force employers to retrench some of the practitioners. As a result of this move, the ECD practitioners felt uncertain as they were not sure on whether they were going to retain their jobs or not. More so, the old highly experienced practitioners were uncertain at the thought of being replaced by the young highly qualified practitioners, especially with the introduction of the new and high qualification which is a bachelor's degree. The data below were gathered in this respect.

Yes, I am panicking that I may lose my job at any time with these changes that are being implemented, cited AP1 YELLOW.

There are times when I feel that maybe I will wake up and be told that I am no longer meeting the minimum requirements to be an ECD practitioner and cannot be in front of the children, said BP5 GOLD showing signs of being frustrated.

ACM9 RED had mixed reactions on the aspect of uncertainty. She had the following response to say:

I am uncertain because I studied a long time ago and at one point I was told that my previous qualification was no longer valid, hence I had to study NQF level 5. On the other hand I think studying has lowered my uncertainty because I feel that I am better qualified and no longer panic that I will lose my job.

As an ECD practitioner, I am concerned about not only those children, but also about the centres remaining with less children which will result in practitioners losing job, said KCM14 CREAM showing a somehow concerned face.

4.4.4. Theme 4: Challenges currently faced by the ECD practitioners

The finding exposes that the ECD practitioners are faced with a lot of challenges in the sector. Such challenges include unfair working conditions and labour practices, large salary disparities and challenges that come with the compliance process application as noted from the findings. Following is a description of these sub-themes.

Question asked: Describe your current working conditions?

4.4.4.1: Emerged sub-theme: Unfair working conditions and labour practices

Fourteen out of fifteen practitioners were noted as being faced with unfair working conditions and labour practices. The findings revealed that the ECD practitioners work abnormally long hours. In most cases they start work at 6:00hours and close centres at 18:00hours or even worse when the last child is collected by the family. Furthermore, the ECD practitioners do not close for school holidays; they only close on public holidays and for the December holidays. They work throughout the year. Another point of concern was the fact that they do not get tea break or lunch times as is the situation in schools. They eat in front of the children while monitoring the children. This does not give them time to break, relax and reflect. Below are some of the responses from the practitioners in regard to their working conditions.

> *The working hours are also too long, we start work at 7:30 until 5pm,* AP1 YELLOW indicated.

> BCM2 MAROON added that*: I open at 6am and close at 6pm. I can't open at 8am because some parents want to drop their children as early as 6am when they are going to work ...We don't have the leave, we only close for December holidays and on public holidays.*

> *Sometimes we get these complaints from the parents, you don't know really what they want... I start work at 8am and I finish at 5pm, we don't have break times. We must eat while supervising the children, sometimes you are walking around with your cup of tea and children start fighting, then you have to stop eating and attend to them and before you know it break time is over,* said BP5 GOLD.

According to ECM6 BROWN:

> *Our working hours are too long … My problem is that the government is doing all these policies but doesn't involve us as practitioners, we are not even represented in the Parliament, and there is no minister who advocates for the ECD practitioners but they are taking a decision on our behalf.*

Here we work from 6am to 6pm, Monday to Friday. So I won't even have the time to study. We work long hours without over time, it's so discouraging, said FP7 BLUE.

As said by CP8 BLACK

We must always have our eyes open and be vigilant to observe children, so you understand that we must always be standing and going around.

We don't have break times or lunch, we are always with the children, indicated ACM9 RED.

As said by HCM11 WHITE that:

We don't have school holidays, we only close in December so you can imagine how tired we will be.

Question asked: How much is your monthly salary?

4.4.4.2: Emerged sub-theme: Large salary disparities

The outcomes of the study have exposed great disparities in earnings in the ECD sector, with one of the ECD practitioners earning as little as R1000 00 per month while the highest paid participant earning R15000 00 per month. The study also revealed that the majority of ECD practitioners are earning well below the government set minimum wage which currently stands at R3500 00 per month. The salaries vary from centre to centre and also from suburb to suburb, depending on the socio-economic status of the community. The custom in ECD with regard to remuneration is unlike in schools where teachers that hold the same qualifications and experience receive the same salaries. Low salaries dictate the low status the ECD practitioners have. In some instances, practitioners in the same centre earned different monthly salaries. One good example is in centre code named 'CB' where BCM2 MAROON and BP5 GOLD work. BCM2 MAROON earns R14000 00 per month while BP5 GOLD earns R3000 00 per month. The highest paid participant earned a monthly salary of R15000 00 per month, while the lowest paid earned R1000 00 per month. According to the findings, the centres that were situated in low density suburbs had their practitioners paid better

salaries as compared to practitioners working in high density suburbs. The findings are displayed on table 4.3.

From the findings, it is clear that most of the practitioners earn below the stipulated country's minimum wage which currently stands at R3500 00 per month. This was announced by the Deputy President, Cyril Ramaphosa on the 17th of February 2017. The findings further reveal that most of the practitioners in the high density suburbs earned a monthly salary of below R3000 00.

Table 4.3 Practitioners' monthly salaries

High density suburb		Low density suburb	
Participant code	Salary per month	Participant code	Salary per month
HCM11 WHITE	*R8000 00*	AP1 YELLOW	R3600 00
JCM13 GREEN	*R15000 00*	CP8 BLACK	R1500 00
BCM2 MAROON	R14000 00	ACM9 RED	R5400 00
BP5 GOLD	R3000 00	CCM3 ORANGE	R1500 00
		FP7 BLUE	R1000 00
		DP4 LIME	R1500 00
		GCM10 SILVER	R1500 00
		ECM6 BROWN	R1500 00
		IP12 PINK	R2200 00

		LCM15 NAVY-BLUE	R3000 00
		KCM14 CREAM	R10000.00

Question asked: **What challenges hinder the lawful operations of ECD centres?**

4.4.4.3: Emerged sub-theme: Challenges with Compliance.

The findings of the study reveal that the practitioner wished to run their centres lawfully. However, many centres were faced with the 'unrealistic' demands made by the Department of Social Development upon application for compliance. Such demands were difficult for them to meet. This resulted in some centres operating without registration which in turn compromises the health and safety of children. The findings also reveal a lack of dedication and willingness from the office bearers to assist the practitioners with any information.

Some practitioners indicated that they are often sent from pillar to post whenever they attempt to seek assistance from the government personnel in the Department of Social Development, Department of Education and the Department of Health. Three out of fifteen practitioners cited having been faced with the challenges during the compliance application process. Practitioners had the following to say.

Also compliance is a challenge because I have to improve the centre and it costs money, without money, I am not able to comply with the government requirements to run this centre legally, said DP4 LIME.

Complying with the government requirements is a headache…often we are sent from one office to the other with no assistance at all, revealed BCM2 MAROON.

According to JCM13 GREEN, A lot of schools are running and they are not registered. The staff are not registered.

4.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter presented data gathered during the study. It further discussed the findings of the study and presented the data that was analysed thematically. The findings revealed that there are a lot of deprofessionalising elements in the ECD sector. The following chapter is chapter 5, it gives a summary of the findings, the conclusion, recommendations and further research study related to the topic.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The professionalisation of the ECD sector is beginning to be advocated for, deliberated on and supported by many countries across the globe as the world realises that the child's right to basic education is also applicable to the children aged between birth to four years of age. More so, many countries are coming to realise the importance of ECD in ensuring that the children become lifelong learners, hence the need for a solid foundation by skilled, respected and recognised ECD practitioners. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of the ECD practitioners regarding the professionalisation of the ECD sector in the Gauteng Province of South Africa. This is the last chapter of the study. It provides the summary of the findings as it relays to the purpose and aims of the study, the conclusions, recommendations and provides with further research studies related to the topic.

In Chapter 1, I looked at the background of the study with the aim to introduce my research problem which is concerned with the perceptions of the ECD practitioners regarding the professionalisation of the ECD sector in the Gauteng Province of South Africa. It was my intention to investigate the perceptions of the ECD practitioners in order to gain a deeper understanding regarding the professionalisation of the ECD sector.

In Chapter 2, the researcher explored the literature surrounding the professionalisation of the ECD sector. The literature helped me to listen to the voices of the previous scholars on the professionalisation of the ECD sector which resulted in the shaping of my study as far as the professionalisation of the ECD sector is concerned. The literature review helped me frame my study around issues that characterise professionalisation or lack thereof in the ECD sector. I compared the ECD sector in South Africa with the ECD sector in some of the international countries as they are always leading in the changes that we, as South Africa later adopt in the ECD sector.

In Chapter 3, the researcher outlined the qualitative research methods for gathering my data. These methods comprised of the semi-structured interviews, observation and field notes. The researcher established ethical considerations and trustworthiness as regulating guidelines when interacting with participants.

In Chapter 4, the researcher analysed the data that the researcher gathered from the participants. Themes and sub-themes developed. The researcher used her understanding to interpret the data bearing in mind her research questions that had to be answered. Recommendations and conclusions that are to be discussed in chapter 5 emerged from the collected data.

5.2. Literature control

5.2.1 Comparing results to existing knowledge

Table 5.1 Comparing results to existing knowledge: Supportive Evidence.

Theme 1: Play based learning			
Sub-themes	**Author and Year**	**Existing knowledge**	**Interpretive discussion**
Practitioners as glorified babysitters.	**Cohen (2013)**	Views the ECD sector as the 'Cinderella' of the education system.	The ECD sector lacks status as it is viewed as an area of play only rather than a combination of play and learning or learning through play, especially during the first 1000 days on children's lives.
	Ortlipp *et al* (2011)	When the public is better informed about what ECD practitioners do, they will more likely see this as a professional practice and this will impact on how the	The public needs to be better informed about what ECD practitioners do and what ECD education entails, this

		ECD practitioners view themselves which will boost their confidence.	knowledge by the parents will have a positive impact on the ECD practitioners.
	Van Leeuwen (2015).	Many believe that ECD practitioners are basically child minders.	There is a general perspective that ECD practitioners are just child care givers instead of professionals in education and care of the little ones.
	Biersteker (2008)	"For young children, free, self-directed play is an integral part of early learning and healthy development. Play is widely understood to spark imagination, enhance creativity and problem-solving capacities, promote teamwork and instil empathy and compassion for others."	Play helps develop a child holistically and instil the most needed values that are needed in South Africa, especially in times like this where violent is rife. Only when parents understand the benefits of playing in ECD will they understand the responsibilities of ECD practitioners.
Lack of support from the government	**(Ebbeck & Yoke, 2011; Miller et al., 2012).**	There is often a lack of recognition of what early childhood educators know and do.	Recognition of any sector in any country must begin with the government. If the government does not recognise the ECD practitioners in any way, the public will also not recognise them.
	Policy on ECD (2014)	Professionalisation of the ECD sector is lacking in the national ECD system and this is a critical element of an effective	The national government is not recognising the ECD sector and lack of recognition leads to lack of support. It's a norm

		national ECD human resources strategy.	that one can't support what he doesn't recognise.
	Lloyd and Hallet (2010)	More emphasis has in the past years been given to the delivery of a prescribed early years' curriculum, of birth to four year olds, by practitioners, rather than to the status of the practitioners delivering and implementing that curriculum.	This implies that the government expects the ECD practitioners to deliver a high standard of education and care in the ECD centres while the practitioners' need are not being catered for in the sense that the government does not care about the status and working condition of the ECD practitioners.
	Lloyd and Hallet (2010)	Practitioners tend to begin their practice poorly as there is not enough support given to them because of lack of professionalisation of the ECD sector.	The lack of support to establish the ECD practioners as a professionals by the government led to poor delivery of services by the practitioners.
	Leeuwen (2015)	Lack of adequate support given to the ECD practitioners by authorities has left ECD practitioners feeling dissatisfied.	ECD practitioners are not receiving support from authorities and this affects their self-esteem leading to low quality.

	Ashley-Cooper; Atmore, & Van Niekerk, (2012)	ECD must be an immediate priority for the South African government because ECD children deserve nothing less.	The government needs to begin to prioritise the ECD sector the same way it gives priority to other sectors in education as this will result in children's right to basic quality rights being met.
Theme 2: Early Childhood Development practitioners' perceptions of themselves as professionals			
Experience and age leads to the feeling of being a professional.	**Feza (2013)**	Practitioner experience indicates commitment and stability regardless of their low salaries and low status. The age distribution of practitioners between the age of 20 years and 59 years is an indication that ECD attracts women of different ages and has potential for career path.	Experience and age leads to a feeling of professionalism.

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	Berk (1985)	ECD practitioners' levels of training, education and experience are positively linked to teacher behaviours in the classroom.	The way practitioners manage their classrooms is linked with their experiences and qualifications and how they carry themselves among other personnel.
Lack of job description.	**Miller (2008b:266)**	"The diverse roles and responsibilities of the ECD practitioners, the variety of settings they work in, and lack of a professional registration body and formal pay structures make it difficult to agree what constitutes an ECD professional"	ECD practitioners have no job descriptions like other personnel in the education sector. The nature of their jobs demand that they be multi-tasked resulting in difficulty in setting the professional measurements.
	Lloyd and Hallet (2010)	There is an absence of an established job title in the ECD sector which clearly identified the role and nature of these diverse ECD practitioners.	The ECD practitioners do not know their real roles, unlike in schools where a teacher knows clearly that they are Mathematics or English teacher and they are specialists of their subject matter. ECD practitioners are neither specialised in educating children nor caring for them.

	Liddle (2006)	An ECD practitioner is the same as being a parent, and is aware of the need to promote the status and training of the workforce.	ECD practitioners are expected to play the role of parents and this poses a challenge to the professionalisation of the sector as generally there is no standardised way of parenting. Each parent decides on how to raise their children, hence the challenges in the ECD sector as far as professionalising the sector is concerned.
	Goodfellow (2008:21).	ECD practitioners' work is often undervalued and they are vulnerable to being exploited due to the perception that their role is equivalent to 'mothering'.	ECD practitioners are mostly women and this has led to the general perceptions by the public that their roles are to care for children. Moreover, in Africa, women are associated with the role of bringing up children and caring for them. This results in a challenge as far as to what professionalism means in ECD.
Theme 3: ECCE qualifications			
A meaningless policy.	McGillivray (2008)	There is a risk of workforce reform policy being imposed on the workforce without their approval or agreement (despite opportunities for consultation) and for	ECD practitioners are expected to implement the policies that they were not asked to partake in their development, this results in practitioners not

		ideologies (those of the policy writers and implementers, compared with the workforce themselves) as to what kind of a workforce is needed to be in conflict with each other.	valuing the policies. It is a norm in life that if a person is part of the decision- making process, they are bound to feel motivated to implement any policy that they were involved in developing. However, imposing policies on ECD practitioners will result in them not valuing that particular policy.
	McGillivray (2008)	Tensions may arise if members of the workforce sense an imposition of training and qualification requirements, where their own preference is to remain unqualified and enjoy the challenges of their job without the pressure of study and training.	The result of imposing any decision on people always results in them rebelling against the system. More so, people may feel that they are dictated to and may not competently implement any policies that are being 'forced down their throats'. This may pose a threat of the practitioners choosing not to change, but rather remain as they are.
	Cochran-Smith and Zeichner (2005)	Policies that increase the educational attainment of preschool teachers are not likely to increase classroom quality without the practitioners.	Not all policies that advocate for practitioners to be highly qualified may result in improved teaching and learning outcomes.

	Nutbrown (2012).	Lack of professionalisation in the ECD sector might lead to ECD practitioners not seeing any significance to even attain the minimum qualifications as they consider their sector as one that already has a number of inbuilt barriers of poor working conditions and lack of career paths.	ECD practitioners may not be concerned about the policy on minimum requirements for ECD teachers as they are already struggling with undesired working condition in the sector which include among others, poor working environments. To them, it may be meaningless to obtain a degree and still go back to work in ECD centres that are mainly operated from the backyards especially in the townships. They may then choose to have their low qualifications matching with their poor working conditions.
Significance of the new policy.	**Moyo and Ndlovu (2012).**	Professionalisation of the ECD sector should be characterised by facilitated teaching and learning experiences that are transactional and designed to support the attainment of knowledge in practice.	Policy acts as a guide to the attainment of maximum result, therefore, policies are unavoidable in any field that is result oriented like the ECD sector that aims at laying a solid foundation in children's lives and producing lifelong learners.

	Mishra (2015)	Professionalisation of the ECD sector should allow for clear identification of objectives, present theory about knowledge and skills to be acquired, demonstrate and model, create opportunities to practice acquired skills in real life situations and give feedback to the practitioners: Such can be achieved when policies are implemented.	Policies enhance the shaping of the sector, they act as a guide and allow the personnel to determine between what leads to good results and what does not.
	Osgood (2006)	Professionalisation of the ECD sector could challenge policy and practice in a reflective way.	Policy is a starting point towards the professionalisation of the ECD sector and it calls for practice in the form of implementation which often results in high levels of professional identity in the ECD sector.
Uncertainty	**McGillivray (2008)**	"Uncertainty and ambiguity are inherent in the daily lives of early year's practitioners, not least resulting from a rapid pace of government-imposed change, but also arising from discourse that revealed the absence of	ECD practitioners are shadowed by uncertainty which is a result of the new policy on minimum requirements for the ECD teachers that currently does not allow the old experienced practitioners to enrol for

| | | an established job title that identifies who they are". | a degree qualification, the instruction by the government to have the five-year-olds moved from ECD centres to school, which to the ECD practitioners may lead to the drop in enrolment resulting in job loses, reliance on the money paid by parents for salaries, poor working environments that are not reliable under harsh weather conditions and many more factors that lead to uncertainty in the ECD sector. |
| | **Redmond (2015)** | "Uncertainty is associated with knowing what behaviours are expected of us or predicting our own actions". | ECD practitioners do not know what behaviours are expected of them due to lack of job description in the sector. Each day is a beginning of new duties to the practitioners. In addition, the ECD practitioners do not know how they will keep their jobs when the personnel that is trained at tertiary level finally are rolled out by the universities. Furthermore, they are not sure of whether or not the universities will agree to enrol them |

			basing on the Prior to Recognition Learning (RPL), or not, which will take into consideration their experience as ECD practitioners.
	Calabrese (1975)	Uncertainty involves having a number of possible alternative predictions or explanations.	ECD practitioners are currently not sure how exactly to keep their jobs as ECD practitioners; they are considering advancing their studies, but they are faced with challenges linked to funding and not qualifying to register for the degree qualification. They cannot quit their jobs as they are relying on the little they are earning as ECD practitioners to raise their children. They cannot stand the thought of waking up one day and finding themselves taking orders from young degreed personnel. They are thinking of a lot of options to survive in the sector at the same time.

| | Berger and Bradac (1982). | "Uncertainty reduction theory asserts that people have a need to reduce uncertainty about others or situations by acquiring more information. Information gained can then be used to predict others' behaviour. Uncertainty is presented as a process in which we consider multiple possibilities in trying to explain or predict something". | There is high level of uncertainty in the ECD sector which emanates from lack of adequate information that is disseminated to the practitioners regarding meeting for personal and professional development, how and where to get funding, and in some cases lack of knowledge on the new developments that are taking place in the sector. Moreover, there is a lack of support by the inspectors from any government department which leads poor monitoring of the ECD centres, resulting in each centre operating autonomously from the centres in the same township. |

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	McGillivray (2008)	"Uncertainty and ambiguity are inherent in the daily lives of early year's practitioners"	ECD practitioners are faced with a lot of uncertainties in the sector.
Theme 4: Challenges faced by the Early Childhood Development practitioners in general			
Unfair working conditions and labour practices.	**(Department of Basic Education, Department of Social Development and UNICEF, 2010).**	Some of the prominent challenges and obstacles facing the ECD sector include absence of learning materials and resources, especially within the classroom setting, minimal funding, lack of qualified teachers, inadequate security for children whilst at the ECD facility, as well as poor toilet amenities.	The ECD sector is under resourced, both materially and humanely. Practitioners are not well trained for the workload they are exposed to. The scarce resources pose a challenge in the attainment of the maximum learning and teaching outcomes. Children are exposed to unsafe environments which may be life-threatening, for example, uncovered swimming pools, open electric switches. All these could have been resolved and avoided if there was monitoring of the ECD centres for compliance regularly.

	Van Leeuwen (2015)	ECD is one of the insecure areas of precarious work where professionalisation of the sector is urgently needed.	Anxiousness and risky factors dominate the ECD sector. It is only through the professionalisation of the sector that the ECD workforce can be emancipated from the undesired factors.
	Biersteker (2008)	Noted the lack of defined career pathways and opportunities for ECD educators and practitioners, and that existing ECD programmes are neither producing the number, nor the kind of educators/ practitioners needed for the diverse ECD context.	The ECD sector lacks defined career paths, this is evident from the current situation in which the new policy on minimum qualifications for ECD teachers clearly fails to cater for the experienced ECD practitioners who do not hold matric certificates. The current trainings offered by mainly private institutions on NQF level 5, do not equip the practitioners for the conditions that are in the sector. More so, the country lacks the number of trained practitioners, hence the high teacher-learner ratios in the ECD centres and the underqualified personnel

			who are expected to flourish in the centres.
	Early and Winton (2001).	Some of the major challenges noted by the ECD practitioners relate to low salaries, lack of benefits, lack of a coordinated system of career paths, and few rewards for pursuing Higher Education.	ECD practitioners are faced with lack of benefits which may be in the form of being paid for the work done outside working hours, stipulated minimum wages and funding to further their studies.
	(Van Leeuwen, 2015).	Lack of common credentials and career paths, low pay, poor working conditions, long working hours and poor public perceptions of the work of ECD practitioners have led to high attrition rates and instabilities surrounding quality in the ECD sector.	Many 'good' ECD practitioners are leaving the sector as a result of inbuilt barriers in the ECD sector. Those who are remaining are faced with long, draining working hours to earn meagre salaries.

Large salary disparities	Ebbeck and Yoke (2011); Miller et al. (2012).	The work that early childhood educators do is commonly undervalued and underpaid.	ECD practitioners are paid salaries that are well below the acceptable and stipulated minimum wage which currently stands at R3500 00 in South Africa. This indicates how unappreciated this job is in the country. Moreover, ECD practitioners do not have standardised salary scales as is the situation in other sectors of education. Their salaries vary from centre to centre and employer to employer.
Challenges with compliance			More ECD practitioners who are managing the ECD centres do not have adequate resources to use for the compliance processes. Moreover, there is lack of compliance as far as progression in the training of ECD practitioners is concerned. ECD practitioners are made to believe that they can skip level 5 and go to level 6. This is an indication of lack of compliance, not only on the part of the

			practitioners but also on the part of service providers.

The literature confirms the findings of the study that there is an urgent need for the professionalisation of the ECD sector if the children's right to quality basic education is something to be upheld and promoted. There is congruency of literature and the findings concur that the children learn through play during the first 1000 days of their lives and parents lack understanding that play is a teaching method at this phase. The findings are further confirmed by the literature in that there is lack of support by the government in the ECD sector due to the fact that ECD is merely taken as a place of play rather than a place of both play and learning. The literature confirms that the ECD sector is one of the sectors that is clouded by a lot of challenges which should be addressed immediately to enhance the outcomes of children's learning. Furthermore, the literature endorses the view that the changes that have been recently implemented in the sector are causing uncertainty among the ECD practitioners. This may increase the challenges in the sector. Happy teachers produce happy learners, lifelong learners produce other lifelong learners. This should be kept in mind at the mention of the ECD sector among ECD specialists and policy planners and when discussions on investing in the ECD sector are done. Some of the findings of this study are not congruent to existing knowledge and they are noted in the following table.above

Table 5.2 *Comparing results to existing knowledge: Contradictory evidence*

Categories	Author and year	Existing knowledge	How does what I found contradict what is known.	Interpretive discussion
Theme 1: Play based learning.				
Practitioners as glorified babysitters.	Centre for Social Development Supporting	The CSD has collaborated with the community development	Parents attach less value to the ECD sector as compared to the primary and high school	There is an understanding by parents regarding the

	ECD practitioners: 20 August 2012: www.dgmt-community.co.za (Accessed on 23 September 2017)	members to support the ECD practitioners by means of moving around the country holding workshops for the practitioners.	education of their children.	responsibility of the ECD practitioners hence the collaboration with the CSD to support the ECD practitioners. This is a sign that parents understand the importance and value of ECD hence the support they offer to the practitioners by volunteering to work with CSD monitors.
Lack of support from the government	Centre for Social Development Supporting ECD practitioners: 20 August 2012: www.dgmt-community.co.za (Accessed on 23 September 2017)	"The Centre for Social Development (CSD) has been offering quality ECD practitioner training for the past 30 years across South Africa using the government allocated resources and government's development imperatives as	Educational interventions are aimed at primary and high school education with no investment made into the ECD sector which is the most important development phase in children's lives. Practitioners indicated that there is a lack of monitoring and support for the government and where the inspectors move around the centres, they are less	The CSD has been one of the wings used by the government to train, monitor and support the ECD sector in the country. It has in the past 30 years managed to train many ECD practitioners. There is

		reflected in key policy statements envisioning a people driven process of development that is based on the reduction of poverty and inequality and the creation of a socially just society…The monitoring and evaluation tool has been designed by CSD to profile the ECD sites as well as what is available in terms of infrastructure, resources, financial and managerial support."	informed of what exactly to look for in the centres. One of the participants indicated that one inspector was asking her: "What must I look for in this centre?"	adequate monitoring and supporting of practitioners taking place in the ECD centres by the Centre for Social Development.
Theme 2: Early Childhood Development practitioners' perceptions of themselves as professionals				
Experience and age lead to the feeling of being a professional.	David, C. (2015) www.davittcorporatepartners.com	"The deeper confidence is based on knowledge of one's abilities and comes from handling situations as they	The 'old' and highly experienced practitioners seemed to be having a feeling of professionalism, they were confident of what they were doing and seemed to know their	As people grow up, they experience different challenges in life which later become learned

| | Accessed on 23 September 2017. | occur in our lives…this means that both age and experience are relevant to our levels of confidence and professionalism". | jobs better and used to the varied tasks they were expected to do on a daily basis. They did not seem to be shaken by their poor working conditions. | lessons such that when they encounter the same later on in life they know exactly how to deal with those challenges and experiences. This will lead into a sense of confidence and professionalism. |
| | | | | Teachers now have a quality as they are able to have their voices heard. They now have rights which include among others, registering with SACE, choosing from a variety of teaching methods, joining unions to represent them. They since gained their quality. |

Lack of job description	www.work.chron.com/duties-earlychildhood-teacher. By Cynthia Measom. Accessed on 23 September 2017.	In general, the ECD practitioner has a duty to engage children in developmentally appropriate activities and look out for each child's well-being.	ECD practitioners have no job description; they do all jobs in the centres that encompass cleaning, playing with children, teaching and cooking among others.	The ECD practitioners have job descriptions, although consisting of a wide variety of duties, but they do have job descriptions. The ideal argument would therefore be on many responsibilities, rather than on not having job descriptions.
Theme 3: ECCE qualification.				
A meaningless policy.	Dalli and Urban (2008).	Professionalism is influenced by changes in policies that dictate practitioners' work.	ECD practitioners were of the view that they do not stand to gain anything from any policies in the sector, for example, the practitioners made it clear that with their current salaries, and they will not be able to enrol for the degree that is brought about by the new policy. To them that policy meant no change in their	Policies are an important aspect in the construction of professionalism in ECD sector. They inform practitioners on what to do and how to do it. Therefore, they cannot be done away with.

			deprofessionalised ECD sector.	
Significance of the new policy.	Centre for Social Development Supporting ECD practitioners: 20 August 2012: www.dgmt-community.co.za (Accessed on 23 September 2017).	South Africa has some of the most progressive ECD policies but there are no effective frameworks in place to promote ECD.	ECD practitioners were excited about the new policy on the Minimum requirements for ECD practitioners (2017), however, they did not realise that they were not beneficiaries of that policy and without funding they cannot afford enrolling for that degree qualification.	Policies must be coupled with implementation strategies and a supporting budget in order to yield results. Policies on their own cannot bring any positive change in the ECD sector.
Uncertainty	Cochran-Smith and Zeichner (2005)	Increasing the educational attainment of preschool teachers is unlikely to reduce uncertainty in the ECD sector.	ECD practitioners were uncertain of their jobs; they feared having their jobs taken away by the graduates that will soon be coming out of the universities holding a degree qualification. The also feared that they may find themselves being managed by high qualified less experiences personnel. More so, some feared that they would be a drop in the enrolment as the government moves the five-year-olds to the schools.	The education level of an individual does not necessarily guarantee uncertainty reduction in the ECD sector. People will always have something to be uncertain of even if they had to be given an opportunity to study and improve their qualifications.

Theme 4: Challenges faced by the ECD practitioners regarding the introduction of a new Higher Education qualification of B.Ed. in ECEC				
Unfair working conditions and labour practices	UNESCO (2006) www.unesdoc.unesco.org/ Strong Foundations – Early Childhood Care and Education. Accessed on 23 September 2017.	"Early childhood care and education is a holistic and multisectoral service. It places strong emphasis on developing the whole child-attending to his or her social, emotional, cognitive and physical needs – in order to establish a solid and broad foundation for lifelong learning and wellbeing. Care includes health, nutrition and hygiene in a warm, secure and nurturing environments; education includes stimulation, socialisation, guidance, participation, learning and	ECD practitioners worked mostly in unsafe working environments that did not promote a high level of learning and teaching, they worked long hours and were not paid for the hours worked of the normal working hours. There are no career paths in the sector. The centres are poorly resourced leading to poor implementation of programmes.	Each profession has its characteristics, so is the ECD sector. The nature of the ECD practitioner's job is that which includes education and care and it obviously will demand one to work long hours. For example, soldiers cannot be said to be exposed to unfair working conditions when sent to war, it is the nature of their job and fighting in war comes with being a soldier. Being an ECD practitioner includes bathing children

		developmental activities".		(hygiene) and teaching and therefore, doing such cannot be viewed as unfair working conditions or unfair labour practices as it is embodied in the profession. Unfairness of working conditions vary from job to job. It would be unethical for a doctor to be seen playing with a patient on sand, however, in ECD it would be viewed as part of learning.
Large salary disparities	Urban (2014)	"Considering the demand and supply where the economy is at equilibrium, minimum wage functions similarly to a price floor. Imposing a higher wage level than	ECD practitioners' salaries varied from centre to centre, sometimes even those in the same centre earned different salaries. Their salaries were entirely dependent on what the centre manager offered. Mostly, centre managers	People ought to be paid according to the level at which they perform. Hard working people cannot be paid equal salaries as 'lazy' people

		the equilibrium would disrupt the price mechanism, which means that the market will not be able to clear, seeing workers not being able to find work. As a result, non-price competition, such as workers' personal connection, experience or age would supersede the price competition, which makes it more difficult for unskilled and younger individuals to find work. This just means that a minimum wage policy will have side effects that can cause a lot of damage to the labour market".	paid themselves better salaries. There was lack of standardised salaries in the sector which resulted in most practitioners being exploited by employers and paid well below the R3 500 minimum wage set by the government.	as this will demotivate the hardworking ones. In the context of the ECD sector, centre managers have more responsibilities than practitioners and ought to earn a higher salary compared to practitioners.
Challenges with compliance	www.nda.org.z a/home/Early_ Childhood_De velopment.	The National Development Agency (NDA), in support of the Department of Social	Some of the ECD centres operated without registration, they indicated that they wish to operate legally but the requirements that were	The NDA in collaboration with the DSD are striving to help building the proper

	Accessed on the 23rd of September 2017.	Development (DSD) on provisioning of ECD services, focuses on ECD programmes that are not registered, those that are conditionally registered and are geographically located in poor communities. The NDA undertakes to commit to capacity building of ECD.	demanded from them were almost impossible for someone who operated from the backyard in a township to meet with. More so, they indicated that they did not have the funds to do the things needed for compliance. Most of the ECD centres were under-resourced.	structures that are conducive for teaching and learning in the ECD.

Findings of this study contradict the above literature which suggests that the government is doing something in support of the ECD sector. Findings initially indicated that there was lack of support from the government, however upon exploring literature, it was evident that there were projects throughout the country that were rolled out by the government in support of the ECD sector. Findings and literature further lack congruency when the findings reveal that parents lacked understanding of the responsibilities of the ECD practitioners; this view was opposed by the literature which revealed that there were collaborative activities between various stakeholders and the communities to support the ECD sector.

The literature further reveals that the discussion of unfair and fair working conditions depended on the nature of each job. The nature of the ECD practitioners' job is that of care and educating children, and care would mean ensuring that children are hygienically up to an acceptable level by cleaning their nose and changing their diapers. Therefore, professionalism would vary from sector to sector. The literature

further contradicts the findings of the study by noting that educational attainment of preschool teachers is unlikely to reduce uncertainty in the ECD sector (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005). In the next table, I outline the silences in data with an aim to exhibit the findings which the researcher expected from the literature, but did not find in data.

5.3. Discussion of findings: silences in data

The data are silent on a number of important issues which would enhance the professionalisation of the ECD sector and make it comparable to other sectors in education. These include among others the RPL use in the enrolment of a degree qualification by experienced practitioners. This could be because the practitioners are not aware that RPL could be used to accommodate them in the enrolment of the degree qualification. Furthermore, data are silent of on the establishment or movement of the ECD sector to be under one department entirely as a means to facilitate effectiveness and efficiency.

There is silence on what exactly would constitute an ECD practitioner considering the many tasks that the ECD practitioners are required to do. There is also silence on the minimum wage that an ECD practitioner who holds NQF level 5 qualification must earn per month. The Policy on Minimum Requirements for ECD Teachers (2017) does not put in place any strategies to reduce uncertainty in the ECD sector. There is silence on the possibilities of holding workshops to educate communities and parents on the importance of ECD, the relationship between playing and learning in children's first 1000 days and the responsibilities of ECD practitioners. There is silence on funding and hosting the annual ECD awards by the government to motivate ECD practitioners. Further silence is noted on providing ECD practitioners with support on a regular basis as is the situation in schools. There is silence on the publicising of the ECD sector to allow the government to have a say on the day-to-day operations of every ECD centre in South Africa. Nothing is mentioned on providing bigger spaces to build ECD centres in the country as what is done with primary and high schools.

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5.4 Comparing results to existing knowledge: new insights

ECD practitioners were annoyed by the government that does not consult with them before rolling out any policies that concerned them and the sector. Lack of adequate teaching and learning materials in ECD centres caused frustrations to the practitioners. Lack of standardised salaries resulted in disparities of salaries in the sector demotivated practitioners from giving their all. ECD practitioners were willing to advance their qualifications. Lack of support from the government, lack of quality and low status in the sector contributed to poor service delivery in the ECD programmes. Lack of parents' understanding of the responsibilities of ECD practitioners reduced the practitioners' quality. Lack of professionalisation of the ECD sector led to the ECD practitioners feeling unvalued in the building of lifelong citizens. Lack of supervision and monitoring and supporting of ECD sector resulted in the practitioners not teaching same topics at the same time. Poor working conditions and unfair labour practices resulted in ECD practitioners burning out before the year end which affected the quality of education rendered to children. Lack of career paths in the sector led to the feeling of uncertainty among the ECD practitioners.

It is evident that the ECD practitioners are frustrated by lack of professionalisation in the sector and they are longing for immediate professionalisation of the ECD sector. Practitioners dislike the fact that the new policy on minimum requirements for ECD teachers does not cater for them and to them this meant that the government does not value and recognise their hard work. They are also concerned with lack of standardisation in the salaries of the ECD practitioners and felt that this was opening doors for employers to exploit them with nobody coming to their rescue from being exploited.

5.5. Discussion of findings according to the themes

The summary of the findings is based on the data collected from the interviews and non-participant observation and field notes. The study noted the perceptions of the

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ECD practitioners regarding the professionalisation of the ECD sector in South Africa and these are summarised below using the themes that emerged from the data.

5.5.1 Play based learning

The study revealed that in the ECD sector parents lacked understanding regarding the responsibility of the ECD practitioners and the government was not supportive of the ECD sector. There were misconceptions that ECD phase was a place of play only where there was no learning at all. Participants were of the view that parents did not understand that play and learn strategies are related at this phase in children's lives. Parents lacked significant understanding that the concepts of playing and learning are infused during the first 1000 days of a child's life. Lack of support from the government could have been as a result that the government too shares the same view as parents regarding the ECD sector. 'Learning through play' is a teaching method in the ECD sector and parents ought to be educated on such issues. Lester and Russell (2008:9) posit that "play creates a brain that has increased flexibility and improved potential for learning later in life". Bodrova and Leong (2005) are of the view that children who engage in quality play during the first 1000 day of their lives are more likely to develop holistically.

ECD practitioners need to be communicative with parents and the government to be able to justify the benefits of play-based learning in the ECD. This will not only earn them support from parents, but it will also promote their quality and status. Once parents manage to understand the reasons behind play, they will view the ECD practitioners as professionals, rather than as nannies and child minders. Moreover, the government will start investing in the ECD sector as much as it invests in the primary and high schools. Eventually the change in the mind sets of both the parents and the government will lead to the professionalisation of the ECD sector.

5.5.2. Early Childhood Development practitioners' perceptions of themselves as professionals

The study reveals that most of the ECD practitioners who felt that they were professionals had above five years' experience in the sector as ECD practitioners and

they were mostly above the age of 30. This indicates that age and the feeling of professionalism are highly related. This is a result of one's experiences in handling different situations in the sector. The study further revealed that there was a lack of quality among the ECD practitioners in the sector. This was due to inbuilt challenges faced by practitioners which included low salaries which were worsened by high disparities; the fact that they were looked down upon is a result of the general public assuming that being an ECD practitioner is a job that can be done by any person regardless of their qualifications. Furthermore, the ECD practitioners were 'jacks-of-all trade' in the centres. Their duties ranged from cleaning to teaching; they did basically everything. In some instances, the practitioners were changing diapers and washing the children. What was even worrying was the fact that the ECD practitioners had no assistants in their classes; this posed a challenge on the safety of children as sometimes children had to be left unattended while the practitioners are changing children's diapers. Lloyd and Hallet (2010) echo that there is an absence in the ECD sector of an established job title which clearly identifies the role and nature of these diverse ECD practitioners. ECD practitioners were vulnerable to exploitation as they were seen as 'mothers' rather than professionals.

5.5.3 ECCE qualifications

Policies must be backed by resources for them to bring desired results. In the ECD sector, the New Policy on Minimum Requirements for ECD teachers has no resources allocated to it, hence the view by many participants that it was a meaningless policy for them. One of the main challenges in the ECD sector is lack of career paths which the new policy has not addressed as far as the old and experienced practitioners' career paths are concerned. However, some practitioners still felt that the new policy had a significance to them as it is a starting point for professionalising the ECD sector in South Africa.

The study reveals that there was uncertainty in the ECD sector. ECD practitioners were uncertain on whether they would still be allowed to practise as ECD practitioners due to the new policy that was rolled out which did not cater for them as far as the career paths were concerned. The practitioners are worried that the young, newly and highly qualified degree holders who will soon be leaving the universities may take their

jobs. There was also uncertainty surrounding the fact that the old and experienced practitioners might find themselves reporting to the young and highly qualified practitioners. The practitioners indicated that they were willing to further their studies, however, funding was a challenge to them as most of them earned salaries that were below the minimum wage set out by the government. The uncertainty was further deepened by fears of drops in the number of enrolled children in the centres as the government recently ordered that the five-year-olds to be moved to the schools. This would mean some practitioners would find themselves unemployed.

5.5.4 Challenges faced by the Early Childhood Development practitioners in general

ECD practitioners were exposed to unfair working conditions which made their jobs less enjoyable when coupled with unfair labour practices. Practitioners indicated that they were poorly paid, they had no school holidays as is the situation in the primary and high schools in South Africa where schools are closed quarterly. The environments that the ECD practitioners work in are unhealthy as most of the centres are poorly resourced and operating in the backyards of residential houses. ECD practitioners worked long hours and were not getting paid for hours worked outside normal working hours. They had no time for personal and professional development. ECD practitioners were under pressure from the general public which expected them to lay a solid foundation in children's lives, yet nobody cared about the conditions they were working under.

Most centre managers indicated that they were unlicensed to operate as they had challenges with the requirements needed in order to comply which to them required money they did not have. They indicated that they wished to operate legally but the 'unrealistic' requirements made it difficult for them. Moreover, a handful of practitioners were registered with SACE. Some either did not know what SACE was while some did not see the benefits of complying with the rules and regulations of registering with the board if one was working with children.

5.6 Answering the research questions

In this section I answered the research questions starting with the secondary research questions and ending with the primary research question with the aim of highlighting the perceptions of ECD practitioners regarding the professionalisation of the ECD sector in the Gauteng Province of South Africa.

5.6.1 How do Early Childhood Development practitioners perceive professionalisation of the ECD sector?

The findings revealed that parents viewed ECD practitioners as child minders. According to the findings, parents held the perceptions that play and learn was not related in the ECD sector. They (parents) were of the view that ECD practitioners are did not need any qualifications to teach the birth to four-year-olds.

The respondents felt that even the community that they serve does not understand ECD; they think that they just feed children and send them to sleeping only, they do not understand that children are taught in ECD centres. ECD teachers are viewed as babysitters.

Furthermore, the findings reveal that there was a massive lack of support from the government. Some practitioners cited that the information was not passed on to them on time; they were no inspectors who moved around the ECD centres to support them. The ECD teachers proposed that government has a role to play and should assist in this regard

5.6.2 Do you perceive yourself as a professional?

The findings reveal that the feeling of being a professional had nothing to do with the salary one earns. However, it was noted from the data that age and experience led to a feeling of being a professional.

Teachers were of the view that their long years' experience in the sector made them feel that they were a professional, according to them. The findings further reveal that there was a lack of job description in the ECD sector. The general perception was that society looks down at the ECD teachers and thinks they are just there to do dishes, change diapers and look after the children instead of recognising the crucial

educational role they had to play. Children had to be prepared to be able to cope in the primary school and certain skills had to be taught to strengthen their foundation.

5.6.3 What are the challenges faced by ECD practitioners regarding the introduction of a new higher qualification of B.Ed. in ECEC?

ECD practitioners indicated their fears that emanated from uncertainty and could lead to unemployment in the ECD sector. They indicated that there was panic in the sector as they were not sure of the next step to be taken by the government once there were degreed ECD personnel released to the sector. When asked the question above, the ECD practitioners reported that they were willing to further their studies, yet funding was a problem. The fear was also expressed that due to their poor academic qualifications their jobs might be at risk. When asked what their views were on the new policy, the ECD practitioners showed mixed reactions. Some said that it was a meaningless policy while some noted that the policy was of great significance in the sector. There was also a fear that the numbers of the school would drop which put the school at risk.

5.6.4 What challenges do ECD practitioners currently face with regards to their professionalisation?

The findings revealed that ECD practitioners worked long hours, and had no school holidays. In general, the sector was clouded by unfair working conditions and labour practices. The teachers complained about the fact that they did not have breaks and had to work from morning to closing time. They even had to be at school on public holidays which was quite exhausting as they had only a few days which could be used for leave.

The findings also revealed that there were large salary disparities in the ECD sector. This was evident from the salary differences between FP7 BLUE's salary and JCM13 GREEN's salary. Furthermore, the findings indicated that there were practitioners who were running unregistered centres. They attributed this to the 'unreasonable' requirements required by the Department of Social Development when they tried to have their centres registered.

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5.7. Contribution of the study to the knowledge domain

The study has the following contributions to the study of the knowledge in the ECD sector. Firstly, the study has revealed that the quality of the ECD practitioners has an impact on the achievement of the learning outcomes for children. Secondly, the study has revealed the importance of hearing the voice of the practitioners prior to rolling out of policies as they are the people who are obligated with the implementation of the ECD policies in the centres. Furthermore, the study has revealed that while improvement is inevitable, such improvements should be carefully introduced to avoid uncertainty in the ECD sector. The study shows the challenges faced by the ECD practitioners in the ECD sector due to the sector having being managed by several departments, whereas it could have been a different issue could the sector have been managed by one department in totality.

The study revealed that there is lack of support by the government in the ECD sector. The study also revealed that there are large salary disparities in the ECD sector and standardisation of salaries would alleviate the challenge. More so, the study revealed the urgent need for the professionalisation of the ECD sector.

5.8. Recommendations for promoting professionalisation in the Early Childhood Development sector.

This study focused of gaining a better understanding to the perceptions of the ECD practitioners regarding the professionalisation of the ECD sector. The findings reveal a lack of professionalisation in the ECD sector which was evident from lack of quality of ECD practitioners, low status, lack of career paths, poor working conditions and unfair labour practices, lack of recognition and support from the parents, general public and the government which resulted in high level of uncertainty on the part of the ECD practitioners. The following recommendations can be made based on the literature and the data that were gathered.

- The government should have strategies aimed at professionalising the ECD sector;
- ECD must be moved to the Department of Basic Education;

- Experienced ECD practitioners should be given an opportunity to enrol for a degree qualification using the Recognition of Prior Learning;
- Universities should introduce online tuitions via distance education programmes;
- Government should set up mobile apps with knowledge and practice standards;
- ECD practitioners should affiliate themselves to trade unions for ECD teachers;
- ECD practitioners' salaries should be standardised;
- The government should host the Annual Awards for ECD practitioners at its expense as is done in the primary and high schools;
- Government should be afforded the authority to have a say on the day-to-day running of the ECD centres;
- Standardised salaries for ECD practitioners should be a priority;
- ECD practitioners should be awarded bursaries to enrol in universities;
- The government should roll out a campaign to inform the general public of the importance and responsibilities of the ECD practitioners;
- ECD practitioners and the ECD centres to be monitored, supported and evaluated on a regular basis.
- All practitioners working with children should be registered with SACE regardless of the qualification they hold;
- All ECD practitioners should hold a minimum qualification if they wish to remain practising by 2020;
- There must be relaxation in the bylaws to assist ECD centres to be all registers at municipal levels in South Africa; and
- The number of years must be reconsidered that it takes for one to get a first degree in the ECD sector as this is the equal number of years it takes for one to become a medical doctor. This will still not change the under resourcefulness in the ECD sector as one will prefer studying for 7 years and become a medical doctor than study for 7 years and graduate with a first degree.

5.9 Further study

Even though this study provided valuable acumen into the perceptions of the ECD practitioners regarding the professionalisation of the ECD sector in the Gauteng Province of South Africa, it was with some limitations. Thus further research on the following is recommended:

- Creating support structures for ECD practitioners;
- Exploring the consequences of the professionalisation of the ECD sector; and
- What constitutes to a professional in the ECD sector.

5.10 Limitations of the study

- Researcher's own bias;
- Time restraints influenced the enactment of the study; and
- The study was carried out in one province of South Africa, namely Gauteng. The findings can therefore not be generalised. However, the finding can be transferred to alike cases as the researcher has given a comprehensive explanation of the research sites and research process (Seale, 1999).

5.11 Conclusion

This study focused on listening to the voices of people at the foundation of creating lifelong learners that will contribute to the nation building in a positive way. These people are the ECD practitioners. This aspect was achieved by exploring the perceptions of ECD practitioners regarding the professionalisation of the ECD sector in the Gauteng Province of South Africa. The silences in the data and the new insights discovered contributed to the literature that is concerned with the professionalisation of the ECD sector by providing research based evidence on the views of the ECD practitioners regarding the professionalisation of their sector. Uncertainty

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Appendices

May 2017

Dear Sir/Madam

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH PROJECT

My name is Gugulethu Ncube. I am a Master's degree student at the University of Pretoria. I am conducting a research and the title of my research study is: Perceptions of Early Childhood Development practitioners regarding professionalisation. The purpose of my study is to explore the perceptions of ECD practitioners regarding professionalisation of the ECD sector.

I would like to invite you to become part of this research project. Kindly allow me to explain the scope and responsibility of your participation, should you decide to do so. I intend to gather the information I require for this research project through interviewing you as the ECD practitioner who has been in the ECD sector for 2 or more years, currently teaching children aged between 0-4 years old and holds ECD NQF Level 5 qualification. I have attached a copy of the semi-structured interview schedule to be used during the interview and observation processes to this letter for your information.

The aim of this research is not to pass any judgement on your centre or you, but rather to hear your voice as the ECD practitioner since you are the one on the 'ground'; provide recommendations for policy-makers, professionals and experts to offer solutions to close the gaps in the ECD sector as far as the professionalisation of the sector is concerned.

I would like to emphasize that your participation in this research project is entirely voluntary and that you are free to withdraw from the study at any time after you have decided to be part of it. Please be assured that the information obtained from this study

will be treated with confidentiality. No third party will have access to the raw data obtained during the interview sessions. In addition, the name of your ECD centre and your name as the participant will not be mentioned or be allowed to be identified by any manner or means whatsoever during the research process or in the final research report.

For you and the other participants to be comfortable about the information given, the data transcripts will be provided for you to confirm their accuracy and truthfulness before conclusions are drawn from the findings of the data. At the end of the project you will be given a copy of the research report which will reflect the findings and recommendations related to the professionalisation of the ECD sector in South Africa. This research study presents a unique opportunity for you to become involved in the process of research aimed at exploring and improving South African ECD sector.

I cordially invite you to be part of this research as it is aimed at improving the professionalization of the ECD sector in South Africa. I am hereby requesting for your permission to have you as a participant in this study. If you choose to participate in the project, kindly complete the consent form at the end of this letter.

You may contact myself or my supervisor using the attached details before or during the study should you need any clarification on the study. I look forward to receiving a positive response to my invitation.

Yours faithfully

_____ Email: gncube21@yahoo.com Cell: 079 9356 761
Researcher: Gugulethu Ncube.

_____   Email: Keshni.Bipath@up.ac.za
Supervisor: Dr Keshni Bipath.

_____

CONSENT FORM

Voluntary participation in Master's degree research project – University of Pretoria

I, _____, the ECD practitioner/ centre manager of _____ECD centre, situated at _____, agree to participate in this research project. I understand that my participation in this research is dependent entirely on my free will.

I affirm that I understand the aim, purpose, and methods of data collection of this study and that I am at liberty to withdraw my participation at any stage of the research project - as explained to me by Miss Gugulethu Ncube, the student researcher.

_____   _____

Participant's name and signature   Date

May 2017

Dear Sir/Madam

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH STUDY IN YOUR ECD CENTRE.

My name is Gugulethu Ncube. I am presently studying at the University of Pretoria, South Africa, towards my Master's Degree in Early Childhood Education. I am doing a study entitled **Perceptions of Early Childhood Development practitioners regarding professionalisation.** The purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions of ECD practitioners regarding professionalisation of the ECD sector in South Africa. With your permission, I would like to include ECD practitioner(s) from your ECD centre in this study. Teachers from your ECD centre will be selected based on pre-determined criteria which is as follows:

- Participants must be ECD practitioners teaching children aged between 0 and 4 years old.
- Participants must be working in any (private, rural or public ECD centre) ECD centre at the time of the study for a period of 2 or more years.
- Participants must be holders of ECD level 5 qualification.
- Participants must be working within the Johannesburg region.
- Participants must be able to read and comprehend English.
- Participants must have obtained their ECD NQF Level 5 qualification.

The information in this letter is provided for you to make an informed decision if you would want ECD practitioner(s) from your ECD centre to be part of the study or not. Please be assured that their participation is voluntary and they can withdraw from the study at any stage without any consequences. Practitioners' identities will not be disclosed and pseudonyms will be used to identify participants. I can assure you that all personal information will be kept confidential. If you agree to my request, may you kindly sign the attached consent form.

Should you have any questions, you may contact myself or my supervisor using the details below before or during the study. I look forward to receiving a positive response to my invitation.

Yours faithfully

_____ Email: gncube21@yahoo.com Cell: 079 9356 761
Researcher: Gugulethu Ncube.

_____   Email: Keshni.Bipath@up.ac.za
Supervisor: Dr Keshni Bipath.

Letter of Consent

Please sign this letter of consent to indicate that you fully understand the nature, purpose and procedures that will be followed during the research and you give me permission to conduct research in your centre. A copy of this letter of consent will be given to you.

1. I give my permission to allow ECD practitioners from my ECD centre to participate in the above mentioned research study and in individual semi-structured interviews.
2. I authorise the researcher to do research and collect data in my ECD centre, including field notes, interviews and non-participatory observation.
3. I understand that the researcher will adhere to the ethical research principles of:
   a. voluntary participation, i.e. practitioners from my ECD centre may participate voluntarily and can withdraw at any stage;
   b. informed consent, i.e. my decision to allow practitioners from my ECD centre to participate was based on information provided by the researcher;
   c. privacy, i.e. the anonymity and confidentiality of the participation of ECD centres and participating ECD practitioners.

_____   _____

Head teacher / ECD centre's signature   Date

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Semi-structured face-to-face interview schedule

Purpose and instruction

I indicated to you that I am conducting a study on the perceptions of early childhood practitioners regarding professionalisation. I would like to restate that the aim of this interview is to know your opinions and experiences of professionalisation of the ECD sector. The information obtained will only be used for the research purposes and your name will not be disclosed to any third party. The data will be revealed in my dissertation and or future publications. Would you like to ask any questions before we proceed with the interview? May I audio-record the interview, as I will use the recording at a later stage to transcribe the interview.

Interview questions

1. In your view, what do you think parents see as being your job in the centre?
2. What kind of support do you expect directly from the government?
3. Do you feel that you are a professional?
4. What are your duties as an ECD practitioner?
5. In your view, will the new policy add value to your career?
6. Do you think the new policy is causing any uncertainty amongst ECD practitioners?
7. Describe your working conditions.
8. How much is your monthly salary?
9. What challenges, in your view, hinder the lawful operations of the ECD centres?

Dr David Makhado
Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management.
Department of Basic Education

AND

Ntheki Kgukutli
Director: Restorative Services and Services to Children
Department of Social Development

August 2017

Dear Sir/Madam

Request for permission to conduct a research study in the ECD centres within the Johannesburg, Gauteng

As a Master's student in Early Childhood Education at the University of Pretoria, I am required to do research on my topic of interest. I am concerned about the **Perceptions of the ECD practitioners regarding the professionalisation**. My interest is specifically in practitioners who are teaching children aged between the ages 0-4 years. It is essential to understand the perceptions of the ECD practitioners regarding the professionalization of the sector as they are the personnel directly affected by the introduction of the new and higher qualification which will soon be rolled out by the universities. More so, these are the people who have been caught for long in a sector that previously had no career path.

I would like to ask for permission to conduct research in centres in Johannesburg, Gauteng. 15 participants will be conveniently selected from the ECD centres. The following criteria will guide the sampling

- Participants must be ECD practitioners teaching children aged between 0 and 4 years old.

- Participants must be working in any (private, rural or public ECD centre) ECD centre at the time of the study for a period of 2 or more years.

- Participants must be holders of ECD level 5 qualification.

- Participants must be working within the Johannesburg region.
- Participants must be able to read and comprehend English.

I would like to interview the participants with an aim to have a deeper understanding of their perceptions on the professionalization of the sector and to obtain information that could possibly assist me in answering my research questions. The interviews will be conducted at the ECD centres as this is the most convenient location for practitioners. I will request that practitioners, who are willing to participate, answer questions in a semi-structured interview session which is based on their opinion. This therefore means that there is no correct or incorrect answers. The duration of the interview process will not last longer than 45 minutes for each interview. I will also ask for permission to observe and record the non-verbal cues displayed by the practitioners during the interview sessions.

This research study is conducted under the guidelines as stipulated by the Code of Ethics for Research by the University of Pretoria. Throughout the process of this study, the researcher will ensure that all participants involved in the study will be protected ethically and thus will be implementing ethical responsibility. This involves ensuring that no participants are exposed to any harm. Practitioners will choose to participate on a voluntary basis and all participant's identities will not be disclosed as they will be given a code for the use throughout the research study to ensure that their names are not used. In this way, confidentiality and anonymity is ensured. All information will be kept confidential and the data obtained through this study will be handled solely by the researcher. Throughout this process the participant's privacy and dignity will be respected. At any time during the research study, the participant may withdraw from the process without any penalties. All participants will be requested to sign a letter stating that they provide informed consent and acknowledge their rights and the expectations as participant.

Proposed procedure for data collection

Date	Procedure	Duration
Week 1	Meeting participants	1 hour
Week 2- week 3	Scheduled interview with teachers	45 minutes per interview

Should you need any additional information, please contact my research supervisor,
Dr Keshni Bipath on 0124203663 or via her email: keshni.bipath@up.ac.za

Yours sincerely   Email: gncube21@yahoo.com

Faculty of Education
Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
Lefapha la Thuto

Miss Gugulethu Ncube   Contact number: 0748293247 / 0799356761.

Faculty of Education

Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
Lefapha la Thuto

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

GAUTENG PROVINCE
EDUCATION
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Enquiries: Tshabalala Faith
Directorate: Education Research and Knowledge Management
Contact: 011 355 0498
Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za

TO: **Miss Gugulethu Ncube**

FROM: **Dr David Makhado**
Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management

DATE: **22 September 2017**

SUBJECT: **Request for permission to conduct a research study in the Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres within the Johannesburg, Gauteng**

Dear Ms Ncube

Kindly note that it is not a requirement for researchers to get a Research Approval letter from the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) when conducting research in Early Childhood Development centers. The researcher has to however, negotiate with the management of the center when he/she will require access into such institutions.

The Education Research and Knowledge Management Directorate (ER & KM) therefore only grants Research Approval letters to conduct research to Institutions within GDE schools/premises.

I trust that you will find the above in order.

Yours Faithfully

Dr David Makhado
Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management
Date: 2017/09/22

Faculty of Education
Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
Lefapha la Thuto

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

RE: REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Thursday, 10 August, 2017 17:49

From:

"KgukutliNtheki (GPWEL)" <Ntheki.Kgukutli@gauteng.gov.za>

To:

"G.W. Ncube" <gncube21@yahoo.com>

Raw message Printable View

Good day Gugu,

Thank you for the call and documents attachments. As per our telephonic discussion, DSD does not have jurisdiction regarding the operation of the ECD centers. They are autonomous in terms of their service. We are only involved through monitoring for compliance based on their registration.

We are therefore not unable to grant permission to conduct the study due reasons indicated above.

With Kind Regards,

Ntheki Kgukutli
Directorate: Restorative Services and Services to Children
Department of Social Development
Tel: (011)355 7846/ cell 082 336 3123   Fax:086 421 6745
Email:Ntheki.Kgukutli@gauteng.gov.za

Faculty of Education

Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
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Dr C.G.A. SMITH

Ph.D. (English)

Language practitioner: editing and proofreading

Cell: 0727661428

This is to certify that the following document has been language edited:

PERCEPTIONS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT PRACTITIONERS REGARDING PROFESSIONALISATION

Author: by

GUGULETHU NCUBE

Post graduate document: Dissertation

Date of this statement: 8 November 2017

Smithega