

**The role of toy libraries in the provision of  
play-based learning opportunities for young children**

**M STACH  
2017**

# THE ROLE OF TOY LIBRARIES IN THE PROVISION OF PLAY-BASED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

by

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

**PHILOSOPHIAE DOCTOR**

In

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Department of Education

University of Pretoria

South Africa

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November 2017

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# Dedication

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I dedicate this work to  
My mother and father

My husband  
Cedric Stach

My children  
Cenique, Moniece, Chantelise

and my grandchildren

*“As I sit working on my thesis, typing away as the winter sun creeps across my desk, I pause for a moment to attend to WhatsApp messages coming from my two daughters. Each sharing something in relation to their newly discovered pregnancies and my inevitable role as grandmother within the next six to seven months. As if in an instant my thesis takes on a completely new meaning. My grandchildren will soon be part of this world, this ever changing world and the early childhood development settings in South Africa. I have to admit, up until this point completing my PhD was both exciting and frustrating. Exciting because of all the knowledge gathering and learning. Frustrating because the journey was so hard. Throughout the goal was to complete. But it became personally significant when I started thinking about the two new arrivals we would soon be welcoming into the Stach family. What an exciting world awaits them! Fast changing, infused with issues of technology advances and globalisation, all requiring solutions. I cannot help but reflect on how I have had to embrace technology over the past 10 years.*

*Having proudly “ignored” it and only sending my first e-mail 10 years ago, purchasing a cell phone 5 years ago, realising Google is my best friend around 4 years ago and nervously trying to figure out the world of tweeting and suspiciously joining the Facebook era a mere 6 months ago. Instagram, WeChat and Spotify I am yet to master. Suddenly it became imperative that this PhD should contribute to changing how the South African education sector viewed early learning and toy libraries. That early childhood in South Africa cannot take decades to become enthusiastic about play-based early learning pedagogy. That learning would include both subject-specific knowledge and a range of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. The question I contemplated continuously throughout this journey is: how do we prepare today’s children (including my grandchildren) for tomorrow’s fast-changing world? Of course I know the answer: we encourage ourselves and them to join a toy library and to play.”*

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Lastly, but certainly the most significant is God, my heavenly father. During this journey I lost my mother, recovered from an armed robbery and stolen laptop, underwent an emergency operation, followed by two of my children also undergoing operations within the space of three months, the theft of our car, the weddings of two of my daughters and two pregnancy announcements six weeks apart, a dream overseas holiday and an inexplicable calm amidst all of the storms that raged around me. Lord, your presence was always tangible, your Holy Spirit a reality and my faith in you – unwavering. I have to praise you and tell the whole world: “I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength” (Philippians 4:13).

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# Abbreviations and Acronyms

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ALL-SA .....	Active Learning Libraries South Africa
CAPS .....	Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement for Foundation Phase Gr R-3
COTLASA .....	Cotlands Toy Library Association of South Africa
UNCRC .....	United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child
DAC .....	Department of Arts and Culture
DAP .....	Developmentally Appropriate Practice
DBE .....	Department of Basic Education (South Africa)
DEEWR.....	Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations for the Council of Australian Governments
DFE .....	Department for Education (United Kingdom)
DFESTA .....	Department for Education: Standards and Testing Agency (United Kingdom)
DSD .....	Department of Social Development (South Africa)
ECD .....	Early Childhood Development
ECE .....	Early Childhood Education
ELOM .....	Early Learning Outcomes Measure
ELDA .....	Early Learning Development Areas
ETL .....	European Toy Libraries Group
EYFS .....	Early Years Foundation Stage
FQSTL .....	Framework of Quality Standards for Toy Libraries
GNI .....	Gross National Income
IPA .....	International Play Association
ITLA .....	International Toy Library Association
LAMI .....	Low- and middle-income countries
NCF .....	The South African National Curriculum Framework for Children from Birth to Four
NIECDP .....	National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy
OECD .....	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SATLLA .....	South African Toy and Leisure Libraries Association
TLA .....	Toy Libraries Australia
TLASA .....	Toy Library Association of South Africa
USATLA .....	United States of America Toy Library Association
WEF .....	World Economic Forum
ZDP .....	Zone of proximal development

## Key concepts

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- Toy libraries
- Role of toy libraries
- Play-based early learning sessions
- Toys and play materials
- Young children
- 21<sup>st</sup> century skills
- Framework of quality standards
- Access to early learning opportunities
- Operational characteristics of toy libraries

# Certificate of Ethical Clearance

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UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
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Faculty of Education

## RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

**CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE**

CLEARANCE NUMBER: **EC 15/11/01**

**DEGREE AND PROJECT**

PhD

The role of toy libraries in the provision of play-based learning opportunities for young children

**INVESTIGATOR**

Ms Monica Stach

**DEPARTMENT**

Early Childhood Education

**APPROVAL TO COMMENCE STUDY**

18 April 2016

**DATE OF CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE**

30 August 2017

**CHAIRPERSON OF ETHICS COMMITTEE:** Prof Liesel Ebersöhn

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Liesel Ebersöhn', with a horizontal line underneath.

**CC**

Ms Bronwynne Swarts

Dr Judy van Heerden

Prof Cyclic Hartell

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

## Abstract

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Worldwide, toy libraries are regarded as a non-centre-based early childhood education programme. In South Africa the majority of young children live in poverty and do not have access to early learning opportunities and play materials before entering formal schooling. This study investigated how toy libraries provide play-based learning opportunities for young children. Seven toy library sites located in five South African provinces (Gauteng, Mpumalanga, Free State, KwaZulu-Natal and North West) participated in the study. The participants consisted of toy librarians, managers and parents. The toy librarians were selected purposively, applying the criterion that play-based early learning sessions were provided to children younger than six years.

The research methodology employed was qualitative, and an interpretivist paradigm informed the multiple case study design. The conceptual framework was based on learning and systems theories informing how young children learn. The toy library operations and play-based early learning session characteristics inform the framework of quality standards for toy libraries.

The data production strategies included focus group discussions of photographs, document analysis and observations of play sessions. The group discussion and observation transcriptions, documentation and photographs were analysed by means of coding. Three themes, namely young children and learning, toy library operations and play-based early learning, and nine sub-themes emerged that include academic learning, 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, administration, play materials, services, challenges, developmentally appropriate practice by toy librarians, play-based learning pedagogy indicators and characteristics of play-based learning.

The findings indicate that toy libraries provide access to play-based early learning sessions to young children. However, a variety of developmentally and culturally as well as age-appropriate play materials and play-based early

learning sessions that include a variety of play opportunities are required. In addition, the framework of quality standards for toy libraries was enhanced as a result of the study. This framework provides guidance on how to operate a toy library which includes, apart from lending toys, play-based early learning sessions in its services.

# Certificate of Language Editing

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## DECLARATION OF EDITING

This is to certify that on 12/09/2017 I performed a language edit on

**The role of toy libraries in the provision of play-based learning opportunities to young children**

by Monica Stach



APM Moen

Accredited member of the South African Translators Institute  
Accr no. 1000085



# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION

---

*“The right to play is a child's first claim on the community.  
Play is nature's training for life. No community can infringe that right  
without doing deep and enduring harm to the minds and  
bodies of its citizens. D.L. George (1926)”  
(Children's Play Services, n.d.:2)*

### 1.1 Introduction

The aim of this first chapter is to introduce and orientate the reader to the study. In chapter one I outline the background and purpose of the study. The problem in the study is described in terms of a primary research question and further refined by the secondary research questions. Key concepts relating to the study are clarified. A brief overview of the research design and methodology is provided. The chapter concludes with an outline of the subsequent chapters.

A South African toy library is identified in the National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy (NIECDP) as a resource that:

*“... provides developmentally appropriate educational play materials to early childhood development service providers, parents or children. It may offer play and learning sessions, toy-making demonstrations, individual lending and/or lending to early childhood development service providers.” (Department of Social Development (DSD), 2015:24)*

The definition refers to the provision of developmentally appropriate educational play materials being offered to a limited range of users. The term “may”, creates the impression that play and learning sessions are optional services that a toy library may or may not offer. The making and lending of toys are also presented as optional activities. This study examines how toy libraries provide play-based learning opportunities for young children in South Africa.

Powell and Seaton (2007:36) refer to toy libraries as a “treasure chest of services”. The variety of services being provided by South African toy libraries is explored with specific emphasis on how toy libraries create access to play-based early learning opportunities. The notion of the provision of quality services by toy libraries and how this may be defined in a framework of quality standards for toy libraries is of specific interest. The section below contextualises the study and provides the background within which the study is located.

## **1.2 Background**

Globally 249,4 million children younger than five years are at risk of not achieving their full development potential, mainly because of extreme poverty that stunts their development. Sub-Saharan Africa, which includes South Africa, has 94,8 million children at risk of not reaching their full development potential. In South Africa, there are 6,3 million children under the age of six years, of which four million are at risk of not reaching their full potential. These four million young children live in the poorest 40% of households (Black, Walker, Fernald, Andersen, DiGirolamo, Lu, McCoy, Fink, Shavar, Shiffman, Devercelli, Wodon, Vargas-Barón & Grantham-McGregor, 2016:77; Hall, Sambu, Berry, Giese, Almeleh & Rosa, 2016:9).

Children living in poverty are constantly exposed to multiple risk factors such as malnutrition, poor health, harsh discipline, violence and lack of stimulation or early learning opportunities. These risk factors make children vulnerable and negatively impact their development, resulting in a tremendous loss of South Africa’s human potential. The most effective way to mitigate the risk factors is to give children living in poverty access to critical early childhood services at the earliest possible age. The critical early childhood services to which these children must have adequate access include health, nutrition, security and safety, responsive caregiving and early learning opportunities (Black *et al.*, 2016:77; Biersteker, 2012:53; Berry, Dawes & Biersteker, 2013:26).

I acknowledge the importance of providing access to health, nutrition, security, safety and responsive caregiving to young children; however, this study specifically focuses

on play-based early learning opportunities as provided by toy libraries. Children are born equipped and eager to learn from their environments. The ability to learn must be safeguarded, nurtured and unleashed during early childhood (Richter, Biersteker, Burns, Desmond, Feza, Harrison, Martin, Saloojee & Slemming, 2012:15; Ebrahim, Seleti & Dawes, 2013:66).

The provision of early learning opportunities through play-based early learning sessions that promote early learning at the toy library is one of the critical services provided by toy libraries and mobile toy libraries (DSD, 2015:70). Toy libraries need a quality framework that outlines effective practice principles for play-based learning when conducting a play session in a toy library. It is against this background that the purpose of the study is explained.

### **1.3 Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study is fourfold. Overall, it aims to elevate the role of toy libraries in the provision of access to play-based early learning opportunities for young children through play-based early learning sessions; to this end, this study aims to enhance the understanding of the operational characteristics of toy libraries and to add to the body of knowledge of toy libraries in South Africa.

Firstly, in South Africa the toy library phenomenon as a service delivery platform creating access to play-based early learning opportunities is a very novel idea; toy libraries were only formally recognised by government as a way to increase access to play materials and play-based early learning sessions in 2015. Sadly, the role of toy libraries in providing play-based early learning opportunities for young children, as one of the critical early childhood services needed by vulnerable children, is undervalued. Clarifying the role of toy libraries in providing access to play-based early learning opportunities was a powerful reason to undertake this study.

Secondly, the existing toy library quality framework does not adequately focus on the setting up and implementation of play sessions. A toy library quality framework that includes indicators of the quality of play sessions will enhance toy library operations

by providing play-based early learning sessions that are aligned with national policies, norms and standards as promulgated in the Act. The framework of quality standards for toy libraries (FQSTL 2017) may provide a common understanding with regard to toy libraries in South Africa and may be the catalyst for an increased number of toy libraries providing play-based early learning sessions to young children. The FQSTL 2017 may be a useful tool for government officials to monitor and evaluate toy library services and may guide relevant funding models for toy libraries (Cotlands, 2016c:74).

Thirdly, the operational characteristics of toy libraries impact on the provision of play-based early learning sessions and by implication on play-based early learning opportunities for young children. The aim is to promote the operational characteristics that serve as a proxy for quality service provision. The operational characteristics, combined with the play-based learning characteristics and indicators, may inform what skill set and qualifications toy librarians are required to possess to implement play-based early learning sessions (Weisberg, Hirsh-Pasek & Golinkoff, 2013:106).

The final purpose of this study is to contribute to the body of knowledge of toy libraries and to make recommendations for further toy library research in South Africa. Published peer-reviewed academic literature on toy libraries in South Africa is extremely limited; there are only one unpublished masters' dissertation (Poller, 1987) and two published peer-reviewed articles from the same author in 1988 and 1989. In 1988 Poller explored the relationship between the public library and the toy library phenomenon, providing some historical background on toy libraries. She provided a useful toy library categorisation framework (Poller, 1988:92) and explored the potential role toys played in child development if introduced in public book libraries (1989:33). She explains how toys and game lending was introduced by public libraries. I was unable to locate any additional evidence-based literature relating to South African toy libraries, making this study a necessary contribution to the body of knowledge of toy libraries in South Africa.

This study is also significant on a personal note, having been inspired by Cynthia Morrison's vision of "A toy library within reach of every child in South Africa" (Active Learning Libraries South Africa (ALL-SA), 2012:1). Cynthia Morrison pioneered the

philosophy that toy libraries can be active learning spaces that have the potential to close the education gap that exists in South Africa. She started toy library training programmes and the toy library association. Cynthia also introduced me to toy libraries, trained me and inspired me to devote my professional career to them and to work towards having a toy library within reach of every child in South Africa. My devotion to setting up quality toy libraries that create play-based early learning opportunities for young children in South Africa was the primary reason for undertaking this study.

#### **1.4 The problem of this study**

Toy libraries have been in existence since 1977, when the South African Inherited Disorders Association established the first toy library at the Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital in Rondebosch, Cape Town (Poller, 1988:91). Despite a history spanning 40 years, very little progress has been made with regard to structuring and regulating the toy library sector on the basis of effective practice principles.

In 2015 the NIECDP (DSD, 2015:13) clearly articulated that toy libraries were one of the early childhood development programmes that would be developed, funded and implemented in the scaling up of early childhood development (ECD) services. It is problematic to consider scaling up toy libraries in South Africa when inadequate structure is being provided to guide the setting up (operations) and funding of toy libraries. National norms and standards for non-centre-based programmes are contained in section 94(2) of the Children's Act, 2005 (No. 38 of 2005), hereafter referred to as the Act, and elaborated in Part II: National Norms and Standards for Early Childhood Development Programmes. However, the norms and standards do not adequately set out standards for toy libraries (South Africa, 2010:91).

The knowledge, skills and resources required by toy librarians to implement play-based learning opportunities are lacking. Toy library programmes are not designed on the basis of effective practice principles in early childhood education. Research evidence generated about quality and early learning provision in the early childhood education and care sector should be used by toy libraries. Toy librarians are expected

to have a diverse skill set ranging from securing funding, managing the toy library's operations to expertise on child development and knowing how to provide play-based early learning opportunities (Hirsh-Pasek, Golinkoff, Berk & Singer, 2009:29). This study advocates that toy librarianship should become a recognised profession with related qualifications and career path opportunities.

This study addresses the identified problems within the toy library sector by designing the research around a set of primary and secondary questions.

#### **1.4.1 Primary question**

- How do toy libraries provide play-based learning opportunities for young children?

#### **1.4.2 Secondary questions**

- How do toy libraries create opportunities for young children to access play-based learning activities?
- How do South African toy libraries implement play-based learning, if any?
- Why do South African toy libraries need a quality framework?

The research questions contain a number of key concepts which are clarified in the next section.

### **1.5 Concept clarification**

For the purpose of this study, the concepts relating to toy libraries, play-based early learning, toys/play materials, young children, framework of quality standards, access and operational characteristics will be clarified.

#### **1.5.1 Toy libraries**

Not all countries in the world use the term “toy libraries”. Synonyms for toy libraries

include lekotek, learning games library, toybrary (Jackson, Robey, Watjus & Chadwick, 1991:28), toy lending library, play library, preschool lending libraries, play bus (Kapellaka, 1992:53), mobile toy library (Cotlands, 2016a), toy loan centre (Department of Public Social Services, 2017:1), as well as active learning library (ALL-SA, 2012:1).

A universal definition still eludes the toy library world, with each country appropriating a functional definition that describes the focus of the toy library's service in its unique social and cultural situation. Toy library definitions include common terms such as toys, play, lend and parents. Definitions state that toy libraries acknowledge, safeguard and promote the immense importance of play in childhood (Brodin & Bjork-Akesson, 1992:101; Ozanne & Ozanne, 2011:264). Some toy library definitions stipulate that the toy libraries are inclusive early childhood settings where opportunities to play are also offered to children living with disabilities. These toy libraries offer a range of specially adapted toys for children living with disabilities (Cottrell, 2013:1; Jackson *et al.*, 1991:27; Livingstone, 2016:1).

The European Toy Libraries Group (ETL) states that "Toy libraries provide resources for play, including toys, games, trained staff and dedicated space on a non-commercial basis" (European Toy Libraries Group (ETL), 2014:4). The United States of America Toy Library Association (USATLA) defines toy libraries in terms of what they "do", namely: "provide another environment of abundant play opportunity supplemented by a collection of high-grade toys; a forum for discussion among parents, teachers and others; provide disabled children with quality, specially adapted toys; provide trained personnel to work with families to integrate disabled children into the mainstream; respond to child care needs; offer caregivers valuable direction in child development; help parents to play with and provide play experiences for their children while becoming more informed consumers of toys, and affirm values of honesty and sharing among children in all walks of life" (USATLA, 2016:1). The definition of the association for toy libraries in Australia definition is: "Toy libraries are where fun, creativity and play are valued and promoted! Toy libraries aim to support families and encourage togetherness with quality time spent playing with children" (Toy Libraries Australia

(TLA), 2016:1). Rettig (1998:229) defines a toy library as “a service that provides parents and professionals with an opportunity for shared play and the loan of toys”.

In South Africa, the Toy Library Association of South Africa, abbreviated as TLASA (Cotlands, 2016b:1), defines “a toy library as a high impact, cost effective, non-centre based programme that gives children, their families, early learning facilitators and early childhood development practitioners access to a collection of carefully selected educational play materials, play-based early learning sessions and training on how to use the toys to encourage development.” For the purpose of this study, toy libraries in South Africa were defined as follows at the beginning of this chapter (DSD, 2015:24):

*“Toy libraries provide developmentally appropriate educational play materials to early childhood development service providers, parents or children. It may offer play and learning sessions, toy-making demonstrations, individual lending and/or lending to early childhood development service providers.”*

### **1.5.2 Role of toy libraries**

The English Oxford Living Dictionary (2017) defines the term role as: “The function assumed or part played by a person or thing in a particular situation”. The Merriam-Webster dictionary (2017a) defines role as: “the action for which a person or thing is specially fitted or used or for which a thing exists”. Dictionary.com (2017) defines role as “proper or customary function”. The three definitions each contain the common element of “function” to describe the term “role”. The Merriam-Webster thesaurus (2017b) lists duty, operation, purpose, responsibility and service as synonyms for the term “function”. In light of these definitions, the role of toy libraries is to provide a service to parents and young children that includes the lending of toys which have been selected to stimulate children’s development and learning. When toys are borrowed, the toy librarian has to share her knowledge of the benefits of playing with that specific toy by demonstrating how to play with the toy or the game. Lastly, it is the role of the toy library to increase access to quality early learning



opportunities by providing play-based early learning sessions at the toy library, or to take these sessions to where they are needed in a mobile toy library unit.

### **1.5.3 Play-based early learning session**

Play-based early learning sessions are facilitated by a toy librarian at scheduled times at the toy library. They follow a pre-planned activity structure of two to four hour sessions characterised by demonstrations, explanations and playing with the play materials with the explicit goal to enhance children's development, both academically and in terms of the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. Children's play is guided by the adult as well as initiated by the child.

Play-based learning refers to the pedagogy where a toy librarian guides children's play in such a manner that children learn key concepts as defined in The South African National Curriculum Framework for Children from Birth to Four, abbreviated as NCF. The NCF clearly states that "play and hands-on (active) experiences enhance children's learning and development" (Department Basic Education (DBE), 2015:7). Developmentally appropriate play materials are selected and the play is structured to achieve a range of developmental and curriculum outcomes. The toy librarian provides guidance to parents or ECD practitioners on how to facilitate play-based learning opportunities using the play materials from the toy library (Cotlands, 2017:1).

### **1.5.4 Toys and play materials**

The term toy library brings images of a space filled with commercially produced toys to mind. However, in the context of this study the term "toy" is too restrictive. A toy library does include commercially produced toys, but it also includes games, equipment used for outdoor play, and in some cases play furniture such as cots for dolls, as well as (in some parts of the world) party décor. These items fall outside of the traditional definitions of toys. It is for this reason that the term "play materials" is used. The definition of toys provided by Trawick-Smith, Wolff, Koschel and Vallarelli (2014:249) also applies to play materials: it includes conventional toys and any object,

whether it is realistic, commercially produced or naturally found, which children may want to play with.

### **1.5.5 Young children**

The term “young children” refers to children younger than six years, i.e. the period of early childhood. Early childhood in South Africa is defined as the period of human development from birth until the year before a child enters formal schooling; in this study the term "young children" refers to children younger than six years (DSD, 2015:11).

### **1.5.6 21<sup>st</sup> century skills**

21<sup>st</sup> century skills are skills associated with life skills, which the workplace regards as essential attributes of employees. The education system is responsible for delivering a workforce that has acquired these essential skills. The 21<sup>st</sup> century skills considered to be the most important are collaboration, communication, creativity, critical thinking, social and interpersonal skills, technology and computer skills and listening skills (Care, Kim, Anderson & Gustafsson-Wright, 2017:2; Gray, 2011:29; Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek, 2017:357).

### **1.5.7 Framework of quality standards for toy libraries**

A framework of quality play-based early learning sessions ensures that effective practice principles are considered when planning play-based early learning sessions at a toy library. The Framework of Quality Standards for Toy Libraries (FQSTL 2017, Table 7.1) was informed by practical experience, early childhood education effective practice principles and findings from this study. The FQSTL 2017 can be used to guide the day-to-day operations of the toy library. When a new toy library is established, the FQSTL 2017 sets out the minimum standards to be adhered to in order for the toy library programme to provide a service that is effective and regarded as being of an acceptable quality. The quality standards can also be used to identify gaps that exist

in the toy library programme with the aim to embark on a quality improvement programme (Cotlands, 2016c:17).

### **1.5.8 Access to early learning opportunities**

Access is about having enough early childhood services (which includes early learning opportunities) for the population of children in a particular geographical area, including toy libraries. A service delivery platform increases access and is a deliberate effort to reach young children and families in under-resourced areas. Access also implies that aspects such as geographical location, poverty or economic factors are not a barrier for young children to gain entry (Biersteker, 2012:57).

## **1.6 Research design and methodology**

In chapter four, I present a detailed description of the research design and methodology used in the study. The study is designed to answer specific research questions, which in turn informed the research design and methodology. In order to answer the research questions, I chose a qualitative research design employing multiple case studies, treating each toy library as a case. In the seven case studies, I focused on exploring and understanding how toy libraries provide play-based learning opportunities for young children, if at all (Creswell, 2014:14). I gathered multiple perspectives, subjectively constructed by participants in this study, which enabled an in-depth exploration of the complexity of the toy library phenomenon (Hamilton & Corbett-Whitter, 2013:7; Mukherji & Albon, 2010:25; Rule & John, 2011:7).

The cases were purposively selected to cover a range of toy library models. Toy library sites one, two, three and four share the same features: owned by a non-profit organisation and serving young children and ECD practitioners by lending toys. All except site two provide a mobile toy library service. Site five is a toy library located in a community library, site six is located at a public school and site seven's toy library is located in a public hospital. The toy libraries of sites one, six and seven are located in urban areas in Gauteng; site two is located in rural Mpumalanga, site three in the rural Free State and site four in rural Kwazulu-Natal.

Data was collected by analysing documentation relating to the operations of the toy library and using photographs that were taken by the toy librarians and used during the focus group discussions. Observations of play-based early learning sessions was conducted at sites 1, 2, and 4 and used to triangulate the collected data. The data analysis process was done by hand coding all the data, identifying “what goes with what” and listing the themes and subthemes as they emerged (Rule & John, 2011:78). The themes were linked to the literature and findings were generated. The chapters of the study are outlined below.

## **1.7 Outline of chapters**

This study comprises seven chapters.

### Chapter One: Introduction and orientation

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

### Chapter Two: Literature review

This chapter of the study provides an in-depth analysis of the literature that is deemed relevant to this study.

### Chapter Three: Conceptual framework

This chapter consolidates the key concepts relating to the study, tabulating theories underpinning the conceptual framework and using diagrams to depict key concepts.

### Chapter Four: Research design and methodology

This chapter provides a detailed description of the layout and implementation of the qualitative research design and methodology, participants and data production procedure. A section on the trustworthiness and ethical considerations concludes this chapter.

### Chapter Five: Data analysis and presentation of findings

This chapter presents and discusses the data collected from the seven case studies through documentation, photographs, focus group discussions and observations.

### Chapter Six: Comparison of the research findings with the literature

In chapter six the research findings are compared with the literature. The comparisons are presented in a series of four tables. The interpretive discussion in the first table focuses on similarities between the findings and literature, the second table highlights the contradictory evidence. The third table addresses the silences that exist in the literature. The last table provides new insights obtained from the study.

### Chapter Seven: Reflections, conclusions, limitations and recommendations

The final chapter reflects on each chapter and explores the conclusions of the study by answering the research questions and presenting the framework of quality standards for toy libraries. An exploration of the limitations of the study follows. The final section of the chapter contain a series of recommendations linked to the findings of this study.

## **1.8 Conclusion**

In this chapter I provided an introduction to the background that informed this study. I described the purpose and significance of the study, linking it to the problem being investigated in the study and framed as research questions. I clarified key concepts and briefly outlined the research design and methodology used in the study. I concluded this chapter with an outline of the chapters. In the next chapter, I review the existing literature on ECD, play-based learning and toy libraries.

# CHAPTER TWO

## LITERATURE REVIEW

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*“Make early childhood development a top priority.  
Dedicated resources should be channelled towards  
ensuring that all children are well cared for from an early age and  
receive appropriate emotional, cognitive and physical development stimulation.”*  
(National Planning Commission, 2012:69)

### 2.1 Introduction

The literature review chapter is introduced by contextualising the preparation of today's young child for the world they will be living in. ECD as a global priority provides the backdrop against which the South African early childhood development context is explored. South African laws and policies relating to play provide an introduction for the section, explaining the relationship between play and learning. The section on play and learning describes play as a child's right, explores the importance of play and describes African culture and play. The benefits of play-based learning and the link between learning and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills are explored, concluding the section on play and learning with a list of South African 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. The toy libraries section explores the rationale for establishing toy libraries, provides a historical overview, discusses toy library associations, initiators, facilities, beneficiaries of toy library services and the key stakeholders involved in the toy library. A discussion of the benefits, challenges and future of toy libraries concludes this section. The final section of chapter two reviews play-based early learning sessions at toy libraries and the pedagogy, characteristics and indicators of play-based early learning. The chapter concludes with a framework of quality standards for toy libraries.

### 2.2 The young child: preparing today's children for tomorrow's world

Toy libraries contribute to children's holistic development. Planning toy library programmes requires an understanding of the context the young child is surrounded

by. The world we live in is changing (Winthrop & McGivney, 2016:2), and the changes are relentless, fast and unpredictable (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2016:36). Children born today need skills in order to navigate this changing world. Global changes that influence the world of children are evident in technology, the world of work and globalised challenges, as argued by Winthrop and McGivney (2016:7).

Technological advances, from the discovery of the wheel to artificial intelligence, keep astounding every generation of the human race. Brynjolfsson and McAfee (2016:211) refer to the present trend of change as the digital revolution. The world's economies and societies are being digitised (World Economic Forum (WEF), 2016:5). Examples of digitisation include self-driving cars being developed by Google, a next-generation robot called Watson (developed by IBM) which is equipped with artificial intelligence with reasoning skills, 3D printing, nanotechnology, genetics, biotechnology, drones and mobile phones (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2016:61). It is estimated that by 2021 there will be 11,6 billion mobile-connected devices, exceeding the world's projected population of 7,8 billion, and more people will have smart phones than electricity (Cisco, 2017:3; Mitullah, Samson, Wambua & Balongo, 2016:4). Cisco (2017:3) forecasts that the strongest mobile data traffic growth will be in Africa. Quality education has become accessible through Massive Open Online Courses, referred to as MOOCs, enabling distance education for low and middle-income groups and especially for females (Garrido, Koepke, Andersen, Mena, Macapagal & Dalvit, 2016:28).

Worldwide changes are being experienced in the workplace. Children are likely to have 10 jobs in their working lifetime, and eight of those jobs are yet to be invented (Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek, 2017: 336). Autor and Brendan (2013:6) confirm that technological advances are leading to a decrease in routine jobs requiring manual labour, while jobs that require analytical, interpersonal or "non-routine" skills are occupying a growing share of the labour market. The WEF (2016:24) confirms that there is a substantial mismatch between the work-related skills required and the skills sets that are actually supplied by the education sector. The workforce, working in a wider range of jobs, will require technical, social and cognitive skills which include

creativity, logical reasoning and problem solving skills. ManpowerGroup (2016:1) argues that globally there is a shortage of communication and teamwork skills.

The greatest risk faced by Sub-Saharan Africa, which includes South Africa, is the massive rate of unemployment or underemployment, which has the potential to lead to an uprising of the youth potentially resulting in social unrest and global instability, as identified by the Global Risks Report 2016 (2016a:72). Dobbs, Madgavkar, Barton, Labaye, Manyika, Roxburgh, Lund and Madhav (2012:9) forecast that Sub-Saharan Africa, along with India and South Asia, will become the new source of low-cost labour in global markets as the European, Chinese and North American workforce ages. In South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa there will be 58 million more job seekers than jobs to fill in 2020, meaning that there will be a surplus of low-skilled workers and at the same time a shortage of medium-skilled workers (Dobbs *et al.*, 2012:55). South Africa has to reform its education agenda to meet the demands of the workplace in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The WEF (2016:27) acknowledges that equipping people with the right skills set to make them employable starts during the early childhood development phase, since skills such as creativity (lateral thinking), logical reasoning, problem solving, communication and teamwork take time to develop and mature.

The third aspect to consider in the changing world is that of globalisation. The Business Directory (2017:1) defines globalisation as the “worldwide movement toward economic, financial, trade, and communications integration” that has connected the world and requires global solutions for the world’s pressing challenges. Globally, climate change and the refugee crisis are affecting the world (Winthrop & McGivney, 2016:11). Climate change, in the form of increased temperatures of the earth, will disrupt weather patterns and impact agriculture, which will affect food security. At the end of 2015, a total of 65,3 million people were recorded as being refugees, internally displaced persons, asylum-seekers and stateless people, as reported by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2015:2).

The changing nature of the world in terms of technology, the workplace and globalisation requires a different approach to education. Identifying the skills set that is required by today’s children for tomorrow’s world is an ongoing challenge for



scientists, ECD practitioners and policymakers. Winthrop and McGivney (2016:14) maintain that education has to nurture and cultivate a breadth of skills, comprising a combination of the basics of literacy (reading and writing) and numeracy with knowledge of academic subjects. The breadth of skills (or 21<sup>st</sup> century skills) will be further explored in the section on play-based learning. ECD holds the promise of addressing the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills crisis, especially since it is regarded as a global priority.

The toy library's role is to provide play-based learning opportunities for young children. The type of play materials and activities that are included in the play sessions needs to reflect the changing society. Toy libraries need to understand the context of a changing world, particularly the community the child comes from. As children learn through play, the toy library needs to ensure that what is being learned includes the skills the workplace requires, so that children will be given a solid foundation in the early years.

### **2.3 Early childhood development: a global priority**

This study focuses on the role of toy libraries to provide play-based early learning opportunities for young children. In South Africa, young children are children between the ages of birth to nine years, but in this study, the focus is on children younger than six years. It is for this reason that the literature on early childhood development is included.

The importance of early childhood development is a global focus for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. On 25 September 2015, a total of seventeen sustainable development goals were adopted by the UN. The goals set out to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all. Each goal has targets to be achieved by 2030. Goal 4 – Quality Education – is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all and has seven targets, of which target 4.2 (United Nations, 2015:19) states:

*“By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education.”*

Strengthening ECD also enables governments to achieve at least 7 of the other Sustainable Development Goals on poverty, hunger, health, quality education, gender, water and sanitation, and inequality. The United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon issued a statement on 22 September 2015 that recognises that the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 is possible if driven by early childhood development initiatives across the globe (United Nations, 2015:1). I agree that early childhood education is a powerful equaliser of society and that every country in the world has an obligation to prioritise its youngest citizens: the children. The next section explores what is meant by early childhood.

#### **2.4. Understanding early childhood education in the South African context**

The toy libraries referred to in this study serve young children, and toy librarians need to understand how young children develop in order to provide the right play materials and play sessions. Early childhood is the “period of human development from birth until the year before a child enters formal schooling”, as defined in South Africa (DSD, 2015:11). Early childhood lays the foundation on which all future development builds, which makes it a particularly important and sensitive period of development in the lifespan of a human being. Worldwide it is recognised as a critical period during which children need to be protected and adequately nurtured. Young children’s physical, cognitive, emotional and social skills are critical for further development and must be adequately developed. Children’s innate potential will flourish, provided that they are well nourished, have a stable, caring and responsive adult to bond with, are protected from disease, violence and stress and have access to early learning opportunities (Daelmans, Darmstadt, Lombardi, Black, Britto, Lye, Dua, Bhutta & Richter, 2016:1).

The situation of children in South Africa is impacted by the social and economic conditions young children find themselves in. The developmental potential residing in children is immense. Children are the human capital and future workforce of our country. Globally a total of 249,4 million children younger than five years are at risk of

not achieving their full developmental potential, mainly because of extreme poverty resulting in stunting. Sub-Saharan Africa, which includes South Africa, has 94,8 million children at risk of not reaching their full developmental potential. A total of 6,3 million children under the age of six years live in South Africa. Four million young children in South Africa live in the poorest 40% of households and are at risk of not reaching their full potential (Black *et al.*, 2016:77; Hall *et al.*, 2016:9).

The four million children living in poverty face multiple risk factors. While all children are exposed to risk factors, it is the intensity and multiplicity of risk factors that is potentially harmful. Risk factors include family stress, child abuse or chronic neglect, food insecurity leading to malnutrition and stunting, exposure to violence, disability, poor health care and education, caregiver substance abuse or mental illness, harsh discipline, violence and poverty (Black *et al.*, 2016:77). The Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University (2014:9) confirms that in situations where children are exposed to chronic poverty resulting in family economic hardship, without adequate adult support, a situation of toxic stress is created, which is obviously not the optimal environment for positive child development. Living in poverty increases young children's vulnerability.

Poverty in South Africa is classified into three poverty categories, each linked to a rand value. The poverty lines measure a family's access to sufficient food. The upper bound poverty line refers to the minimum amount required for families to afford adequate food and basic non-food items and is pinned at R923. The lower bound poverty line is pinned at R594 and includes families who are adequately nourished, but have to sacrifice other essential items. The food poverty line, pinned at R397 per month, refers to families that are unable to afford sufficient food. The upper poverty line allows children to have a minimum acceptable standard of living. An alarming 63% of South African children younger than six years live in households that fall below the R923 upper bound poverty line (Hall *et al.*, 2016:6). The impact of living in poverty, in a household with an income of less than R923 per month, results in stunting. Stunting is a condition where children are too short for their age. In South Africa a fifth of children under the age of five suffer from stunting. Children affected by stunting have

poor health and their development is negatively impacted (Black *et al.*, 2016:78; Hall *et al.*, 2016: 14).

Children living in poverty are seen as part of the group of children referred to as “vulnerable children” in the NIECDP. ECD services are targeted at vulnerable children and also include children experiencing developmental difficulties, chronic health conditions, living without biological parents, living in child-headed households and children living in under-serviced rural areas or urban informal settlements. In addition, children whose caregivers suffer from mental health conditions or partake in substance abuse also fall into this category. Children exposed to violence and children younger than two years who are incarcerated with their mothers, as well as children living with disabilities, are also classified as vulnerable (DSD, 2015:14).

Vulnerable children need access to ECD services, such as toy libraries, to minimise the impact of multiple risk factors. ECD services are able to act as a protective buffer against the harsh realities such young children have to face on a daily basis (Werner, 2006:128). The NIECDP proposes a comprehensive package of ECD services to mitigate the risks associated with poverty in early childhood. A toy library may provide some of these interventions, especially by providing access to early learning opportunities through play-based early learning sessions. The comprehensive package includes maternal and child primary health interventions, nutritional support, support for primary caregivers, social services and stimulation for early learning. The maternal and child primary health interventions include antenatal care, prevention of mother-to-child transmission of diseases, physical and mental health screening, psychosocial support and immunisation. Nutritional support of pregnant mothers and mothers with children is prioritised. Support for the primary caregiver involves parenting skills and psychosocial support. Social services should include birth registration, access to social grants and a responsive child protection system. Stimulation of early learning includes increasing access to quality and age-appropriate early learning programmes, such as toy libraries (DSD, 2015:54; Hall *et al.*, 2016:28).

The highest return on investment is to start with the youngest children living in the poorest communities, as proposed by Engle, Black, Behrman, de Mello, Gertler,

Kapiriri, Martorell and Young (2007:79) and Jaramillo and Mingat (2006:29). I concur with Engle, Fernald, Alderman, Behrman, O’Gara, Yousafzai, de Mello, Hidrobo, Ulkuer, Ertem, Iltus and the Global Child Development Steering Group (2011:1339) that timely and appropriate quality ECD services can prevent the loss of children’s potential. Early childhood development initiatives need an enabling environment which is first and foremost embedded in a country’ laws and policies. Establishing toy libraries for young children in the poorest communities and ensuring that the toy library programme provides play-based early learning sessions will provide young children with an opportunity to develop their potential. Much progress has been made to encourage the establishment of more toy libraries in South Africa. The various laws and policies that promote early childhood development are discussed below.

## **2.5 Early childhood development laws and policies relating to play**

Quality ECD services, such as toy libraries, promote early childhood development by harnessing the power of play-based learning. Early childhood development in South Africa is governed by DSD as the lead government department where child issues are concerned. DSD is responsible for the care and protection laws relating to ECD. The Minister of Social Development promulgated the regulations as contained in the Children’s Act 38 of 2005 (South Africa, 2010), hereafter referred to as the Act. The Act consists of seventeen chapters covering issues pertaining to social, cultural and religious practices, parental responsibilities and rights, partial care, early childhood development, child protection system, the national child protection register, protective measures relating to health of children, protective measures, prevention and early intervention, children in need of care and protection, alternative care, foster care, child and youth care centres, drop-in centres and adoptions (including inter-country adoptions). For this study, chapter five (Section 91-103), which deals with early childhood development, is of particular interest for toy libraries (South Africa, 2010:29). The norms and standards required in terms of registration are contained in this section. The Act forms the legal basis from which the rest of the documents relating to early childhood in South Africa is derived. Toy library facilities and programmes are regulated by the Act, and in order to access funding from the DSD, toy libraries have to comply with its requirements.

The Department of Health is responsible for the booklet *The Road to Health*, which is issued to every new mother for her new-born baby and contains key information on what parents and caregivers should do to ensure optimal development of the baby. Play as an instrument for promoting healthy development is integrated in the booklet. Practical guidance is given on why play is important and how to communicate and play with children of different ages so as to support their development (Republic of South Africa, 2012:24; DSD, 2015:56).

In 2012 the National Planning Commission published the *National Development Plan 2030: Our Future – make it work*. Extending early childhood development services for children under five is prioritised by providing two years of universal access to early childhood development in South Africa. This affirms that ECD service delivery mechanisms, such as toy libraries and providing early learning opportunities for young children, are regarded as a priority of the government of South Africa (The Presidency: National Planning Commission, 2012:28).

The Diagnostic Review of ECD included a review of the National Integrated Plan for ECD and identified key issues to be prioritised with regard to ECD provision in the country. This review influenced subsequent ECD-related documents and flagged the need for innovative service provision, referred to as non-centre-based programmes. Non-centre-based programmes include programmes such as home visiting, playgroups and toy libraries and are seen as a mechanism to increase access to a range of services, including early learning opportunities for young children (Richter *et al*, 2012:15).

The NIECDP creates a framework for government's accountability to provide a comprehensive package of quality ECD services that would be universally available in sufficient quantities and proximity so that all children enjoy an equal opportunity to access the ECD services (DSD, 2015). The policy also introduces a number of new services to fill gaps identified in the range of services currently available, which includes toy libraries. The NIECDP clearly articulates that non-centre-based programmes, such as toy libraries, need to be developed, funded and implemented in

the upscaling of ECD services. ECD Services are provided to children younger than six (DSD, 2015:13).

The South African ECD landscape has seen interesting shifts and renewed commitment to providing services to young children. The various laws and policies have shaped the direction of programming and service provision in the country, creating an enabling environment for the establishment of toy libraries.

The importance of play and learning to young children, as it relates to toy libraries, is explored below.

## **2.6 Play and learning**

In light of the theories relating to child development, and play in particular, this study argues that play is not an optional luxury in the lives of children. Children's right to play and adults' understanding of the importance of play provide the backdrop against which to explore the important link between play and learning in the early years. Toy libraries are perfectly positioned to promote the right of children to play, since there is an obvious correlation between "toys" and "play".

### **2.6.1 The right to play**

Toy libraries are critical advocates for children's right to play. Every child in the world has the right to be afforded the time and space to play, especially when visiting a toy library. Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations, November 20, 1989:9), proclaims that every child has a right to leisure, play and participation in cultural and artistic activities (United Nations, 1989:9). Despite this proclamation, signatory countries' implementation and promotion of the right to play are seriously lacking.

The concerns with regard to the right to play, as expressed in Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the inadequate implementation of Article 31 were scrutinised in 2013. In Geneva, General Comment No. 17 on the Right of the Child to Rest, Leisure, Play, Recreational Activities, Cultural Life and the Arts

(Article 31), was published (United Nations, 2013). General Comment No. 17 is a 22-page document listing all the challenges to the implementation of Article 31. A number of concerns are listed with regard to play, which include lack of awareness of adults of the importance of play (particularly child-controlled play), inadequate space, excessive pressure for educational achievement, negative effects of technology and that children are rarely involved in planning their own play opportunities and playgrounds. Children with disabilities, girls, institutionalised children, working children and children in extreme poverty are groups of children who require special attention in order to realise their rights under Article 31 (United Nations, 2013:7).

Toy libraries are perfectly suited to assist with the implementation of Article 31 and the promotion of children's right to play, since toy libraries raise awareness of the importance of play, provide space and time for children to play and advocate a balanced approach when they include traditional and technology play in the lives of children. Children direct their play in a toy library because they choose the toys they want to lend or play with during play-based early learning sessions; this automatically involves children in planning their own play opportunities. In addition, toy libraries are inclusive settings where all children are welcomed (Cottrell, 2013:1; USATLA, 2016:1; ETL, 2014:4; TLA, 2016:1; Cotlands, 2016b:2; Ozanne & Ozanne, 2011:266).

Section 6(2) (a) of the Act states that all proceedings, actions or decisions in a matter concerning a child must respect, protect, promote and fulfil the child's rights as set out in the Bill of Rights. The Act therefore supports the implementation of the right to play as enshrined in the Bill of Rights. However, despite it being stated in the Act, implementation in South Africa, as in many parts of the world, is lacking in all the areas mentioned in General Comment No. 17. The lack of allowing children to play is rooted in adults' perceptions of play and how they relate to learning.

### **2.6.2 The importance of play to young children**

One of the roles of the toy library is to understand and value the importance of play to young children who participate in the toy library programme. The word "play" requires an inclination, disposition or likelihood of "playfulness". Play is not possible without a



measure of playfulness. Christian (2012:19) states that “it is the child’s playfulness that renders an activity play. As such playfulness is recognised as the essence of play”. Play and playfulness have a variety of connotations. Both words evoke a myriad of feelings, experiences and memories (Mardell, Wilson, Ryan, Ertel, Krechevsky & Baker, 2016:3). Play happens spontaneously and suddenly. Play can be solitary, social or imaginary, as when children have imaginary friends or games are played via the Internet (Eberle, 2014:214). Think of children waiting for a taxi who play a game with stones, or children playing a card game or children playing hide-and-seek, to name but a few examples. Scholars have been debating the subject of play for a long time, continuously adding another dimension to the already complex and multi-faceted phenomenon (Eberle, 2014:229; Hirsh-Pasek *et al.*, 2009:29). Toy libraries can create an environment where children go to play just for the sake of playing.

Play is not always playful (Bateson, 2015:15). Rule-governed competitive sport, theatrical play, teasing and bullying may seem “playful”, but are recognised as being stressful and hurtful. In a toy library setting, there is no room for this kind of play. A positive, relaxed mood is what makes children and the toy librarian’s interactions playful in a toy library, and this study aims to explore playfulness in the context of having fun and eliciting a sense of feeling good about oneself.

Play, as it relates to babies, toddlers and young children, is seen as a fundamental part of life (International Play Association World (IPA) 2014:1). The phenomenon of play is complex and multi-faceted. Sutton-Smith (1997:3), referring to the ambiguity of play, said “that the word play stands for a category of very diverse happenings.” Using “children” and “play” together in one sentence to describe early childhood is universally acceptable, and play is associated with children’s holistic development. Play is a phenomenon commonly observed where young children are found.

Ailwood (2003:288) claims that play discourse is either a romantic discourse of play, a discourse about its characteristics or a developmental discourse. The romantic discourses of play view play as always positive, linked to nature and see childhood as a time of innocence and purity. This kind of play is mostly unavailable in early childhood settings.

The play discourse on play characteristics is an attempt to list and define play through its common characteristics, e.g. that it is child-directed, freely chosen and involves choice. Although play characteristics may be a useful way of describing play, it ignores the context of play. When trying to link the characteristics to an early childhood setting such as a toy library, I find that it contradicts exactly that which it aims to promote. For example, a characteristic such as "free from external rules" (Ailwood, 2003:289) is immediately nullified, because when children engage in a free play session at a toy library the setting, activities and structure of the play session are determined by social and educational goals set by the toy librarian, with the child having an opportunity to direct the play and choose within the given parameters of the play session. The toy librarian needs to be knowledgeable about the characteristics of play, so that she can guide children's play and adequately structure the toy library environment and play-based early learning sessions.

The third discourse about play is the developmental discourse. In this study the developmental discourse of play in early childhood education is dominant. The socio-cultural theories (Vygotsky, 1978:35; Parten, 1932:249), cognitive development theories (Piaget, 1952:21; Gardner, 1983:77), social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1989:47), psychoanalytical theory (Erikson, 1985:265), biological theory (Gesell, 1933:209) and the ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1994:37) are the foundational theories informing this study. Play develops along a child's particular developmental stage, linked to the physical (Gesell, 1933:209), the social (Parten, 1932:249), the emotional (Erikson, 1985:265) and cognitive stages of development (Piaget, 1952:21; Gardner, 1983:77, Bandura, 1989:47). Children's development is dependent on having access to play, for example in spaces such as toy libraries. The toy librarian largely determines what is provided to the child during the early learning play sessions, bearing in mind that the child represents a particular culture, which has to be considered when planning the toy library programme (Bronfenbrenner, 1994:37). Furthermore, the supportive role played by the toy librarian in the play-based early learning session (Vygotsky, 1978:35) impacts the child's development. In line with the developmental discourse of play I locate play at a toy library, which is a location beneficial to children's cognitive, social, emotional and physical development (Ailwood, 2003:290). The toy librarian's knowledge of child development will inform

what play materials are selected and how the play materials are included in play-based early learning sessions.

Play is an activity that comes naturally to children. For them, play is interwoven with their everyday activities and will emerge spontaneously at any time, provided that children feel safe (Lester & Russel, 2010:34; IPA, 2014:1; Whitebread, Basilio, Kuvalja & Verma, 2012:24). Children's gender influences their play preferences (Boyette, 2016:270; Lester & Russel, 2010:33). Boys and girls play differently in that boys have more opportunity to play outside, while girls' play occurs more indoors. In agricultural societies, girls generally take on larger work responsibilities than boys, resulting in less play time for girls. Understanding how gender and the society children grow up in impact children's play is important contextual knowledge the toy librarian needs in order to set up a toy library and when providing play-based early learning sessions. Ignoring these factors may result in programmes which children are not able to identify with, since it does not reflect what they are familiar with when they are at home.

Play is either recognised by adults as being important for physical, cognitive, social and emotional development, with adults participating in children's play, or as a spontaneous activity for children where adults have no role – whether as providers of structure or as participants; or it is seen as a spontaneous activity, but limited because of competing priorities in the child's world. Furthermore, adults who regard play as a waste of time or frivolous will provide children less time to play (IPA, 2014:1; Gosso & Carvalho, 2013: 2). The toy librarian's perception of play and play-based learning will have a profound impact on how play is guided.

Young, vulnerable children (children younger than two years of age, children living in poverty and in areas without services and children living with disabilities) have limited play opportunities for a variety of reasons. One of the reasons why play opportunities are limited by significant adults, such as parents and toy librarians, may be limited resources such as open space or play materials.

Deprivation of play or its the absence will have negative consequences for children's development. The most negative consequence of play deprivation is unhappy children.

Play-deprived children are more violent, antisocial and face an increased risk of obesity (IPA World, 2014:3). Children younger than two years of age living in poverty and in areas without services and children living with disabilities are considered vulnerable children and have fewer opportunities to play. Persistent playlessness is harmful to children's overall well-being. Lester and Russel (2010:43) confirm that creating play opportunities reduces toxic stress. The toy library plays a significant role in reducing play deprivation and toxic stress, since it provides children and their families access to play and other services offered by the toy library.

Whitebread *et al.* (2012:18) describe the importance of a balanced "play diet" as a variety of activities which allow children the opportunity to engage in all five of the types of play (physical play, play with objects, symbolic play, pretence or socio-dramatic play and games with rules), which will develop young children's full repertoire of play skills. Play is a powerful tool for early learning. When providing play-based early learning sessions at toy libraries, the sessions need to be structured in such a way that all kinds of play are encouraged and guided by the toy librarian.

### **2.6.3. African culture and play**

Culture influences children's play in that it defines the settings for and the beliefs about play. Different cultures value play differently (Lester & Russel, 2010:33; Gosso & Carvalho, 2013: 2; Boyette, 2016:760). For example, an adult playing with children may be frowned upon by African cultures, since play is seen by some as something done by children without adult involvement (Gosso & Carvalho, 2013:2; Lester & Russel, 2010:41; Nwokah, Hsu & Gulker, 2013:212).

The play of children in industrialised societies is different from that of children in agricultural societies, also referred to as foraging or pastoral societies characterised by nomad activities (Boyette 2016:759). An industrialised or western society has complex social hierarchies where wealth accumulation and prestige is pursued. Children's learning happens in educational institutions, and parents are expected to be involved in children's play.

In agricultural or African societies learning is passed on from one generation to another. Children are involved in the work families do in order for them to survive (Michelet, 2016: 224). Young children spend their days with their families in and around their homes (Boyette, 2016:760). Children partake in the work carried out by adults in their family on a voluntary basis, and as children grow older they are expected to perform the chores they are capable of doing.

Children do not necessarily distinguish between working and playing, and at some point work has to be prioritised over playing (Boyette, 2016:764; Michelet, 2016:243). Wadende, Oburu and Morara (2016:3) confirm that children growing up in an African community learn and play by doing tasks such as caring for a sibling and helping older siblings or parents clean up or even prepare a meal. Play is inevitably replaced with participation in the family economy (Ng'asike, 2014:50). Children's play is closely related to what children will be expected to be doing in the household, for example herd cattle or crack nuts (Boyette, 2016:760). Children's play and learning happen in natural contexts, such as dry river beds using natural objects such as sand and water (Ng'asike, 2014:48). The power of children learning from each other is especially important in an African context, where child-to-child mentorship helps children learn skills of independence, intelligence and social responsibility (Ng'asike, 2014:56).

Young children in Africa and South Africa do not have access to large numbers of toys or play materials specifically designed for children; instead they play with everyday objects that are used by adults in their family or which they have found and turned into a toy (Boyette, 2016:761). The toy library can play a role by showing parents how everyday objects develop their children's skills and by demonstrating to parents how to play with their children. It is quite the norm for children between the ages of five to seven years to take on the role of primary caregivers and to be the playmates of babies and smaller children in the family. Children are rarely seen to engage in play with their parents, but do play with older siblings of varying age ranges (Boyette, 2016:761).

Children's play and learning are deeply rooted in the local indigenous cultural knowledge in the community, which should be embraced and included in settings such as toy libraries rather than be ignored (Ng'asike, 2014:48; Wadende *et al.*, 2016:1;

Michelet, 2016:234). Children learn from their social, cultural and historical contexts, and the child's home environment has funds of knowledge and learning children can benefit from which are ignored and not incorporated in children's early childhood development curriculums and related activities or experiences (Ng'asike, 2014:49). In the words of Ng'asike (2014:57), practitioners working with young children in an African context should find ways to "incorporate that which children know with that which Western cultures are proposing as curricula for early childhood".

Ogunyemi and Ragpot (2015:5) refer to the dichotomy that exists in countries such as Kenya and South Africa as regards the way children's play and learning are viewed. Kenya and South Africa have committed to an ECD curriculum based on play. Alarming, Ng'asike (2014:43) confirms that children's play is absent from settings such as ECD centres. In addition, African culture and indigenous knowledge are disregarded (Ng'asike, 2014:43). A cross-cultural pedagogy that takes into account the way children play in Africa must be considered when providing play-based learning opportunities for young children. In addition, understanding and managing the dark side of play is critical in toy library settings.

#### **2.6.4 The dark side of play**

Childhood play is mostly romanticised as being good for children (Grieshaber & McArdle, 2010:9). Proponents of play-based learning may ignore the negative, potentially "dark side" of play (Sutton-Smith, 1997:132), where play is not natural, normal, innocent, fun or solely about development and learning. According to Wood (2014:5), the dark side of play is associated with subversion, disorder and the transgression of social rules. When children play it does not necessarily mean that all play is beneficial for all children at all times. Children's play can be coercive, cruel and dangerous.

Children live in vastly different social, economic, cultural and political circumstances, each of which presents specific opportunities for play. Children's participation in play opportunities can be influenced by home cultures, child-rearing practices and expectations of schooling, which may disadvantage children who have not been

enculturated into the play experiences in early childhood settings such as toy libraries (Wood, 2014:6).

In play, power relations in terms of class, race, socio-economic status, gender, size, ethnicity, age, skin colour, sexuality and proficiency in English may further disadvantage children who are vulnerable if we do not mitigate these risks when creating play opportunities within the toy library (Grieshaber & McArdle, 2010:1). Adults need to understand that power relations are at work that unintentionally marginalise or privilege children. In their play, children act out what they experience in their daily lives; consequently, their play will not only reflect fun aspects, since many children living in poverty experience alienation, discomfort, violence and rejection.

These silent or invisible aspects of play need to be considered in toy library settings, so that access to play opportunities may become more equitable, fair and just for all children in the toy library programme (Wood, 2014:16). The relationship between play and learning is explored in the next section.

### **2.6.5 Play and learning – two wings of a butterfly**

Carlina Rinaldi, the president of Reggio Children, used a powerful metaphor to represent the undeniable and powerful interplay that exists between play and learning, especially during the early childhood years (The LEGO Foundation, 2017:13):

*“Play and learning are like the wings of a butterfly – one cannot exist without the other”.*

In South Africa, a partnership between the Department of Education, UNICEF, the LEGO Foundation and Cotlands, uses the word P.L.A.Y as an acronym for Powerful Learning Around You to convey the belief that play is linked to learning (DBE, 2017:1). Mardell *et al.* (2016:4) acknowledge that not all play is learning and that not all learning has to be playful, but in most circumstances play has a powerful ability to promote learning.

In an attempt to organise learning for young children, countries are organising early childhood education into curricula. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) conducted a survey which analysed the content of early childhood education and care curricula of 35 OECD partner countries. Although South Africa is not a member of OECD and South Africa's NCF was not included in the survey, South Africa is a key partner of the OECD through the Enhanced Engagement programmes (OECD, 2016). The outcomes of the survey provide valuable research-based evidence on the impact of early childhood education curricula on children's learning and development. The curriculum survey confirms that content is organised so that ECD staff know what to do and what to expect from the children. Values and principles are included in the curricula. Literacy, numeracy, information communications technology, science, arts and music, physical and health development and play are emphasised. With regard to play time, it is either specifically allocated or embedded (OECD, 2011:86).

Duncan, Dowsett, Claessens, Magnuson, Huston, Klebanov, Pagani, Feinstein, Engel, Brooks-Gunn, Seton, Duckworth and Japel (2007:1443) support a play-based curriculum as opposed to a drill-and-practice curriculum, since it fosters academic and attention skills in an engaging and fun way. England, Australia, Kenya and South Africa have opted to introduce curricula into early year's education. England's Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework explicitly states that each area of learning and development must be implemented through planned, purposeful play and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activity (Department for Education (DFE), 2014:9).

The implementation of the statutory framework for the early years foundation stage (EYFS) is supported by three additional resources: the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile Handbook, which guides the assessment process (Department for Education: Standards and Testing Agency (DFESTA), 2016), the EYFS Profile (exemplification for the level of learning and development expected at the end of EYFS) – Four Parts, which provides examples of assessment in practice (DFESTA, 2014) and the Early Years Outcomes, a non-statutory guide for practitioners and inspectors to help inform understanding of child development through the early years (DFE, 2013).



Australia's Belonging, Being, Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations for the Council of Australian Governments (DEEWR, 2009a:9) states that the practice expected from educators in the early years in Australia is to provide learning through play that provides opportunities for children to learn as they discover, create, improvise and imagine. Early childhood educators are supported to implement the Early Years Framework through an Educators Guide to The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (DEEWR, 2010a). The Reflect, Respect, Relate resource supports the quality of teaching and learning in early childhood settings through assessing learning and development in the early years using observation scales (Department of Education and Children's Services, South Australia, 2010). Everyday practice is supported by practice-based resources, which include Living Practice with the EYLF, Connecting with Families, posters, postcards and bookmarks (DEEWR, 2010b). In addition to the framework, an Information for Families booklet (translated into eleven languages) explains the framework to families (DEEWR, 2009b).

South Africa's curriculum for young children is referred to as The South African National Curriculum Framework for Children from Birth to Four (NCF), which is used to determine what children learn through play when engaged in play-based early learning sessions at the toy library. The NCF is focused on children aged birth to four years. The curriculum framework is arranged into six early learning development areas (ELDA), namely: well-being, identity and belonging, communication, exploring mathematics, creativity and lastly knowledge and understanding of the world (DBE, 2015:8). Each of the ELDA's introductions provides an overview of what is intended with the ELDA as well as what the adult's role is. The introduction also explains what adults should be paying attention to and indicates reflection points. The introduction of each ELDA is followed by a number of aims, developmental guidelines and examples of activities, arranged into four broad developmental categories: beginning, moving on, advancing further and towards Grade R. Each ELDA concludes with assessment guidelines, which inform the adult of aspects to observe and discuss with parents, as well as watch points to record and to act upon for individual children. The

NCF clearly articulates the role of play and that young children learn when they play (DBE, 2015:16). The NCF was used as a framework when the data was analysed to determine which learning activities children engaged in, as well as which resources were being used in toy libraries (refer to Figure 5.1 and 5.2 list the participant responses linked to the respective ELDAs in the NCF).

Laying the foundations of learning through play-based learning is continued in the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement for Foundation Phase Gr R-3, abbreviated as CAPS, which specifically emphasises that in Grade R, Mathematics, Life Skills and Home Language learning should be play based. The CAPS for home language Grade R refers to integration and play-based learning. It promotes free play, teachable moments, teacher-guided and child-initiated activities (DBE, 2011a:20). Toy libraries offering play-based early learning sessions to six year olds should use the CAPS to guide the planning of the play activities.

The Life Skills section explicitly states that children should not be stuck behind desks and should be given opportunities to play (DBE, 2011b:10). Furthermore, the Mathematics section promotes the pedagogy of free play (child-directed) and structured (adult-guided) activities, emphasising the preferred pedagogy to be used as active learning through play, referred to as play-based learning in this study (DBE, 2011c: 13). The intentions of both the NCF and CAPS are to provide a framework of what is to be included in learning programmes for young children, clearly indicating that the activities that are selected to promote children's learning and development must be play based and that through play children need to acquire both academic and life skills, also referred to as 21<sup>st</sup> century skills.

Providing curricula in early childhood may result in pressure to complete the curriculum and to meet national outcomes, which may result in less time for "unscheduled play", resulting in divorcing play and learning in the early years. The NCF was introduced in South Africa in 2015, yet before that increased formalisation of the pre-school industry is commonplace, with practitioners being pressurised to teach children to read and write and to stop playing (Theobald, Danby, Einarsdóttir, Bourne, Jones, Ross,

Knaggs & Carter-Jones, 2015:346; Berkhout, Hoekman & Goorhuis-Brouwer, 2012:1326).

## **2.7 The benefits of play-based learning**

The theorists Piaget (1952:21), Vygotsky (1978) and researchers of play-based learning such as Hirsh-Pasek *et al.* (2009) recognise play as the main way children learn. When children are given the opportunity to play, they are able to take risks, try out new ideas, experiment, explore, fail and try again. Play-based learning has specific benefits with regard to cognitive, social, emotional and physical development (Mardell *et al.*, 2016:4).

### **2.7.1 Cognitive benefits of play-based learning**

Children's cognitive skills are developed during play (Mardell *et al.*, 2016:4). Activities associated with cognitive development include games, block play, drawing, dramatic play, counting, classifying and creating patterns (Kamii, 2014:77). Children engaged in fantasy play that involves telling stories and using rich vocabulary are afforded the opportunity to practice language, reasoning skills and creativity, skills associated with cognitive development (Zosh, Reed, Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek, 2014:469). A play-based early learning session at a toy library includes activities that encourage the development of cognitive skills. One of the stations that are included in the structure of a play session focuses on cognitive development.

Play and playfulness deepen children's academic skills and content knowledge in the subject areas of mathematics, literacy, science, and information and computer technology (Cheng, 2011:72; Han, Moore, Vukelich & Buell, 2010:99). Cognitive development is closely linked to academic gains once entering formal schooling. Weiland and Yoshikawa (2013:2125) confirmed that participation in a play-based early childhood programme led to improvements in literacy, language, mathematics and emotional development (specifically in executive functioning). In play, children's creativity skills are enhanced as they imagine new possibilities, identify problems, solve the problems and communicate their solution (Whitebread & Basilio, 2013:77).

### **2.7.2 Social development and play**

Social development of young children lays the foundations for future relationships. Children living in poverty are at greater risk of experiencing difficulty with their social and emotional development, Whitebread and Basilio (2013:78) say. Gaps as well as advances in social-emotional development during early childhood remain and increase when entering formal schooling. Playing with other children requires children to read body language cues, listen and being aware of someone else's perspective. Children need to acquire work-related social skills such as listening and communication, which are linked to understanding instructions and following directions. Listening skills help a child comply with a teacher's demands in a group setting, a skill which is a determining factor for later success at school (McClelland, Morrison & Holmes, 2000:309).

### **2.7.3. Emotional development and play**

Children's emotional well-being determines their future mental health (Lester & Russel, 2010:19). It is of utmost importance for children to learn how to regulate their emotions and behaviours, because it is an important skill set that determines later learning success at school (McClelland, Acock, Piccinin, Rhea & Stallings, 2013:320). Children who are not able to regulate their emotions are less likely to receive instruction from a teacher, are not fully engaged, are not positive about their role as learners and have fewer cooperative learning opportunities (Mardell *et al.*, 2016:5). Play is effective in promoting children's self-regulatory skills, as confirmed in a study of low-income children by Razza, Martin and Brooks-Gunn (2012:312). In a toy library children are presented with multiple opportunities to regulate their emotions, take turns, share, negotiate for a toy or space to play – skills which are all associated with emotional development. In addition, while playing in the toy library children have the opportunity to participate in fantasy play by dressing up, pretending to take on the role of someone else and role-playing everyday events they see at home, such as cooking, caring for the baby and ironing.

#### **2.7.4 Physical development and play**

Children's readiness upon entering formal schooling includes both developmental and physical readiness, as confirmed by Goddard Blythe (2011:1). Children's play is often physical in nature (Whitebread *et al.*, 2012:19). Children's physical development includes active play such as jumping, climbing, and skipping. Boys often participate in rough-and-tumble play, which usually involves a friend or siblings at the toy library or parents when at home. Rough-and-tumble play is typical among young children, is the most widely researched form of play and involves physical activities such as wrestling, pushing, rolling, chasing, grappling and kicking (Jarvis, 2010:62). Toy libraries which have outdoor spaces provide opportunities for children to engage in physical play.

Guinhouya (2012:438) notes that giving children an opportunity to engage in physical play has positive effects on bone health, reduces cardiovascular risk factors and improves the musculo-skeletal system, besides improving children's psychological well-being. Guinhouya (2012:438) confirms that play reduces overweight and obesity. Worldwide, as well as in South Africa, children spend a large percentage of their time in sedentary activities, which leads to obesity (McVeigh, Norris & de Wet 2004:983). In South Africa the combined overweight and obesity prevalence is 13,5% in children aged 6-14 years (Shisana, Labadarios, Rehle, Simbayi, Zuma, Dhansay, Reddy, Parker, Hoosain, Naidoo, Hongoro, Mchiza, Steyn, Dwane, Makoe, Maluleke, Ramlagan, Zungu, Evans, Jacobs, Faber & SANHANES-1 Team, 2013:17). Children should have at least one hour of moderate to vigorous physical activity per day, which includes playing indoors and outdoors, in order to raise activity levels and prevent obesity (Guinhouya, 2012: 438). Outdoor play in early childhood development settings are associated with developmental and learning benefits, which include enhanced motor and physical skills, perceptual competences such as depth, form, shape, size and spatial orientation. Risk taking and learning to master risky situations (such as having to slide down a fireman's pole attached to a jungle gym), self-worth and children's independence are strengthened if they are given opportunity to play and explore in their environment (Prince, Allin, Beate, Sandseter & Ärlemalm-Hagsér, 2013:184).

Physical development includes developing fine-motor skills by participating in activities such as playing with playdough, cutting, drawing and playing with play materials where parts have to be clicked together or bobbles threaded onto a string. During a play-based early learning session at a toy library a range of fine-motor activities are provided. Grissmer, Grimm, Aiyer, Murrah and Steele (2010:1015) maintain that the development of fine motor skills takes place when children do art and have an opportunity to manipulate objects during free play. Young children's fine motor skill scores are strong predictors of later maths ability (Grissmer *et al.*, 2010: 1016).

## **2.8 Learning and the 21st century skills**

This study considers how toy libraries enhance children's learning of the required academic skills, but also how toy libraries nurture the development of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. Toy libraries not only provide resources, but are a powerful catalyst for igniting children's learning potential through play. Learning, and by implication education, is facing a crisis, argues Gray (2011:29). He explains that education in society reflects what the society of the day regards as important. For example, hunter-gatherer societies focused their education on survival skills, whereas ancient Greek education focused on good citizens who could debate. Protestant education focused on reading, religious and moral values. During the Industrial Revolution, occupation-driven education focused on apprenticeships, and in the 20<sup>th</sup> century education focused on competencies such as reading, writing and arithmetic. Gray (2011:29) is of the opinion that today's education systems focus on mastering and regurgitating content, which is measured and then regarded as learning. However, education reform initiatives are looking at 21<sup>st</sup> century skills to be embedded in how and what children are learning (Gray, 2011:29). The term "21<sup>st</sup> century skills" refer to the skills and competencies children will be required to have in order to enter the workplace. Wintrop and McGivney (2016:4) argue that children need to be equipped for a changing future through a breadth of skills and learning opportunities. Toy libraries that provide play-based learning opportunities develop young children's 21<sup>st</sup> century workplace skills.

An internet search for 21<sup>st</sup> century skills yields numerous lists. An example of a list of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills is provided by Abbott (2016a:1), who affirms that the 21<sup>st</sup> century workplace skills children need to develop include critical thinking, problem solving,

reasoning, analysis, interpretation and synthesising of information; research skills and practices, interrogative questioning; creativity, artistry, curiosity, imagination, innovation, personal expression; perseverance, self-direction, planning, self-discipline, adaptability, initiative; oral and written communication, public speaking, presenting, listening; leadership, teamwork, collaboration, cooperation; information and communication technology literacy, media and internet literacy, data interpretation and analysis, computer programming; civic, ethical and social-justice literacy; economic and financial literacy, entrepreneurialism; global awareness, multicultural literacy, humanitarianism; scientific literacy and reasoning; environmental and conservation literacy, understanding of ecosystems and lastly health and wellness literacy, including nutrition, diet, exercise, public health and safety.

Golinkoff and Hirsh-Pasek (2017:357) simplified the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills into a useful table with four levels of mastery for each skill. The table combines academic or content knowledge with the skills rather than seeing content as separate from skills.

Table 2.1 Four levels of mastery for each of the 6 Cs (Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek, 2017:357)

	Collaboration	Communication	Content	Critical Thinking	Creative Innovation	Confidence
<b>Level 4</b>	Building it together	Tell a joint story	Expertise	Evidence	Vision	Dare to fail
<b>Level 3</b>	Back and forth	Dialogue	Making connections	Opinions	Voice	Calculated risks
<b>Level 2</b>	Side by side	Show and tell	Wide breadth/shallow understanding	Truths differ	Means-end	Where do I stand?
<b>Level 1</b>	On my own	Raw emotion	Early learning/situation specific	Seeing is believing	Experimentation	Barrel on

Golinkoff and Hirsh-Pasek (2017:3858) argue that children need education that develops their head and hearts. Education is more than academic facts, also referred to as the “hard skills”. If children are to succeed in life, they also need to learn “soft

skills". The six skills identified by Golinkoff and Hirsh-Pasek (2017:3855) are 21<sup>st</sup> century skills children need to be given the opportunity to acquire if we want to enable children to succeed in the rapidly changing world of the future and contribute to solving global issues. The six skills include collaboration, communication, content, critical thinking, creative innovation and confidence, also referred to as the 6 Cs. In the table each skill is listed in the sequence it naturally unfolds in the child (Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek, 2017:2874). Collaboration needs communication. Content relies on communication in order to be developed. Critical thinking is impossible without content, and vice versa. Creative innovation is dependent on critical thinking and content.

When critically evaluating the progression, communication needs to take place first before collaboration is possible; however, for the purpose of this study the sequence proposed by the author will be used, which is collaboration first, then communication. Although the skills are listed in rows and columns, they must be viewed as integrated. The arrows indicate how learning skills move from level one (the bottom) to level four (the top). The first level is seen as the novice level; at level four the child is an expert in that particular skill. One level builds upon the next level, reinforcing and strengthening the skills. It is possible to be at various levels across the spectrum of skills. Each skill and its four levels are elaborated below.

### **2.8.1 Collaboration**

Collaboration is about learning to work together, eventually in a team, and to be able to see from another person's point of view. The workplace regards the ability to work in teams as one of the critical skills (Wintrop & McGivney, 2016:4). Collaboration skills are learned as children are given opportunities to play and interact with other children and adults. Golinkoff and Hirsh-Pasek (2017:941) distinguish four levels within collaboration, starting with level 1: on my own, then level 2: side by side, followed by level 3: back and forth and lastly level 4: building it together. Parten's (1932:249) categorisation of children's social interaction when playing closely matches the four levels of collaboration.



Collaboration on level 1 starts with babies crying to communicate their needs and learning how to self-regulate their emotions as they interact with adults. The foundations of collaboration are laid. Babies do not collaborate at this level, but are starting to learn about controlling their emotions. Play at this level is referred to by Parten (1932:250) as solitary independent play. The child plays alone and independently from others and makes no effort to get close to other children. The child is not paying attention and is unaware of the others around them.

Level 2: Side by side collaboration is evident when children start playing alongside others. Parallel play is when a child plays independently among a group of other children without trying to influence or modify the activity of children near him (Parten, 1932:250). Children's self-control is further developed as they learn to stay in their own space. Play takes place beside rather than with peers. This is seen as independent play in a group, which is a more socialised form of play than at level 1.

Level 3 collaboration is referred to as "back and forth" by Golinkoff and Hirsh-Pasek (2017:1046). In children's play, collaboration is seen when children share toys, have conversations and show an awareness of others. A level of self-control is present in that they do not try and keep everything to themselves and become interested in each other. This resembles Parten's (1932:251) category of associative play as a type of group play where children play with each other. Children talk about what they are playing, they borrow and lend play materials and follow each other with some attempt to control which children may or may not play along. They children carry out similar or identical activities, but act as they wish.

The highest level of cooperation is level 4: building it together (Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek, 2017:1132). At this level there is a shared passion for the importance of the goal, which the group wants to reach at all costs. A high level of trust is present, with room to disagree and dispute what is to be done. The input of each individual is valued. Self-control enables individuals to offer suggestions and to speak their mind. Young children exhibited level 4 collaboration skills during cooperative play, the most highly organised group play children participate in (Parten, 1932:251). In cooperative play children take on different roles, censor each other's actions, control of play is

centralised and directed by one or two individuals and individuals subordinate their own wishes to those of the group. The efforts of one child are enhanced by another in order to attain a final goal. The goal might be to make something, to compete, to dramatise situations or to play formal games. Children's self-control is developed as they share and take turns, which results in positive social behaviour (Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek, 2017:1233).

Children learn collaboration skills first on their own, then side by side, then through a back and forth process and finally mature when they can build something together. During play-based early learning sessions, children are given multiple opportunities to practice and develop their collaboration skills as they participate in a variety of play opportunities. In order to collaborate, children also need to be able to communicate.

### **2.8.2 Communication**

Children need effective communication skills in order to collaborate. Communication skills include listening, speaking and writing (Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek, 2017:1300). It involves speaking so others can understand your message as well as listening when you are spoken to. The first level of communication is face-to-face speaking. Communication skills also develop through four levels, starting with raw emotion, showing and telling, having a dialogue and finally telling a joint story. Babies communicate using crying and gestures. Gradually children start using words to communicate. Eventually the skill of communication matures into the ability to write coherently and succinctly in a global world linked via the internet (Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek, 2017:1321).

Learning to communicate or acquiring language skills depends on social interactions. Children's communication starts out with raw emotion communicated by means of crying or screaming. If adults respond immediately, reliably and accurately to what is being communicated over a period of time, children's communication skills improve. Children do not learn language skills from screens unless it is done interactively, for instance through video chatting (Roseberry, Hirsh-Pasek & Golinkoff, 2014:965).

The second level of communication is that of “show and tell”. Communication is mainly from the adult, with very little communication from the children. Many education settings function in this way; children are expected to sit and listen (Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek, 2017:1469).

The third level of communication is that of dialogue. Dialogue implies that real communication is taking place. There has to be a series of back-and-forth exchanges. Young children’s language develops when they are exposed to conversation. The mind-set of the listener is taken into account. In play, children communicating on level 3 will exchange information, and by doing so learning takes place (Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek, 2017:1562).

Communication on level 4 is about telling a joint story. When children are given the opportunity to engage in cooperative play such as fantasy play, they build a story together and reach level 4 communication skills (Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek, 2017:1582). During cooperative play children’s communication skills, which include understanding who you are speaking to, listening to what they are saying, interpreting non-verbal cues and learning about someone else’s viewpoint, are practised and enhanced (Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek, 2017:1659). In a toy library children’s communication skills are improved when the toy librarian enters into conversations with the children, asking open-ended questions that allow for further conversation, and encourages debates and disagreements (Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek, 2017: 1734). Communication as a skill often takes place around content, which is explored next.

### **2.8.3 Content**

Traditionally learning is seen as the ability to remember numerous facts, referred to as knowledge or content. Children have to learn content through memorisation and are then tested. The test confirms how much a child has learned. In the digital age knowledge, fact, information or content is available at the press of a button, and the content children are expected to learn today will be obsolete before they complete school (Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek, 2017:1821). Today’s children need to learn how to synthesise and evaluate large volumes of information. Children need to be able to

learn to use what they know and have in new creative ways to solve problems. Content has to be learned in a way that allows us to use it. Content learning evolves across four levels, namely 1: early learning/situation, level 2: wide breadth/shallow understanding, level 3: making connections and level 4: expertise.

Content learning starts at level 1 through early learning, which starts in the womb. Babies remember stories and songs being read and sung to them in the womb (Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek, 2000:16). Learning continues as babies learn through routines, repeating patterns, associations and imitation (Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek, 2017:1878). However, learning at level 1 is situational (not transferred or linked to previous learning) and not flexible.

Moving up a level requires a wide breadth of knowledge, which results in shallow understanding. Children at level 2 have more language, ask questions and thereby learn about a wide range of things and how to judge whether content is right or wrong (Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek, 2017:1968).

Content learning at level 3 is about making connections. In order for children to learn, they not only need content associated with academic learning (Robinson, 2011:7) but also need executive functioning skills. Diamond, Barnett, Thomas and Munro (2007:1387) argue that the core executive functioning skills are inhibitory control (resisting habits, temptations or distractions), working memory (mentally holding and using information) and cognitive flexibility (adjusting to change). Executive functioning is also referred to as self-regulation (McClelland, Cameron, Connor, Farris, Jewkes & Morrison, 2007:947). These three cognitive processes help young children exhibit the behaviour required to be successful at school. Children who have self-regulating skills are able to remember and follow the teacher's directions and can focus on a task by ignoring distractions (McClelland *et al.*, 2007:949).

Young children's ability to regulate their behaviour is important for achievement throughout formal schooling. Self-regulation skills are linked to better performance in children's literacy, vocabulary and maths skills (McClelland *et al.*, 2007:956). Self-regulation skills are a more reliable predictor of academic success than measures of

general intelligence (Alloway & Alloway, 2010:27). Self-regulation skills can be taught to 4 to 5 year olds as they engage in mature, dramatic play (Diamond *et al.*, 2007:1388). Children learn best when the learning is active, engaged, meaningful and socially interactive (Hirsh-Pasek, Zosh, Golinkoff, Gray, Kaufman & Robb, 2015:7).

The last level of content is that of expertise. Once children see new connections between things, they can extend their learning and eventually become experts. Experts work at solving problems by applying what they know, evaluate their actions and think how to do it differently (Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek, 2017:2276). Play-based early learning sessions in a toy library are ideally suited to create a space where children can acquire content when stories are being read or a discussion takes place. In addition, having a group of children together in one space is certain to produce conflict, which creates opportunities to acquire self-regulatory skills. Becoming a life-long learner lies at the heart of learning. Content is needed in order to learn and is regarded as one of the important skills children need, along with critical thinking, which is explored next.

#### **2.8.4 Critical thinking**

Critical thinking is about questioning what we hear or read. It requires focus, digging in deep and holding relevant facts to enable solutions. Critical thinking involves older children learning how to analyse, synthesise and evaluate information (Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek, 2017:330,2473). Critical thinking levels include "seeing is believing" at the first level, followed by "truths differ" at the second level to "opinions" at the third level, and at the fourth level "evidence", or mastering the intricacies of doubt.

Critical thinking at level 1 (seeing is believing) starts with children learning more content as they grow older and learning to make judgments of what is right and what not as young as age 1. The start of critical and rational thinking is already present (Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek, 2017:2501). Children younger than four see and believe what they see. It takes time and experience to realise that things are not always what they seem.

At level 2, "truths differ" refers to the fact that multiple viewpoints and differences of opinion exist (Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek, 2017:2547). Children begin to compare what they hear with what they have seen in the world and start becoming sceptical. They ask many questions to try and figure out what others think. By age 4 or 5 children realise there are different truths and start questioning their own thoughts and feelings.

At level 3 opinions have developed. People rely on their own personal reality, although they recognise others' points of view. Questioning why things are done in a particular way is acceptable at this level. Older children are able to share opinions and debate various opinions, which promotes critical thinking.

As critical thinking moves to level 4, decisions are based on evidence. Children who are encouraged to play games or who tell funny stories, or who are encouraged to read books and ask "why" and "what if" questions, are learning critical thinking skills. Encouraging children to ask questions and answering the questions is the start of critical thinking. Evidence is used along with critical thinking to solve problems. The ability to solve problems is being able to select and combine the right integrated information at the right time and to make important decisions after critically thinking about it, providing solutions to problems (Gardner, 2006:46). Someone who can take a step back, reflect on what is wanted, what the question is that needs to be answered, will be the person who is considered to be a critical thinker (Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek, 2017:324). During play-based early learning sessions children have the opportunity to develop skills to solve problems. Solving problems requires creativity, which is explored next.

### **2.8.5 Creative innovation**

Children need to be creative in order to participate in the world that awaits them. Creativity is the ability to generate many ideas, of many different kinds, many of which are original, unusual and clever – also referred to as divergent thinking (Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek, 2017:2920; Russ, 2013:140). A number of studies confirm that pretend play in young children promotes creativity in adulthood (Russ, 2013:146). Everybody in every sphere of life is required to be creative, and creativity is not only about

activities such as art (Robinson, 2011:3). Creativity is divided into four levels by Golinkoff and Hirsh-Pasek (2017:2983). Level 1 is experimentation, level 2 is means-end, level 3 is voice and level 4 vision.

Children who are encouraged by adults to experiment freely through pretend play are exposed to the first level of creativity, referred to as experimentation. At level one children are not held back by so-called conventions, because they don't know many conventions; this frees them up to be creative (Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek, 2017:2995). Allowing children to freely experiment at a young age is critical for fostering creativity.

Creativity at level 2 ("means-end") is about learning how to be creative, finding the means achieve the end product. Children at level 2 carry out creative activities for extended periods of time, working on them until the end goal they had in mind is achieved (Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek, 2017:3047). Children's creativity flourishes if they are invited to discover how something works instead of being told what to do (Bonawitz, Shafto, Gweon, Goodman, Spelke & Schulz, 2011:328).

At Level 3 voice becomes important; being creative means adding your own personal expression (Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek, 2017:3160). Weisberg (2006:40) defines creativity as an incremental process which requires time and the mastering of practical skills or techniques (expertise), as well as having knowledge about the domain and being able to use that knowledge to be creative or to innovate. If young children are given the opportunity to change endings of stories or are given the opportunity to use materials in a novel or unusual way, their creativity is nurtured. Once a child has found their creative voice, they move the next level, which is vision.

Vision characterises the fourth level of creativity (Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek, 2017:3184). Innovations that are truly remarkable take society out of its comfort zone. At first glance, an innovation may be seen as a crazy idea, resulting in its being rejected. At this level of creativity something has to be done better or there is a shortcoming which needs to be fixed. Creativity is often linked to a problem that needs to be solved. Preparation, experience and practice are required to reach the vision level of creativity

(Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek, 2017:3210). Creative children require confidence and perseverance, concepts which are explored next.

### **2.8.6 Confidence**

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century confidence is a critical attribute. Confidence is about the willingness to try and to be persistent (Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek, 2017:3363). Confidence is what makes children keep trying and figuring out (experimenting) as they explore, discover and innovate. Success is determined by how many more times a child will try after failing. Failing and making mistakes naturally occur within the realm of creativity. Children must be encouraged to fail, because it provides an opportunity for learning and finding another way to do the task at hand (Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek, 2017:3371). Growing in confidence is described as moving through four levels, starting with level 1: barrel on, moving to level 2: where do I stand, level 3: calculated risks and level 4: dare to fail.

Barrelling-on at level 1 refers to a child thinking that he/she knows more than they actually know and being overconfident with regard to what they physically are capable of doing (Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek, 2017:3408). Young children seem overconfident about their physical abilities and do not yet compare themselves with others, which allows them to carry on regardless – to simply barrel on.

Asking "Where do I stand?" characterises the second level of confidence. It is the ability to realistically assess one's abilities in relation to those around the person who have similar characteristics (Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek, 2017:3448). Children who are at level two in the development of their confidence may not take big bold steps that may cause them to fail, but would select that which they know they can successfully do. A child with low self-esteem will avoid failure. Children need spaces where they can take risks and by doing so learn about success and failure. Failure presents opportunities for learning. When children take risks and learn "where they stand" they become aware of their own limits and capabilities (Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek, 2017:3507). Children's confidence is further developed if they are encouraged to explore alternative ways of doing a task, thereby increasing creativity and confidence.



The arts (music, drama, dance, drawing, painting) provide opportunities to engage and persist, which builds perseverance and confidence and enhances executive functioning skills as well (Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek, 2017:3538). Once children know where they stand, they are able to take calculated risks, which is the third level of confidence.

Calculated risk characterises the third level of confidence. Taking a calculated risk involves weighing up the chances of success against failure. Calculated risks create an opportunity to learn from making mistakes (Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek, 2017:3560). If children are not given the opportunity to take calculated risks, their development may stagnate.

At level 4 a child dares to fail. Children need to be able to try out things, to fail and to try again. Keeping on trying requires perseverance and passion. Children's efforts need to be praised in order to encourage perseverance. The process of a task is more meaningful than the end result, as it builds skill and confidence (Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek, 2017:3794). The expectations adults have of children greatly influence their confidence and ability to dare to fail (Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek, 2017:3744). Children need to learn how to work hard and persevere and that learning, inventing and eventually being successful does not come at the first attempt (Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek, 2017:3788).

## **2.9 A South African list of 21st century skills**

Toy library play-based early learning sessions play a role in developing 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in young children. Care *et al.* (2017:1) conducted a study, which included South Africa, to determine which 21<sup>st</sup> century skills were considered to be most important. Stakeholders that participated included parents, teachers, school administrators, teacher trainers/lecturers, non-government personnel and government personnel. The 21<sup>st</sup> century skills that were regarded as important across the stakeholder groupings are presented in Table 2.2: Priority 21<sup>st</sup> century skills for South Africans (Adapted from Care *et al.*, 2017:14).

Table 2.2: Priority 21st century skills for South African (Adapted from Care *et al.*, 2017:14).

21 <sup>st</sup> Century skills	Learners	Parents	Teachers	School administrators	Teacher trainers/lecturers	Non-government personnel	Government personnel
Collaboration	✓						
Communication	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
Creativity	✓			✓			
Critical/analytical thinking	✓		✓				
Curiosity/inquisitiveness							
Decision making and reasoning							
Leadership		✓	✓				
Listening	✓	✓	✓				✓
Problem solving						✓	
Self-awareness							
Self-regulation				✓			
Social/interpersonal	✓	✓	✓				
Teamwork skills		✓					
Technology and computer	✓	✓	✓				

Learners (from Mexico, the Philippines, Kenya and South Africa) that participated in the study identified a broad range of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, including collaboration, communication, creativity, critical thinking, social and interpersonal skills, technology and computer skills and listening skills as being important (Care *et al.*, 2017:2). When analysing the stakeholder groups against the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills it is noteworthy to firstly identify the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills that were not mentioned by any stakeholders, which include curiosity or inquisitiveness, decision making and reasoning and self-awareness.

Collaboration, problem solving, self-regulation and teamwork skills were 21<sup>st</sup> century skills only identified by 1 stakeholder group as being important. Creativity, critical or analytical thinking and leadership were identified as important by two of the seven stakeholders. Social and interpersonal skills, along with technology and computer skills, were viewed as important by three stakeholders. Listening skills were selected

by four of the seven stakeholders, indicating its importance as a 21<sup>st</sup> century skill. The 21<sup>st</sup> century skill that was considered to be the most important in the South African context by five of the seven stakeholders was communication skills. Toy libraries need to understand the importance of the identified skills and should ensure that toy librarians are skilled to encourage and nurture the development of the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills.

In the same study stakeholders were asked how the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills could be developed. The school-aged children, parents and ECD practitioners emphasised play as a method to learn the required 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. Learner-centred approaches and innovative teaching methods were seen as having the ability to promote the required skills (Care *et al.*, 2017:28). In light of this, toy libraries have an important mandate to nurture 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in young children during play-based early learning sessions.

## **2.10 Toy libraries**

In order to provide a comprehensive overview of the operational characteristics of toy libraries, the following section explains the rationale for establishing toy libraries against the backdrop of a historical account and an exploration of the role and importance of toy library associations. The various facilities where toy libraries are operational and the various beneficiaries are explained. The treasure chest of services is explored, followed by a discussion of the variety of stakeholders. The benefits and challenges associated with the toy library sector are examined. The section concludes with a view of the role of toy libraries in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **2.10.1 The rationale for establishing toy libraries**

The reasons for establishing toy libraries are diverse and are determined by the need in the community. The settings in which toy libraries are located are equally diverse, resulting in toy libraries that can serve various target groups. The rationale for establishing toy libraries strongly influences the services that are provided at the toy library (Kapellaka, 1992:54). Toy libraries can be found in book libraries in South Africa and across the world where the rationale is to introduce reading and books to children

visiting the children's section in the book library (Department of Arts and Culture (DAC), 2015:35). Toy libraries are also situated in hospitals, where the motivation for the toy library is to provide therapy-related services as well as play opportunities for children who are hospitalised for lengthy periods and who are occasionally able to participate in play (Barros De Oliveira, 2015:66). Toy libraries are also situated at schools, where the purpose of the toy library is to provide resources in the form of toys, games and play materials that support the implementation of a curriculum (Kapellaka, 1992:54).

### **2.10.2 A historical overview of toy libraries**

According to Kapellaka (1992:53), the first toy library was established in Los Angeles in the summer of 1935, during the Depression. The manager of a neighbourhood store reported to the school principal that toys were being stolen from his store by children of that particular school. As a result of this incident and because the principal realised that the children did not have toys of their own, toy loans were initiated. The toy loan services are operational to this day (Department of Public Social Services, 2017:1).

In the period ranging from the 1950s to 1960s, the toy library concept was gradually adopted by a number of countries. There are records of toy libraries in Germany in 1952 (Rettig, 1998:229) and in Denmark in 1959 (ETL, 2014:4; Fuchs, 2014a:67). A Swedish toy library was established in early 1963 by the mothers of handicapped children. It was named Lekotek and focused on children with disabilities (Rettig, 1998:229). Italy and India had established toy libraries by 1965 (Rettig, 1998:229). In Britain, toy libraries began in 1967 (Kapellaka, 1992:53). Moore (1995:27) confirms that toy libraries were introduced in Norway in 1969.

Further expansion of the toy library phenomenon took place during the 1970s and 1980s when toy libraries were opened in Australia in 1971, Canada and New Zealand in 1972 (Jelly, 2014:75), the Netherlands in 1973 and Switzerland in 1972 (Fuchs, 2014a:305). South African toy libraries were initiated in 1977 (Poller, 1988:91). Israel's toy library history commenced in 1984, Nigeria's in 1986, Russia's in 1992 (Moore, 1995:32). Barcelona's toy libraries opened in 1978, according to Borja and Garcia

(2014: 131). The first toy library in Brazil opened in 1981 (Abri Associação Brasileira de Brinquedotecas, 2016:1), followed by Korea in 1983 (Kim, 2014:53) and Israel in 1984. In the 1990s, records show that only Russia introduced toy libraries (in 1992, according to Moore, 1995: 31). The African and South African history follows.

The African history of toy libraries is very poorly documented. Filion and Baillargeon (2012:27) suggest that toy libraries were set up between 2009 and 2011 in a number of African countries. The exact dates are unconfirmed, but it seems that toy libraries were established in Senegal, the Ivory Coast, Benin, Burkina Faso and the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2011.

South Africa's history of toy libraries is also poorly preserved as a result of the history either not being documented, or if documented, not accessible to me. Poller (1988:91) confirms that toy libraries have been in existence since 1977, when the South African Inherited Disorders Association established the first toy library at the Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital in Rondebosch, Cape Town. They were established by occupational therapists with the view to assist children living with disabilities, and toy libraries directed towards child development in general followed. Toy libraries in South Africa range from those intended for therapeutic use to those for promoting child development or recreational activities for children (Poller, 1988:92). In 1982 a toy library was established in Tongaat, Kwa-Zulu Natal which was open for two hours a day and where toys could be borrowed for five cents (South African History Online, 1982:1).

The South African Toy and Leisure Libraries Association (SATLLA) was established in 1993. SATLLA was managed by a group of volunteers who were passionate about having toy libraries to help children living with disabilities to be able to play (ALL-SA, 2012:3). The founding member of SATLLA, Cynthia Morrison, joined the International Toy Library Association (ITLA) in 1994. The first National Toy Library Conference in South Africa was organised by SATLLA in 2001, and it was estimated that around 21 toy libraries existed at that time. The organisation's name was changed to Active Learning and Leisure Libraries South Africa (ALL-SA) at the conference in 2001, and

ALL-SA was registered as a non-profit organisation with the Department of Social Development (DSD) in South Africa that same year (ALL-SA, 2012:3).

In 2005 ALL-SA hosted the 10<sup>th</sup> International Toy Library Conference, which was attended by 275 delegates representing 26 countries. ALL-SA provided a range of services to the toy library community, which included operating a come-and-play toy library model in the inner city of Johannesburg which benefitted around 12 800 children per annum (ALL-SA, 2012:9).

In addition to offering play sessions, ALL-SA provided training on how to set up a toy library as well as how to develop children’s skills through play and making toys from scrap materials. ALL-SA was a rich source of information to the toy library sector through its magazine titled “Play Today Building our Nation through Play”, which was published twice a year (ALL-SA, 2010:1). Over a period of two years (2010 to 2012) it became increasingly difficult for ALL-SA to obtain funding to sustain its operations and in October 2012, ALL-SA donated its assets to Cotlands, a non-profit organisation established in 1936 (Cotlands, 2013:5). Cotlands continues with the toy library association’s functions, which include providing toy library training, organising conferences and seminars as well as producing newsletters.

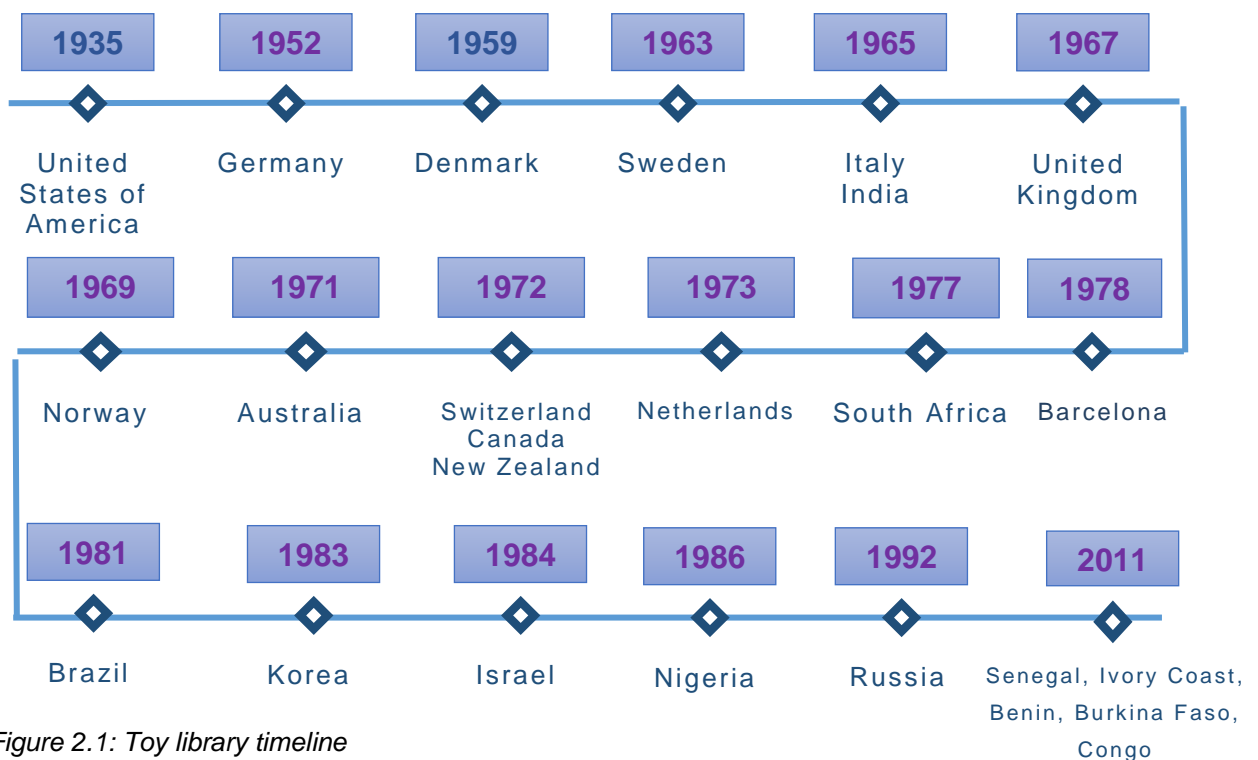


Figure 2.1: Toy library timeline

### **2.10.3 Toy library associations as a networking platform**

Across the world, it is common practice for toy libraries to belong to a toy library association that is affiliated to ITLA. Toy library associations charge a membership fee and offer a range of benefits, such as receiving information in the format of newsletters, access to toy library operations manuals (ITLA, 2014b:13; USATLA, 2016; Toy Library Federation of New Zealand, 2016:4; Cotlands, 2016b), funding information and advisory services and opportunities to network (Powell & Seaton, 2007:7). The Toy Library Federation of New Zealand (2016:4) offers toys to its members at a reduced rate.

In Europe, members of toy library associations expect them to provide working standards, accredited training and funding in order to sustain toy library programmes (ETL, 2014:11). The Swiss Association of toy libraries was founded in 1980 (Fuchs, 2014b:305), the Toy Library Federation of New Zealand (2016:2) in 1981 and the USATLA in 1984 (Moore, 1995:15). The Asian Network was established in 1997 (Khor, 2014:84). Fillion and Baillargeon (2012:29) confirm that an African Toy Library Association was established in 2011.

ITLA was founded in 1990 in Turin during the 5th International Toy Library Conference and is registered as an international non-profit organisation under Belgian Law. ITLA's vision, as stated in the constitution, is: "Every community in the world has access to toy libraries that contribute to the well-being of all". ITLA's mission is recorded in the organisation's constitution as follows: "To advocate for toy libraries and toy librarians on how to make play come alive for the optimal development of communities" (ITLA, 2014a:2).

ITLA is managed by an international board elected at the bi-annual international toy library conference. ITLA's board serves for a period of three years. The board promotes toy libraries in their respective countries and ITLA membership. ITLA's membership is representative of the six continents of the world. ITLA's member countries per continent are shown in Figure 2.2. Europe has 14 countries that are ITLA members (Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Switzerland and the United Kingdom). Asia

has nine member countries (China, India, Israel, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Philippines, Taiwan and Turkey). South America has two member countries, Brazil and Colombia, along with Oceania (Australia and New Zealand) and North America (Mexico and the United States of America). The continent of Africa has only one country which is an ITLA member, namely South Africa (ITLA, 2016).

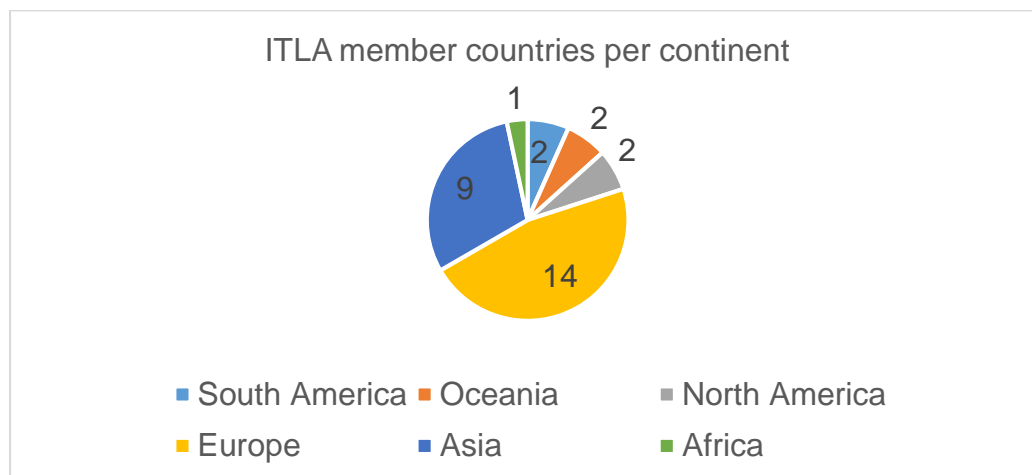


Figure 2.2: ITLA member countries per continent

In order to fulfil its mandate to facilitate the exchange of experiences and to promote reflection between toy libraries around the world, ITLA ensures that bi-annual international toy library conferences are convened by rotating the conferences between continents (Appendix M). Europe has hosted eight of the fourteen international toy library conferences (1978, 1981, 1984, 1990, 1996, 2002, 2008, 2017), Asia has hosted two (1993 and 2014) and North America, Oceania, South America and Africa have each only hosted one conference (1987, 1993, 2005, 2011). The hosting of conferences is usually undertaken by toy library associations representing a country on the continent (ITLA, 2014b:7).

Kapellaka (1992:53) claims that the Toy Library Institution in Australia was established in 1971. The Canadian Association of Toy Libraries was founded in 1975, followed by the USATLA in 1984 (Kapellaka, 1992:53). COTLASA (Cotlands, 2013:24) began operating in 2013 and continued the work initiated by ALL-SA. COTLASA became TLASA in 2015, a newcomer to the toy library association fraternity that provides information and support to toy libraries in South Africa through its website, quarterly



newsletters and seminars, as well as bi-annual conferences (Cotlands, 2015:16). TLASA provides training courses on toy library set-up and administration, play-based learning, birth-to-two stimulation and creating resources from waste. TLASA annually promotes and celebrates World Play Day and Toy Librarian Day on 28 May (Cotlands, 2016b).

#### **2.10.4 Toy library initiators**

The literature reveals that toy libraries have been initiated by an array of people, including individuals who commit on a full-time or part-time basis (Powell & Seaton, 2007:23). Toy libraries have been set up by volunteers, early childhood practitioners, psychologists, teachers, therapists, parents, nuns, community workers, as well as librarians working in book libraries (Kapellaka, 1992:54).

#### **2.10.5 Toy library facilities**

Toy libraries are located in diverse facilities. They are found in public book libraries (DAC, 2015:27), schools, hospitals, community halls, churches and buildings owned by non-profit organisations (Barros De Oliveira, 2015:66). A variety of mobile toy library models exist where a range of vehicles are equipped with play materials. The mobile toy library visits the beneficiary base, making the services being offered by the toy library more accessible.

A population-based approach, as advocated in the NIECDP, makes services available where they are needed most and will assist in working towards providing enough services in a particular area. This approach requires a survey to identify where children have no access, using field workers and comparing a variety of data sets and then setting up toy libraries in those identified areas. A child living with a physical disability and who is wheelchair bound requires a ramp to be able to access the toy library. Toy libraries should be designed in such a way that children in wheelchairs can access the building, move around easily and have access to the toilets. Geographical barriers, such as locating a toy library far from the majority of its members, or locating a toy library away from public transport routes, must be avoided; they should be established

where the highest number of young children who live in poverty is found (DSD, 2015:43).

### **2.10.6 Beneficiaries of toy library services**

Jackson *et al.* (1991:29) confirm that the beneficiary base for toy library programmes is diverse. Toy libraries provide a service to children, senior citizens, parents, community workers and professionals (Powell and Seaton, 2007:59). Toy libraries focusing on providing services to children younger than six years were included in this study. Toy libraries serve children found in a variety of settings – children’s homes, shelters or prisons where they are imprisoned with their mothers. Children living in rural areas form another category of toy library beneficiaries. Community care workers and home visitors who provide services to young children in their homes are also toy library beneficiaries. Another beneficiary group that accesses toy library services is professionals ranging from early childhood development practitioners to play therapists, occupational and speech therapists (Cotlands, 2016a:3).

### **2.10.7 Services offered by a toy library**

The services offered by toy library programmes have been described as a treasure chest of services to children and families in communities (Powell & Seaton, 2007:36). The type of service rendered by a toy library is determined by the reason why the toy library was set up and by whom rather than where it is geographically located. Toy library services include lending of educational toys and games (play materials), which include specially adapted toys for children living with disabilities (Rettig, 1998:229; Cottrell, 2013:1). Parent training, support and advice on appropriate play techniques are common services, both locally and internationally. Toy libraries also plan social events for families (Jackson *et al.*, 1991:29). In addition, opportunities for children to play at the toy library in come-and-play or play-based early learning sessions form part of the toy library’s services (Cotlands, 2016a:3).

Training for toy librarians is provided by TLASA as well as by non-profit organisations who have toy libraries. Toy libraries produce newsletters to showcase their work,

especially if they have donors that fund the toy library project (Jackson *et al.*, 1991:29). Mobile toy libraries increase access to play materials and play-based early learning sessions by taking the service to remote, hard-to-reach and underserved areas (DSD, 2015:104). Toy library services are further extended through toy-making workshops and selling second-hand toys. Toy library services are provided by staff generally referred to as toy librarians (DSD, 2015:14).

Children need a diversity of play experiences, which requires access to a range of toys, games and play materials (Kapellaka, 1992:55; Heckman, 2011:5). Families are not always able to provide the variety of play materials required. Toy libraries fulfil a critical role by giving families and their children access to diverse play materials that are appropriate in terms of age, development and culture (Kapellaka, 1992:55; Nwokah *et al.*, 2013:203).

#### **2.10.8 Key stakeholders of toy libraries**

The introduction of ECD services in a particular geographical location requires consultation with key stakeholders. It is important to identify who the key stakeholders are and to ensure thorough community consultations with key stakeholders who will be the programme champions and supporters (DSD, 2015:74).

Toy library management has to build a relationship with key government stakeholders, which include municipalities, the DSD and the Department of Health's ECD officials. Toy libraries are set up in a specific ward which is determined by the local municipality, and therefore ward councillors, traditional leaders and community leaders play a role in the creation of an enabling environment within a specific ward in which the toy library can flourish. Another critical stakeholder group is early childhood practitioners who either provide centre-based ECD programmes or home visiting programmes, such as home visitors and community health workers (DSD, 2015:74).

### 2.10.9 Benefits associated with toy libraries

The toy library concept has a number of benefits which make it a valuable programme to serve young children and their families. The benefits include:

- that members (children, parents, teachers, early childhood practitioners, therapists and other professionals) gain access to a wide variety of age, developmentally, culturally and linguistically appropriate toys, play materials and games (Kapellaka, 1992:55; Nwokah *et al.*, 2013:203) which enhance children's cognitive, social-emotional and physical development (Livingstone, 2016:1; Ozanne & Ozanne, 2011:265);
- that children have access to play opportunities at the toy library when play-based early learning sessions are provided (Kapellaka, 1992);
- that parents receive specialised or professional advice on play from the toy librarian (Kapellaka, 1992:55; Cottrell, 2013:1);
- the provision of a toy edit or an advisory service which excludes toys that may be offensive, violent or unsafe from the selection of toys in the toy library (Ozanne & Ozanne, 2011:273);
- a space for both parents and children to socialise (Ozanne & Ozanne, 2011:270; Kapellaka, 1992:55);
- that children learn about being responsible citizens and about good stewardship linked to values such as honesty, caring and sharing, which are reinforced when toys are borrowed, used at home and have to be returned in good and clean condition for the next child to use (Ozanne & Ozanne, 2011:274);
- toy lending from the toy library and toy-exchange events where used toys are exchanged, promoting recycling of toys and thereby reducing the need to buy new toys, which results in fewer toys being produced, which benefits the environment (Livingstone, 2016:1);
- a reduction in the negative impact of materialism and consumerism because toy libraries promote the sharing of collective public goods, which spills over into creating a society that is able to donate toys to others (Ozanne & Ozanne, 2011:273; Linn, 2010:62) and
- the promotion of multi-cultural knowledge by ensuring that toys reflect various cultures and that play materials and activities engender respect and tolerance

of different cultures and reflect the culture of the children using the play materials (Ozanne & Ozanne, 2011:275).

#### **2.10.10 Challenges experienced in toy libraries**

Providing services through toy libraries has its own unique challenges, as highlighted by Kapellaka (1992) and confirmed by Powell and Seaton (2007:37). A common challenge experienced by toy libraries is accessibility. Inaccessibility of toy library services can be caused by a range of factors, which include distance, cost as well as simply having no toy library in a community. Toy libraries that experience funding constraints find it challenging to provide an adequate range of toys and are often unable to replace broken or worn-out toys (Powell & Seaton, 2007:37). The under-usage of toy library services due to poor marketing is an ongoing challenge for toy librarians (Powell & Seaton, 2007:38), as is staffing the toy library with suitably qualified and skilled toy librarians.

Furthermore, toy librarianship is not recognised as a profession in South Africa, leading to unclear career pathing and the absence of accredited toy library training courses. Non-profit organisations provide short courses or in-service training courses on toy librarianship (Letcee, 2011:1). The NIECDP (DSD, 2015:14), defines a toy librarian as:

*“A person qualified and/or experienced in working in a toy library to assist different early childhood development service providers, parents or children using the service to select educational play materials which assist with the early learning and development of the range of age-appropriate skills and provides guidance, as well as instruction in their use.”*

In order for communities to benefit from toy library programmes, funding is required to set up and sustain the toy libraries operations. The operational cost of running a toy library programme is often not funded, and funding is generally described as being insufficient (Powell & Seaton, 2007:35). Toy libraries have access to limited funding, which results in an inability to attract skilled and knowledgeable staff and the use of volunteer toy librarians, which might result in poor quality services if time is not

invested in skilling volunteer toy librarians. Job insecurity and toy libraries having to introduce reduced hours of operation due to lack of funding are common phenomena.

Jackson *et al.* (1991:30) and Powell and Seaton (2007:37) report that various funding models exist. Funding for toy libraries varies greatly from country to country. Toy libraries that receive no funding are generally managed by volunteers who expect no remuneration for their contributions. A number of toy libraries are privately funded and owned, charging a membership fee to sustain the toy library. In South Africa, the government funds toy libraries through various government departments, including the DBE, the DAC and DSD (DSD, 2015:75). Non-profit organisations manage to attract corporate social investment funds as well as funding from the National Lottery Fund, which are used to set up and operate toy libraries (Cotlands, 2014:60).

Toy libraries find innovative ways to generate income, such as refurbishing toys, providing training or participating in events for which the toy library is paid. Toy libraries sometimes charge nominal user or membership fees; however, in most instances services are provided free of charge. Toy library associations, such as the TLASA, play a vital role in promoting and adding credibility to the work of toy libraries and structuring the toy library sector (Cotlands, 2016b).

### **2.10.11 The future of toy libraries**

Increased access to the internet and an upsurge in online shopping confidence have impacted the way toy libraries deliver services to their members. Online toy ordering is commonplace in countries such as India and New Zealand. In India, toy library franchises such as Share Toys make toys available via an online ordering service, turning toy libraries into a commercial for-profit business (Talwar, 2013:1). In South Africa, toy libraries need to evolve to keep up with global trends if they are to remain relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as a powerful advocate for promoting children's play and play-based learning. The advent of electronic games linked to digital play will influence thinking in terms of play materials. Toy library franchising models in other parts of the world are challenging the traditional toy library models, and toy libraries will have to rethink their operating model to remain relevant.

## 2.10.12 The role of toy libraries

Toy libraries in South Africa focus primarily on providing developmentally appropriate play materials, toy-making demonstrations and lending toys to individuals or ECD service providers as well as play and learning sessions (DSD, 2015:24). In this study the focus is on the role of the toy library in the provision of play-based learning opportunities for young children. The following section explores play-based early learning sessions at the toy library as well as the pedagogy, characteristics and indicators of play-based learning. Lastly the issue of access is explored.

### 2.10.12.1 Play-based early learning sessions at toy libraries

Designing and implementing quality play-based early learning sessions at toy libraries requires an understanding of young children and how they play and learn. It also requires the toy library to be set up and operated in a manner that supports play-based early learning sessions. In addition, developmentally appropriate practice principles provide a useful guideline when delivering play-based learning to children.

Figure 2.3 provides a visual representation of how various elements converge and inform a framework for quality play-based early learning sessions.

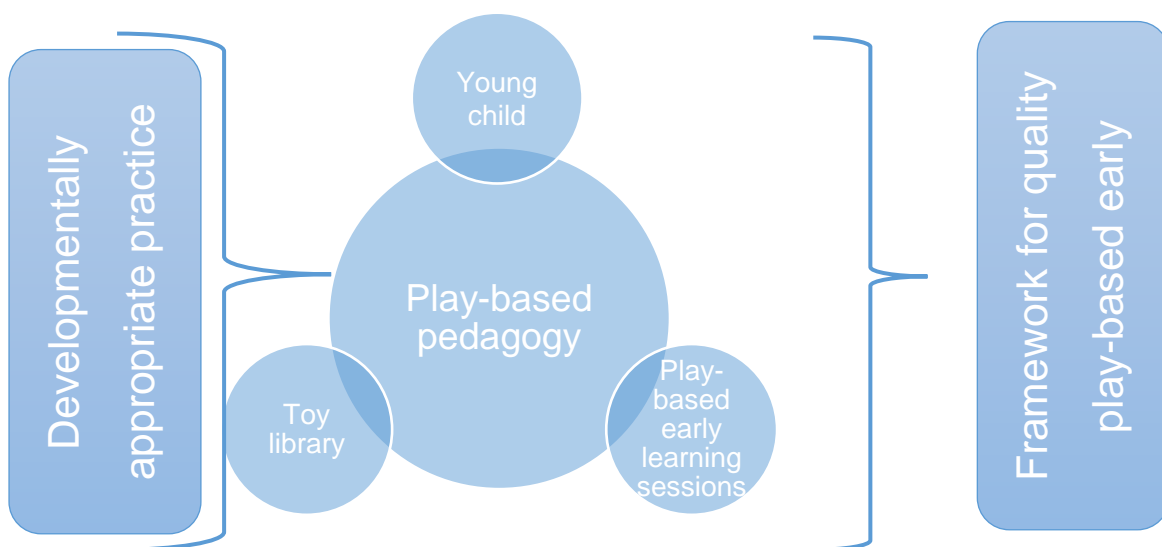


Figure 2.3: Elements of play-based learning in a toy library

The principles of Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) refer to a practice in early childhood settings that promotes young children's optimal learning and development (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009:16). DAP is based on the following assumptions: that the programme will respond to children's interests and needs, actively involve children in their own learning, encourage play, use a variety of strategies to facilitate learning and will impact children's physical, social-emotional and cognitive development (which includes language, mathematics and science).

DAP was conceptualised for the preschool setting, which is either a centre or someone's home, to provide a child care and education service lasting between three to eight hours. The principles of DAP are useful and to a large degree applicable to toy library settings. Toy libraries that provide play-based learning opportunities for young children require the same practice elements as a preschool, unless it is only a lending toy library. A quality play session in a toy library requires consideration and provision of the same key elements as are associated with providing an early childhood education programme. A play session requires a suitable environment, a dedicated programme and a skilled adult to implement it.

The terms development, growth and learning are often used to describe the changes young children undergo as they pass through early childhood between the ages of birth to nine years. Children's growth is associated with an increase in the child's physical size, which is related to the child's weight and height. Development refers to an increase in what the child knows (knowledge) and can do (skills). Learning, on the other hand, is a widening and deepening of the child's skills, concepts and attitudes in preparation for entering formal schooling (Excell, Linington & Schaik, 2015:18).

In order for children to grow, develop and learn optimally, they need access to equitable, high-quality early childhood programmes (Cobble & Bredekamp, 2009:1). Table 2.3 lists the twelve key principles of child development and learning that inform developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood settings, according to Copple and Bredekamp (2009:10). Toy libraries should be designed bearing the twelve key



principles in mind; they inform the toy librarian’s practice when working with young children and are rooted in early childhood development theories.

Table 2.3 Principles of child development and learning that inform DAP (Cobble & Bredekamp, 2009:11)

<b>Principles of child development and learning that inform developmentally appropriate practice</b>
1. All domains of development and learning physical, social and emotional, and cognitive – are important, closely related and influenced by the others.
2. Children’s learning and development follow well-documented sequences, with later abilities, skills and knowledge building on early foundations.
3. Development and learning proceed at varying and uneven rates across the different domains and children’s functioning.
4. Development and learning result from the dynamic and continuous interaction of both maturation and experience.
5. Early experiences have profound effects, both cumulative and delayed, on children’s development and learning. There are optimal periods for certain stages of development and learning.
6. Development proceeds toward greater complexity, self-regulation and symbol capacities.
7. Children develop best when they have secure, consistent relationships with responsive adults and opportunities for positive relationships with peers.
8. Development and learning occur in and are influenced by multiple social and cultural contexts.
9. Always mentally active in seeking to understand the world around them, children learn in a variety of ways. A wide range of strategies and interactions are effective in supporting all of these kinds of learning.
10. Play is an important vehicle for developing self-regulation as well as for promoting language, cognition and social competence.
11. Development and learning advance when children are challenged to achieve a level just beyond their current mastery and also when they have many opportunities to practise newly acquired skills.
12. Children’s experiences shape their motivation and approaches to learning, such as persistence, initiative and flexibility. In turn, their dispositions and behaviours affect their learning and development.

### **2.10.12.2 Play-based learning pedagogy to promote 21st century skills**

As discussed elsewhere in this thesis, play for the sake of playing is generally beneficial to children’s development. However, in early childhood settings such as toy libraries opportunities present themselves to potentially harness the power of play as

an opportunity to promote young children's development. In this section the focus is on the pedagogy of play, which the toy librarian needs to incorporate and implement when conducting play-based early learning sessions.

Not all adults working with children are convinced that play is a powerful mechanism for learning; some advocate direct instruction, which is associated with workbook exercises, drill and practice and an overemphasis on standardised IQ and readiness test (Eliason & Jenkins, 2011:6).

The preferred approach for children to learn in a toy library setting is through a play-based learning pedagogy where child-initiated play encourages active learning, problem solving and critical thinking (21<sup>st</sup> century skills), according to Pardhan, Faria, Bano, Fatima, Jaffer, Murani & Rajput (2012:19). O'Gorman and Ailwood (2012:287) state that their research indicates that children perceive activities initiated by the child as play, whereas activities initiated by the toy librarian are perceived as work.

Ogunyemi and Ragpot (2015:3) classify play-based learning as "educative play" and argue that not all play is educative. Toy librarians need to be aware that while play is active, it does not always result in learning. However, studies conducted by Han *et al.* (2010:82) found that play-based learning where the adult (in this context, the toy librarian) guided children's play to learn new words, thereby enhancing communication and listening skills, children's learning of new words increased. The at-risk pre-schoolers' vocabulary increased as opposed to the group that only received direct instruction and no opportunity to learn through play.

Guided play has also proven to be effective in mathematical learning. Fisher, Hirsh-Pasek, Newcombe and Golinkoff (2013:1872) investigated different strategies to teach pre-schoolers the properties of various geometrical shapes such as triangles, using physical objects to play with. The group of children who actively participated via discovery and scaffolding by a knowledgeable adult understood the features of the shapes better. Learning about shape, space, size, measurement, volume and area is possible during play if children have access to well-organised and resourced sand and water play (Wallace, White & Stone, 2010:398). Providing the materials is only half of the learning; the toy librarian's role is to allow free exploration, introduce the concept, encourage children to apply the concept and to evaluate children's understanding over

a period of time while children are playing with materials that are provided (Wallace *et al.*, 2010:395).

Bonawitz *et al.* (2011:329) studied the impact of direct instruction versus allowing children to discover properties of a toy by themselves. The study involved the teacher giving one group of children direct instruction on the intended use of the toy. The second group was given the opportunity to discover the toy, and they were able to discover the intended use as well as additional uses of the toy and its pieces without having been instructed by the teacher. The studies cited here confirm that young children learn through guided play as opposed to direct instruction or free play alone. The toy librarian needs to ensure that she guides children's play in order to maximise children's learning during play-based early learning sessions.

Mardell *et al.* (2016:1) explore the elements that must be present in a school in order for a pedagogy of play to be effective. The study is a partnership involving an international school in Denmark. Guided play, also termed playful learning or play-based learning, is not always evident in all early childhood education settings (Mardell *et al.*, 2016:2). Tension continues to exist between play and direct instruction as pedagogies to teach children. A pedagogy of play requires that the entire early childhood development setting (environment) becomes playful. Playfulness needs to be celebrated, made visible and examined by practitioners in order to better understand it as a tool that can unlock powerful learning around a child. Taking risks, exploring new ideas, making mistakes and experiencing joy are key ideas associated with play-based learning (Mardell *et al.*, 2016:2; Bruner, 1986:78). In a toy library playfulness should be evident in the physical space as well as in the way the toy library staff interact with each other and the public. The toy library has to purposefully convey the message of playfulness in creative ways.

Figure 2.4 aims to explain where play-based pedagogy fits on the continuum of play in relation to learning. The play continuum, adapted from Miller and Almon (2009:13), illustrates how learning through play can either be loosely structured without an adult on the one end of the continuum or strictly controlled on the other end by an adult allowing no time for play and exploration and giving direct instruction to enable

learning. In order for play-based learning to flourish, a playful environment rich in child-directed play is required. The toy librarian guides the learning through play by including rich experiential activities in the child’s environment and employing a range of strategies to direct learning towards the intended goal.

Allowing children to direct the play, creating an environment that encourages play and guiding play results in play-based pedagogy. The term “pedagogy” is derived from the Greek “paidagōgos”, meaning literally ‘to lead the child’ or ‘tend the child’. In common usage, it is often used to describe practice of or approaches to working with children in societies where an early childhood education curriculum is provided (Smit, 2012:1).

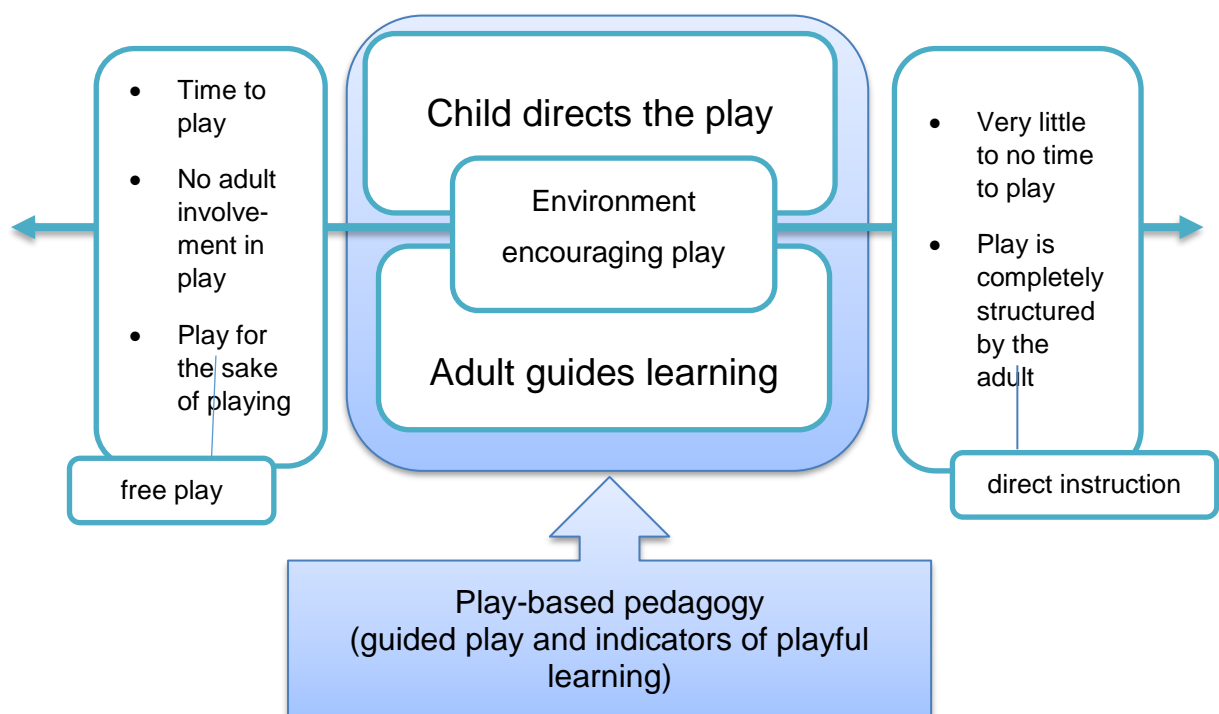


Figure 2.4: Play continuum (Adapted from Miller and Almon, 2009:12)

Pedagogy broadly includes all the processes and provisions used to initiate or maintain learning processes leading to the achievement of educational goals (Siraj-Blatchford, 2009:2). Play-based pedagogy is the interplay between the playful environment, the child directing the play and the toy librarian’s guidance towards learning while playing. The interdependence and interplay between the child directing

the play, the environment encouraging play and the guided play offered by the adults is briefly discussed below.

### **A. Child-directed play**

Child-directed play refers to play where the children take the lead and decide what to play with, for how long and with whom (Miller & Almon, 2009:13; Anderson, Spainhower & Sharp, 2014:14). Child-directed play requires opportunities for children to make choices and to be in control of the play. In a toy library setting, toy librarians need to be mindful that play which is directed by children has the potential to become infused with learning if the toy librarian knows how to guide the play. Theobald *et al.* (2015:346) investigated 3 to 4-year-old children's perspectives on play-based learning. The children described play as the time of day they are "doing" something alone or with their friends. The idea of ownership of play was an important aspect for children. In addition, the children did not describe all the activities in their day as play.

When children's learning happens in early childhood settings such as toy libraries, the toy librarians need to ensure they set up an environment that encourages children to direct the play and that they take the lead in order to guide learning.

### **B. Environment**

Toy librarians are expected to create an environment in which play-based learning can flourish. Van Heerden (2011:41) reminds us that the environment must portray that the space is for children and that the space was purposively created on the basis of how young children learn. Adults are guided by the children's needs, and they accommodate these needs in terms of the daily schedule, the way the environment is set up, the materials, activities and the interactions with the children (Newfoundland Labrador Education and Early Childhood Development, 2016:1; Siraj-Blatchford & Sylva, 2004:722; Hirsh-Pasek *et al.*, 2009:1; Pramling Samuelsson & Carlsson, 2008:631; Miller & Almon, 2009:22).

In order for a toy library to be able to provide play-based learning, it has to be set up and operate in a particular manner. Hirsh-Pasek *et al.* (2009:29) emphasise that play-based learning in playful environments results in young children learning more and having better academic outcomes as regards early literacy skills, numeracy and spatial concepts.

Children need to be able to discover, explore, create, experiment, observe and sustain their play activities in the play environment (van Heerden, 2011:42). Children's play may include toys or play materials. Careful thought and planning goes into the selection of play materials. Trawick-Smith *et al.* (2014:249) are of the opinion that very little empirical evidence exists about which toys to select for use in early learning settings.

It is important to choose play materials with a specific intention and for a particular purpose. The range of play materials should include toys, games, instructional material, every day or disposable household items, construction pieces and items found in the child's familiar surroundings. Ng'asike (2014:48) urges implementers of early childhood education programmes to consider the cultural relevance of whatever is used to enhance children's development. How can a toy librarian not include that which is familiar to children in the toy library? Including familiar play objects in the toy library and embracing the folklore materials from the local cultures, which are rich in folktales, songs, dances, myths, beliefs, knowledge of nature, environment, the universe, soil, water and plants, enriches the learning opportunities provided by the toy library.

Play materials should not only include Western commercially produced toys, but also cultural items which children perceive as a toy in their culture and which might have been found outside the house (such as sticks, stones, mud) and may also include toys made to play with, as is customary in some cultures (Trawick-Smith *et al.*, 2014:250). Families are not always able to provide this variety, and therefore the lending of toys by the toy library plays an important role, giving families access to a diverse range of play materials – provided they are culturally sensitive (Nwokah *et al.*, 2013:212; Ng'asike, 2014:48).

In short, play materials that inspire, maintain and enrich children's play and bring children together to play with the same objective or engage in playful activities with others are regarded as play materials suitable for a toy library. The selection of available play materials significantly impacts the quality of children's play and, by implication, their learning (Trawick-Smith *et al.*, 2014:250). Children's gender, socioeconomic status and ethnicity impacts what children select to play with as well as how long they play with a toy.

A study conducted by Trawick-Smith *et al.* (2014:254) confirms that toys that are non-realistic and open-ended encourage different types of play. The quality of play of boys and girls is related to different kinds of toys; this makes it necessary to select toys which encourage mixed-gender play, so that both genders benefit. Furthermore, Trawick-Smith *et al.* (2014:255) confirm the need to observe what children play with and how they play with materials. Toy librarians need to inquire what children play with in their family and neighbourhood settings and what toys hold cultural meaning for families that access the toy library programme (Trawick-Smith *et al.*, 2014:255). Making decisions about which play materials to include in a toy library can also be informed by exploring the childhood games and play materials of the parents and grandparents of the community being served. Sharing children's choice of play materials with the family may also influence what the child will be given to play with at home, thereby enhancing the quality of play opportunities at home (Trawick-Smith *et al.*, 2014:255).

The longer play materials are available to children, the less they are interested in them unless they are open ended, making it vitally important to rotate toys or to combine play materials in novel ways to encourage quality play experiences (Trawick-Smith *et al.*, 2014:255; Shutts, Banaji & Spelke, 2010: 606). A guiding principle when selecting play materials is to select those that can keep children engaged in elaborate play over time, which the toy librarian will only be aware of if how and for how long children play with specific play materials is noted by the toy librarian.

Poverty-stricken families need access to play materials because they offer an effective and cost-efficient way in which children living in poverty can get equal access to resources and development that reflects the cultural and social realities of the children. Parent education is essential when providing toys both to demonstrate to the parent how to use the toy and to recommend adaptations of the toy (Heckman, 2011:7; Nwokah *et al.*, 2013:205). Children learn best through guided play, which is further elaborated upon in the following section.

### **C. Play-based learning through guided play**

The success of play-based learning lies in the toy librarian's ability to provide guided play. Guided play "refers to learning experiences that combine the child-directed nature of free play with a focus on learning outcomes and adult mentorship" (Weisberg, Hirsh-Pasek, Golinkoff, Kittredge & Klahr, 2016:177). Guided play allows for the child's autonomy and the adult's guidance. Adults design the setting, and children have the autonomy to explore the setting while the adult scaffolds the learning by watching the child and encouraging learning through comments, suggestions and questions, bearing the learning goal in mind. The role of the adult is to offer children support in problem solving and to present new problems for them to solve, paying attention to their spontaneous interests and valuing their eagerness to learn about the world. Children are autonomous in spaces where play-based learning is valued (Weisberg *et al.*, 2016:179).

Despite the policy prescribing play-based learning, the implementation of the NCF through a play-based learning pedagogy is challenging and to a large extent not observed in practice (Clasquin-Johnson, 2011:8, 164; Smit, 2015:3). ECD practitioners in South Africa and abroad (Berkhout *et al.*, 2012:1326) do not always have adequate resources to stimulate and promote play-based learning, especially in poverty-stricken areas, and where resources are provided, they may not be adequate and practitioners may not know how to use the resources linked to the NCF and play-based learning (Clasquin-Johnson, 2011:148, 162; 171; Smit, 2015:26). In South Africa, as confirmed by Clasquin-Johnson (2011:171), as well as in countries such as



the Netherlands, practitioners are not trained in the pedagogy of play-based learning (Berkhout *et al.*, 2012:1326).

Practical skills training in play-based learning is required for ECD practitioners in general, including toy librarians. The training programmes for ECD practitioners must include modules on the knowledge and skills required to facilitate play-based learning in toy library settings and any other setting providing ECD programmes to young children (Clasquin-Johnson, 2011:171; Smit, 2015:26; Howard, 2010:100). It appears that this challenge is not unique to South Africa, since Ogunyemi and Ragpot (2015:5) confirm that similar challenges exist in Nigeria.

Ng'asike (2014:54) builds a convincing argument with regard to the importance of local indigenous knowledge and using the communication tools that are used within a culture, linking those to the range of strategies adults use when interacting with children. He lists proverbs, myths, stories, songs and games reflecting a particular culture as powerful African pedagogy. Nwokah *et al.* (2013:212) support the importance of embedding play in a caring and responsive relationship in order to guide children's play effectively.

Siraj-Blatchford and Sylva (2004:726) studied the pedagogical practices used in the most effective settings. Guided play is enhanced when combined with "sustained shared thinking", which relies on the toy librarian's awareness of and response to children's understanding and capabilities when participating in an activity. The child requires an awareness of what is being learnt, and together the child and toy librarian co-construct an idea or skill. Sustained shared thinking invites "scaffolding" as a principle into the play space. Scaffolding happens when a toy librarian identifies what a child understands and is able to do, and then provides appropriate support so that the child can achieve the learning goal. The toy librarian then gradually reduces the support, so that the child continues the activity independently. Scaffolding employs additional pedagogical approaches such as modelling, demonstrating, explaining, encouraging and identifying children's experiences and actions through rich discussions (Siraj-Blatchford, 2009:9; Ng'asike, 2014:54).

A toy librarian is required to be intentional and reflective as an ECD practitioner. Reflective practice is defined in the NCF (DBE, 2015:79) as follows:

*“An ECD practitioner who is a reflective practitioner will observe developmental and learning needs and interests, plan activities for these, carry them out (facilitate development and learning) and reflect upon the usefulness of the activities in order to plan further. Reflecting includes ‘shining a light’ onto practice.”*

Reflective practice is about being thoughtful, looking deeper, finding out how to provide richer, more meaningful play-based learning opportunities, accepting that there is no one right answer and about creating a culture where practices are examined and questioned (DEEWR, 2010). Schön (1987:26), who is credited with coining the phrase “reflective practice”, distinguishes between reflection-in-action (thinking on your feet as a situation arises, which enables you to adjust your actions) and reflection-on-action (thinking after the event). The ability to reflect on what we know is revealed by what we do.

Reflecting in action and after action generates new knowing, which results in changing actions and improving practice (Schön, 1987:26). Research confirms that practitioners, such as toy librarians, who regularly reflect on what they do, why they do it and how this new knowledge can be used to improve their practice achieve the best outcomes for children and families (Siraj-Blatchford & Sylva, 2004; Schön, 1987:40).

Toy librarians are responsible to facilitate play-based learning opportunities for young children. Reflection on guiding questions is useful when evaluating practice. Questions arise such as: Does the toy librarian know when to extend, join in the play or exit from children’s play? Is there enough time for play that is uninterrupted and prolonged? Is there a range of culturally appropriate resources available for children to play with? To what degree are children involved in the various types of play at the toy library? Is there an equal balance in the time and resources for play indoors and outdoors? Which children play alone? Which children play together? How does children’s play progress over time? How can observations and documentation be used to plan for play? Are

there some plays that are exclusive or limiting, or superficial and repetitive? How do you communicate your excitement, passion and belief about play-based learning to families? How does the toy librarian engage with children when their play is unfamiliar, makes you uncomfortable or challenges your 'rules' of engagement or expectations? Does the toy librarian ask questions or offer suggestions while children play? Does the toy librarian sometimes direct children's play? (MacNaughton, 2003:175).

Excell and Linington (2015:197) describe guided play in terms of a number of observable actions required of the toy librarian. A toy librarian who guides children's play:

- creates opportunities for children to initiate play by providing a variety of activities encouraging free play and encouraging children to make choices that result in exploration and discovery (Excell & Linington 2015:197);
- encourages uninterrupted time to play (Excell & Linington, 2015: 197, 199);
- ensures a physically and emotionally safe and inclusive environment (Excell & Linington, 2015: 198);
- supports children's play by being involved, shows interest in what the children are doing and joins in children's play when requested to do so or at an appropriate time to enhance further learning (Excell & Linington, 2015: 198);
- interacts positively (Jalongo & Isenberg, 2012:58), talks often to children to build a relationship, content knowledge and conversation skills (Jordan, 2009:43);
- provides adequate resources that stimulate interest and do not reinforce stereotypes, that reflect the child's culture and daily living activities and are also open-ended to stimulate creativity (Excell & Linington, 2015: 190, 199);
- provides indoor and outdoor space for children to play (Excell & Linington, 2015: 198),
- observes children at play to determine the child's preferred play activities with the view to extend and enhance play-based learning (Excell & Linington, 2015: 198).

Play-based learning requires an understanding of the NCF (DBE, 2015), an ability to practically set up a toy library environment that encourages play-based learning as well as an understanding of the role of the toy librarian in guided play while children are participating in play-based early learning activities (Weisberg *et al.*, 2016:178). A

toy library setting is well suited to provide young children with play-based learning experiences.

The next section provides an overview of the operational characteristics of toy libraries.

### 2.10.12.3 Characteristics of play-based learning

Play is described as being intrinsically motivated and pleasurable where objects and actions take on new meaning, the play is freely chosen and managed by the child and where the process of play is more important than the end result (Lester & Russel, 2010:18). Children who engage in play-based learning at a toy library are likely to experience learning through play if the activities they engage in are joyful, actively engaging, meaningful, iterative and socially interactive (The LEGO Foundation, 2017: 15). Figure 2.5 depicts the characteristics of play-based learning.

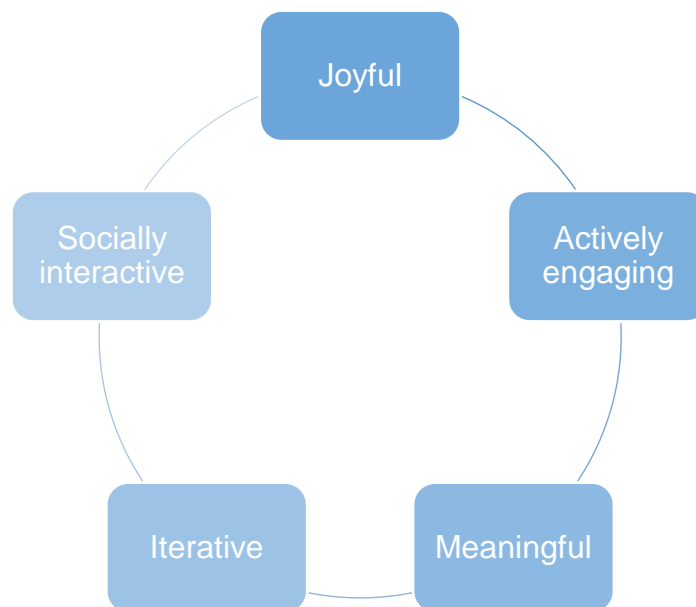


Figure 2.5: Play-based learning characteristics (adapted from The LEGO Foundation, 2017:14)

The play-based learning characteristic of joyfulness is commonly associated with most forms of play. However, in the context of play-based learning it includes feelings of thrill, surprise and learning from the fact that something is “unexpected”. Stahl and Feigenson (2015:94) confirm through their study with 11-month-old infants that early

learning and inherent early knowledge are enhanced when an element of surprise or unexpectedness, surprise or wonder is linked to curiosity and learning.

Play-based learning actively engages and focuses children's attention. Verdine, Golinkoff, Hirsh-Pasek and Newcombe (2014:11) confirm that actively engaging children to play with blocks, puzzles and shape sorting toys enhances both their spatial skills and concepts relating to mathematics. Piaget's (1952:21) stages of cognitive development confirm that learning takes place from concrete to abstract; this promotes the use of physical objects, which includes play materials, to enhance learning. Play activities aimed at enhancing children's learning must be meaningful, as children go through making sense of what they experience around them and connect new knowledge to existing knowledge.

The play characteristic of iteration is evident when children try out new ways of building a block tower. Closely related to iteration is the notion of trial and error, problem solving, testing ideas and imagining new alternatives – in other words, being creative (Whitebread & Basilio, 2013:77).

The characteristic of social interaction is evident in play-based learning where children play with each other. Being socially interactive involves communicating ideas, enjoying each other's company and building relationships – skills associated with being able to collaborate and communicate (Hirsh-Pasek *et al.*, 2015:7; Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek, 2017:2874).

#### **2.10.12.4 Indicators of play-based learning**

Play-based early learning sessions at a toy library need to include indicators of playful learning. If the indicators are present, play-based learning will be more likely to flourish. Mardell *et al.* (2016:7) are pioneering work which aims to isolate indicators of playful learning. The tool is envisioned to be useful to plan, assess and reflect on play-based learning opportunities for children. Indicators are grouped in three overlapping categories: delight, wonder and choice. The categories describe the experience of play-based learning by children as they develop knowledge and skills. It is likely that

where the categories overlap, play-based learning takes place, as illustrated in Figure 2.6.

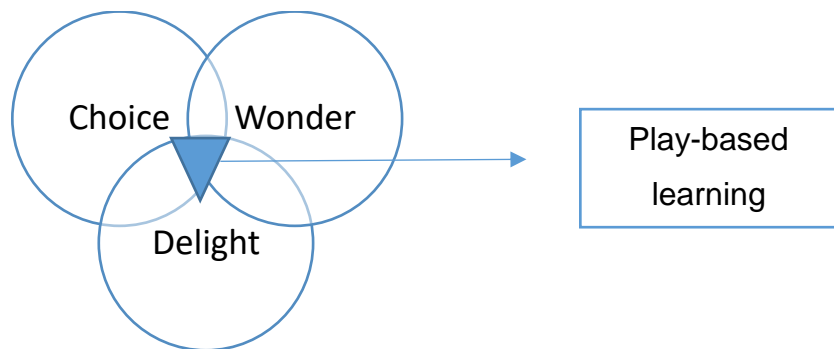


Figure 2.6: Play-based learning indicators (adapted from Mardell, Wilson, Ryan, Ertel, Krechevsky & Baker, 2016:7)

Each category (choice, wonder and delight) describes both observable (referred to as “feels like”) and psychological states of mind (referred to as “looks like”) that children experience during play-based learning, as listed in Table 2.4.

Table 2.4: Indicators of play-based learning (Mardell *et al.*, 2016:7)

<b>Choice</b>	<b>Wonder</b>	<b>Delight</b>
Feels like ... empowerment, autonomy, ownership, intrinsic motivation	Feels like ... curiosity, novelty, surprise, engagement, fascination, challenge	Feels like ... enjoyment, excitement, satisfaction, inspiration, pride, belonging
Looks like ... setting goals, purpose, challenges, negotiating, making and changing rules, having and sharing ideas, being spontaneous, choosing collaborators and roles, choosing how long to work/play and moving around.	Looks like ... exploring, improvising, learning from mistakes, inventing, creating, imagining, pretending, expressing excitement, trying, taking risks with materials, ideas, languages, processes, perspectives, music, names, symbols, words, stories and movements.	Looks like ... smiling, laughing, competing, joking, being silly, singing, humming, focusing attention, achieving, succeeding, anticipating, celebrating and being altruistic.

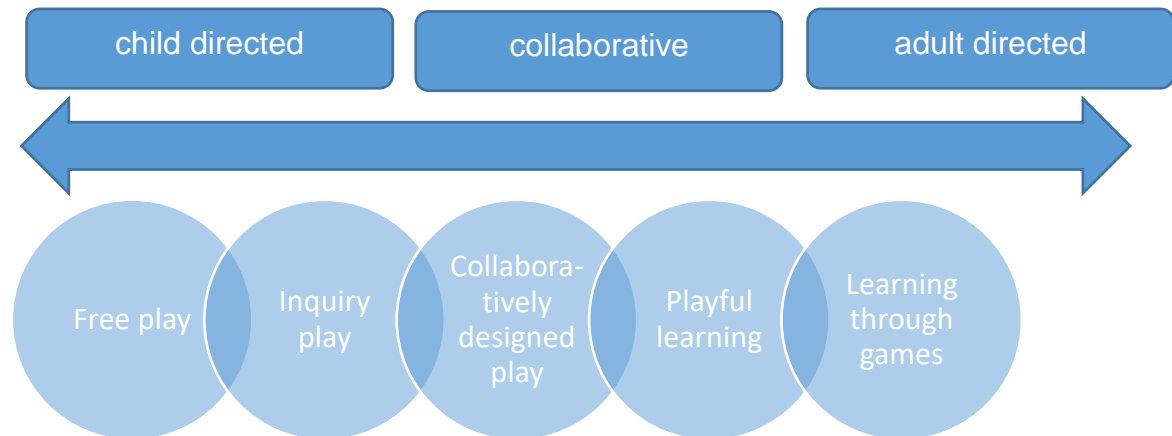
Choice within the play-based learning situation is an empowering scenario, allowing children to direct their learning by being autonomous, taking ownership and thereby

motivating them intrinsically to learn. Children participating in a play-based learning activity set goals, make and change their rules, share ideas and choose who to collaborate with. They will also choose how long to continue working or playing. The category of wonder fills children with a feeling of curiosity, surprise and fascination and makes them experience a sense of challenge. Children's behaviour includes numerous activities: they are seen to be exploring, imagining and creating. They take risks, use language, music, symbols and a variety of materials to communicate their learning. Delight is the third category in play-based learning. If a child is given the opportunity to participate in a play-based learning activity, the category of delight will feel like enjoyment and excitement, but also like inspiration, pride and belonging. Children are seen to be smiling, laughing, being silly and singing while focusing their attention and participating. They succeed and achieve learning goals while being altruistic (Mardell *et al.*, 2016:7).

The feelings experienced are different for each child in relation to the variety of activities (Mardell *et al.*, 2016:8). A child's personal interest influences how each activity is experienced. The practitioner's support of those interests is important to encourage learning. Play-based learning is influenced by the availability of materials, time, opportunities for children to interact, the physical environment and the culture. Cultural influences determine whether play is encouraged or not and by how and what boys and girls play. In addition, culture determines at which age play is expected to stop and whether adults should be involved in children's play at all (Whitebread & Basilio, 2013:77). Play-based learning indicators are useful when investigating how toy libraries provide early learning opportunities for young children.

#### **2.10.12.5 Continuum of play-based learning**

Play-based learning requires children's play to progress along a continuum starting with free play, progressing to inquiry play, moving on to collaboratively designed play, playful learning and finally learning through games. Figure 2.7 depicts the continuum starting at the one end as being completely child directed and at the other end being teacher directed.



*Figure 2.7 Continuum of play-based learning adapted from Pyle and Danniels (2017: 282).*

Free play refers to periods of play where children made choices about what to play, with whom to play, as well as how long to continue playing, with the adult mostly creating the time and space to play. Inquiry play is initiated by the child, and as a result of the child expressing an interest, the adult builds on the child's desire to explore, gradually guiding the child to focus their observations and investigation, thereby extending the play by integrating related curriculum skills and knowledge. In collaborative play the child and adult shares the control. The adult determines the outcomes of this play and collaboratively designs the play which includes the theme and resources necessary to play after which the children direct the play within the collaboratively created environment. Playful learning is a more structured approach focused on learning skills in a playful and engaging manner. Learning through games is the most prescriptive type of play-based learning. It is used to develop mathematics and language skills in an engaging manner (Pyle & Danniels, 2017:284). In a toy library this continuum of play-based learning needs to be included in play sessions.

#### **2.10.12.6 The role of toy libraries in the provision of play-based early learning opportunities**

Young children need access to early learning opportunities. The prevailing model of service provision to young children aged birth to four years in South Africa is implemented through community-owned ECD centres (crèches, day care centres and



pre-primary schools), referred to as centre-based services in the NIECDP. By the end of 2015, the DSD had paid ECD centres subsidies for a total of 685 511 young children to receive early childhood education services. Yet only 33,8 per cent of children between the ages of 3 and 5 years attend early childhood development centres before entering formal learning. A million children aged three to five years live in poverty and do not have access to group learning opportunities simply because not enough services are made available (Hall *et al.*, 2016:27).

Young children living in poverty or in rural or urban informal settlements are not given an equal chance. Heckman (2011:7) and Engle *et al.* (2011:1347) emphasise that early inequalities are reduced through pre-school exposure to developmentally appropriate activities and programmes that stimulate cognitive and social-emotional development, which leads to character building. Early learning programmes, such as toy libraries, that are of good quality have the ability to redress the cycle of inequality since they reduce the socio-economic differences in learning potential between children before they enter formal schooling (Engle *et al.*, 2011:1350; Siraj-Blatchford & Sylva, 2004:714).

Access to early learning opportunities has to be equitable. Equitable access ensures that everyone has a fair opportunity to access the service and that there is no discrimination against race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, cognitive ability, status, language ability, academic performance, family income or geographical location (Abbott, 2016b:1; Heckman, 2011:7; Engle *et al.*, 2011:1350). The principle of inclusion and non-discrimination is characteristic of toy libraries.

In order to improve access, toy library programmes should be established strategically to create access for vulnerable children. Using the NIECDP prioritising strategy, toy library programmes should provide access to the toy library service for children from birth to two years of age, the poorest 60% of children living in areas without service (rural and informal urban areas) and children with developmental delays and/or disabilities (DSD, 2015:68). Gaining access to these identified priority groups requires support from parents and the community at large.

Parents and the community need to understand the importance of early childhood and early learning. Adults in communities may be a barrier preventing young children from accessing early learning opportunities due to a lack of understanding that learning happens from birth and requires interaction with the child to sustain the child's development (Ebrahim *et al.*, 2013:66). Advocacy for early learning is required to change parents' perception of early learning, which in turn will result in parents supporting early learning programmes and young children accessing programmes such as toy libraries. Early learning programmes promote children's right to play, and the approach followed to deliver early learning is to use a play-based learning approach. Toy libraries are a strong argument for the importance of play and how play results in learning in young children.

## **2.11 Conclusion**

This chapter researched, analysed and synthesised the literature pertaining to the role of toy libraries in early childhood development in light of the future, the global prioritisation of ECD and the South African context of ECD. Play and learning, its benefits and learning in relation to the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills set required when entering the workplace was explored. The toy library as a non-centre-based early childhood education setting was discussed, clarifying the role of toy libraries to provide play-based early learning opportunities for young children. Chapter three provides an overview of the conceptual framework used in the study.

# CHAPTER THREE

## THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

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*“The existence of the conceptual framework was helpful in ensuring the research was given order and achieved completion in a way that could clearly be communicated to its readers.”*

*(Green, 2014:37)*

### **3.1 Introduction**

In chapter two the literature relating to early childhood development, play and learning, 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, the role of toy libraries in general and specifically in relation to play-based learning pedagogy, as well as access to play opportunities through toy libraries were discussed. Chapter three provides the rationale for the conceptual framework, which is presented both in diagrammatical and in table format, listing the theories that underpin the study. Play-based early learning sessions and pedagogy and the framework of quality standards are explained as key concepts of the conceptual framework.

### **3.2 Rationale for using a conceptual framework**

The main purpose of the conceptual framework was to give direction to the study. It draws on concepts from multiple theories and findings (Green, 2014:35) and provided a map for the study, helping to focus it. The conceptual framework is aligned with the research questions, design and outcomes and was used to guide the data production and analysis process.

### **3.3 A diagrammatical representation of the conceptual framework**

The various elements of the conceptual framework for this study are presented in Figure 3.1. The framework is informed by operational systems theories and learning theories. The toy library's operations and a play-based pedagogy are key elements

that were investigated in this study. The various elements converge in the framework of quality standards.

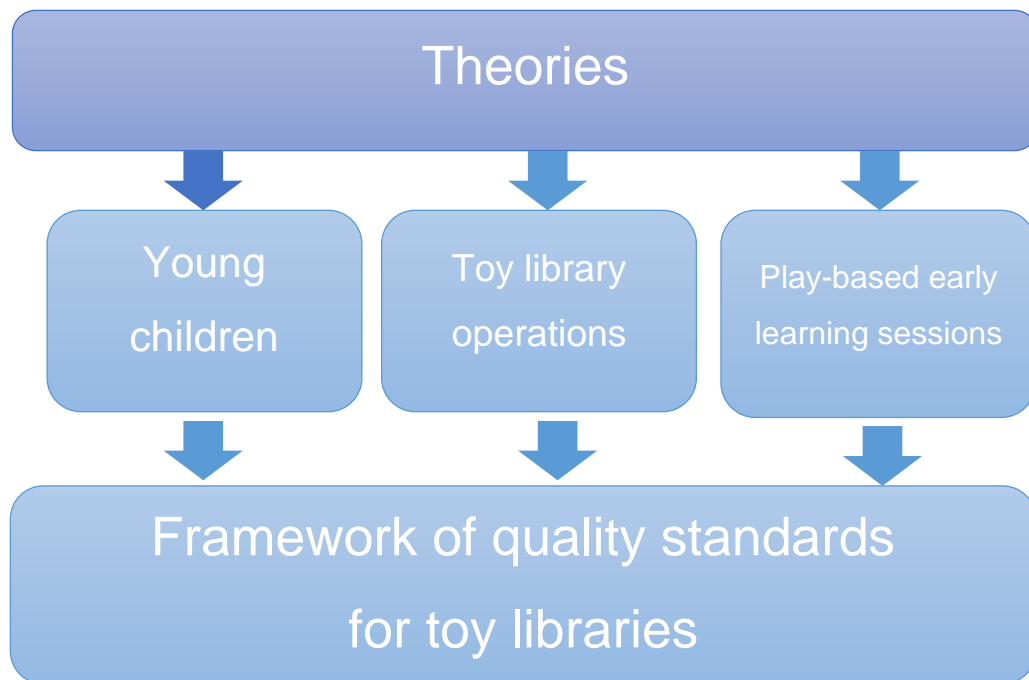


Figure 3.1: The conceptual framework

The literature review informed the conceptual framework. Table 3.1 provides an overview of how the reviewed literature linked to the conceptual framework depicted in Figure 3.1. The conceptual framework incorporates literature linked to aspects of the quality framework.

In the first column of Table 3.1 the conceptual framework looks at the young child in terms of what young children need in order to learn and why early childhood education opportunities are important. Play and learning are explored in terms of the child's right to play, the importance of play and the link between play and learning as well as what young children benefit when they are given play-based learning opportunities in the toy library. Young children need to learn academic and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills.

The second column relates to how the toy library should be operated in order to provide access to play materials and early learning play sessions. Play-based early learning sessions are explored in the third column by looking at what is developmentally appropriate practice, which needs to be considered when conducting

a play-based early learning session. The pedagogy that strikes a balance between child-directed and adult-directed activities creates an environment which fosters play-based learning. The characteristics and indicators of play-based early learning confirm what can be observed in a toy library setting that promotes play-based early learning opportunities. The framework of quality standards for toy libraries encapsulates the key components that need to be considered when setting up a toy library and conducting play-based early learning sessions.

Table 3.1: Reviewed literature linked to the conceptual framework

<b>Young children (who is included, what they need to learn and why is it important)</b>	<b>Toy libraries (the setting that provides young children with the opportunity to access play)</b>	<b>Play-based early learning sessions (PBL is provided in a play session which has to adhere to PBL principles)</b>
Early childhood development context and theories	Overview	Developmentally Appropriate Practice
Play and learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Right to play</li> <li>- Importance</li> <li>- Play and learning</li> <li>- Benefits – domains</li> </ul>	Operations	Play-based learning pedagogy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Child, adult, environment</li> <li>- Characteristics and indicators of play-based learning</li> </ul>
Academic learning and 21 <sup>st</sup> century skills	Access	Framework of Quality Standards for Toy Libraries

The reviewed literature informed the design of the conceptual framework and includes the following concepts: theories of systems and development, young children, toy library operations, play-based early learning sessions and a framework of quality standards for the toy library.

### 3.4 Theories underpinning the study

The conceptual framework is underpinned by two broad categories of theories, namely the operational systems theory (Ackoff, 1971:669; Bronfenbrenner, 1994:39) and a number of child development and learning theories (Vygotsky, 1978:35; Parten, 1932:249; Piaget, 1952:21; Gardner, 1983:77; Bandura, 1989:47; Erikson, 1985:265; Gesell, 1933:209), as depicted in Figure 3.2. A theory is an organised system of knowledge that describes, explains and predicts behaviour, according to Jalongo and Isenberg (2012:116). Theories provide scientific principles that inform effective practice models.

The operational systems theory describes the systems within the operations of a toy library. The learning theories explore child development and highlight effective practice principles.

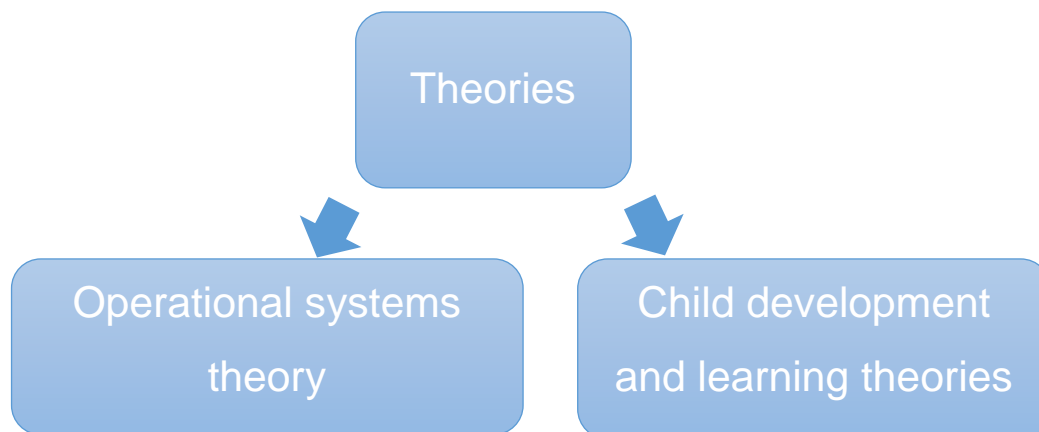


Figure 3.2: Theories underpinning the conceptual framework

#### 3.4.1 Operational systems theory

The operations of the toy library influence access by the way the toy library is set up and operated. Once children access the toy library, a play-based pedagogy contributes to children's early learning development. Effective practice principles relating to early childhood education programmes inform how the toy library should be operated in terms of procedures and processes relating to the toy library's administration, play materials, services and challenges. The four operational elements culminate in a framework of quality standards. Collectively, the four elements form an

operational system. Each of the individual elements impacts the overall operations of the toy library, but the elements are also interrelated. Each individual element also has a series of sub-elements, which further impacts the whole system. The operational systems theory as defined by Ackoff (1971:669) is in synergy with the thinking represented in the ecological theory of Bronfenbrenner (1994:37). This theory describes the reciprocal relationship between the various systems, the same as the operational systems theory of Ackoff (1971:669). He looks at how to create effective operations within an organisation and suggests that an operational system is a set of two or more interrelated elements, each of which has three properties. The first property is that each element has an effect on the functioning of the whole, secondly each element is affected by at least one other element in the system and thirdly all possible subgroups of elements also have the first two properties.

The operations of the toy library describe how the toy library is to be set up and managed (Cotlands, 2017:1). The toy library operations influence access in terms of how the toy library is set up, how administration is structured, play materials are procured, the types of services being offered and also determine how play-based early learning sessions are planned and provided to young children. Each of the individual operational elements inevitably impacts the quality of play-based early learning sessions. For example, if the administration is not done efficiently, the play-based early learning sessions are unable to report on the number of children attending. Similarly, if play materials are procured without considering children's needs and interests, it will impact the learning that takes place in play-based early learning sessions. Figure 3.3 illustrates how various systems are linked and impact the other.

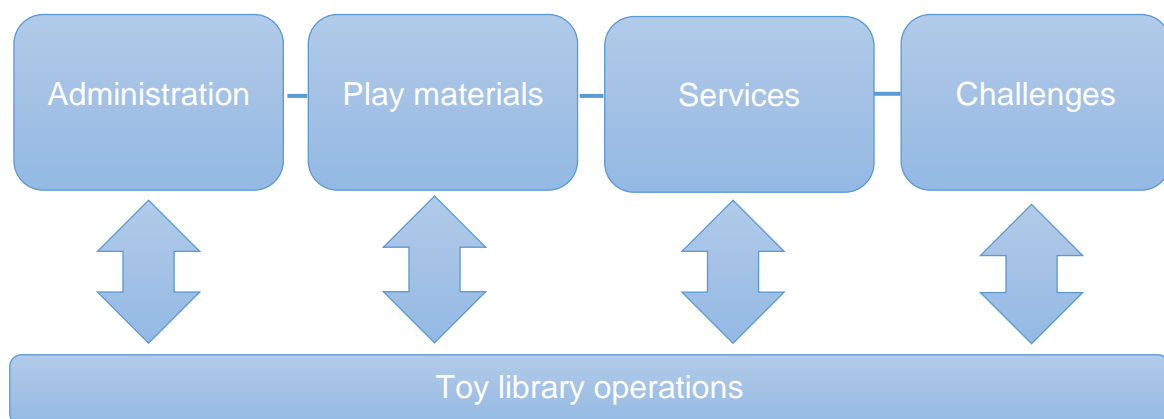


Figure 3.3: Toy library operational elements

A toy library which aims to provide play-based learning opportunities for young children needs to consider all the elements within the framework if it is to be considered effective and offering quality services.

### **3.4.2 Child development and learning theories**

Rapid development occurs during early childhood. Theories of child development provide a group of general principles, ideas or proposed explanations for child development (Miles Gordon & Williams Browne, 2016:70). A number of theories attempt to describe how children learn and develop. I agree with Doherty and Hughes (2014:48) that theories on how children learn and, by association, develop are complementary and contrasting at the same time, and that no single theory is comprehensive enough to provide answers to the myriad of questions about children's development.

Cognitive development theory includes both constructivism and social-constructivist theories which shaped the understanding of how young children learn and develop in relation to play (Wood & Bennett, 1998:18). Jean Piaget (1952:21)<sup>1</sup> is regarded as the father of constructivism, linking play to learning. Piaget proposed three types of play: practice play, symbolic play and games with rules. Play is seen as developing from simple to complex and from concrete forms of play to abstract forms. Piaget's theory of cognitive development describes what children are ready to learn in accordance with their age and stage of development. Piaget emphasised self-initiated and self-directed activity. Learning is dependent on exploration, discovery, first-hand experiences and the child's ability to construct knowledge (Wood & Bennett, 1998:19).

Vygotsky's (1978:201) social constructivism theory viewed children's play as the leading source of development in the early years. His social cultural theory of learning viewed play as being social, mediated by language and learned through socialising with peers and adults (Wood & Bennett, 1998:19). Vygotsky (1978:102)<sup>2</sup> regarded all forms of play as having imaginary elements and stated that all play is rule bound.

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<sup>1</sup> Original source

<sup>2</sup> Original source



Vygotsky (1978:102) proposed that children were highly motivated to learn when they play and believed that symbolism was an important aspect of play.

Neither Piaget (1952) nor Vygotsky (1978:102) proposed a specific pedagogy when working with children in group settings. Piaget's theory that development leads children through a sequence of age-related stages which are initiated by the child assumes that children construct their own knowledge. Vygotsky (1978:102) indicated that learning leads development. The zone of proximal development, abbreviated as ZDP, and scaffolding is often associated with Vygotsky's (1978:102) theory of learning. Children internalise learning through a scaffolding process. The ZDP is described as the difference between what a child can do without help from an adult and what the child cannot do. Learning takes place if an adult or peer helps a child to learn something slightly more advanced than what the child already knows. The child would not have been able to learn the new skill without the help of the adult or more knowledgeable peer, because the learning involves step-by-step support until the skill has been acquired and the help of the adult or peer is no longer required. The concept "scaffolding", as conceptualised by Vygotsky (1978:102), refers to the child being in charge of the focus of the activity, with the adult providing the next stepping stone for the child to move learning and understanding to a higher level. Learning and development happen when an adult is able to plan the next step which will result in learning for the child. Learning starts where the child is, and through questions and various interactions the child masters the skill or task, and then the adult or peer reduces the scaffolding or support.

The conceptual framework of this study is underpinned by a number of theories, as discussed in Table 3.2, which include cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1978:35; Piaget, 1952:21; Gardner, 1983:77), social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1989:47) and the psychoanalytical theory of Erikson (1985:265). Gesell (1933:209)<sup>3</sup> provides a biological theoretical perspective and Bronfenbrenner (1994:37) an ecological systems theoretical perspective.

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<sup>3</sup> Original source

Table 3.2: Theoretical underpinning of the study

Categories of theories	Theorist and theory	Relevance to the study	Implications for toy library programmes
<p>Socio-cultural theories focus on the child's social interaction with significant others, such as a parent, practitioner or peer, to acquire important values and skills of a society (Doherty &amp; Hughes, 2014:40).</p>	<p>Vygotsky (1978:35, 102): Zone of proximal development</p>	<p>Children's development is extended by the adult, who enhances learning by providing a task that is slightly more challenging than the current task, which results in learning. The "zone" between the activity that has been mastered and the next activity is referred to as the "zone of proximal development" (Vygotsky, 1978:35). In the context of a toy library, the support of an adult or knowledgeable other is important.</p>	<p>The toy librarian needs to show and guide children's learning during the play-based learning sessions by providing the next step to learn a new skill or to complete a task. The toy librarian needs to ensure that activities are not too difficult and that they support the child enough so that learning can take place.</p>
	<p>Parten (1932:249) "categories or stages of social play"</p>	<p>Parten (1932:249) identified different categories of social play which develop and change depending on the child's situation. The social play categories are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unoccupied play: typical of a very young infant. Random body movements with seemingly no purpose.</li> <li>• Solitary play: Playing alone, not paying attention and unaware of the others around them.</li> <li>• Onlooker play: The child is seen near a group of children, following their actions or copying what others are doing, but does not want to participate or is waiting for someone to invite him/her to participate.</li> <li>• Parallel play: Playing side-by-side, each child playing with something else, without interacting.</li> <li>• Associative play: Children begin to play together, but play is not coordinated or sustained.</li> <li>• Cooperative play: Group play with coordinated roles, which are sustained during play. The children agree on the roles and the goals of the play.</li> </ul>	<p>When observing children at play it is useful to determine what kinds of play they are participating in. The information helps toy librarians evolve and extend children's play.</p>
<p>Cognitive development theories aim to explain children's</p>	<p>Piaget (1952:21): Stages of children's cognitive</p>	<p>a. Sensorimotor stage (birth to two years): children explore through movement and senses, but do not think conceptually.</p>	<p>Piaget's theory influences how we set up the toy library and how we interact with children. The toy library should encourage exploration and discovery by providing a wide variety of interesting materials for the</p>

Categories of theories	Theorist and theory	Relevance to the study	Implications for toy library programmes
cognitive development.	development in terms of children's thinking, reasoning and perception.	b. Pre-operational stage (two to seven years): increased symbolic and conceptual thinking, use of language and fantasy play, acquisition of gross and fine motor skills. (The concrete and formal operations stages are excluded because they fall outside the age range of this study).	children. Ample opportunity to play gives children an opportunity to practise symbolic language. Concrete materials should be used, with brief instructions and actions, as well as words to explore concepts.
	Gardner (1983:77): multiple intelligences	Gardner (1983:77) provides an inclusive view of intelligence and categorises the intelligences into verbal/linguistic, logical/mathematical, musical, visual/spatial, bodily/kinaesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal and naturalist.	If a toy librarian provides a variety of activities, all the intelligences are nurtured. Activities include: listening to a story or telling about an experience, counting, performing calculations, making graphs, drawing, engaging in pretend play, dancing, singing, dramatic play, co-operative games, playing musical instruments, verbal and non-verbal communication, cooperative group learning, reflecting on own actions, caring for pets and plants, observing, touching real plants and animals and categorising natural materials (Jalongo & Isenberg, 2012:155).

Categories of theories	Theorist and theory	Relevance to the study	Implications for toy library programmes
Social cognitive theories explore the link between learning and social interaction.	Bandura (1989:47): observational learning	Children learn by watching and imitating an adult's physical and verbal behaviours. Self-efficacy is what children believe about their abilities to do well and to succeed in certain situations, as well as their capacity to exercise control over their own actions in order to gain success (Bandura, 1989:47). Modelling is an important aspect of learning.	Toy librarians should model appropriate behaviour and skills during play-based early learning sessions at toy libraries which might include how to take turns, how to build a puzzle or how to include children in play. When children keep on trying to accomplish a task such as tidying up or playing a memory game, encouraging comments by the toy librarian promote children's self-efficacy. Children should be respected as active learners who will imitate that which is being modelled, placing the responsibility on the toy librarian to be conscious of behaviours being modelled (Jalongo & Isenberg, 2012:150).
Psychoanalytical theories seek to explain children's social-emotional developmental stages (Doherty & Hughes, 2014:41).	Erikson (1985:265): stages of social-emotional development	Erikson (1985:265) points out that children's social-emotional development takes place in a series of eight stages (infancy, early childhood, play age, school age, adolescence, young adulthood, adulthood and mature age). Optimal social-emotional development requires a stable environment where there is consistency of care and where there are adequate opportunities for children to explore and build their self-esteem. However, this encouraging environment should have limits or boundaries within which the child is allowed to fail and thereby to develop socially and emotionally.	The toy librarian needs to provide a caring, nurturing and trusting environment in order to advance children's social-emotional development (Weiland & Yoshikawa, 2013:2125; Razza <i>et al.</i> , 2012:312).
Biological theories see development as being determined by biology and genetics.	Gesell (1933:209): maturation theory of learning, also known as the "ages and stages" theory	Normative description of children's physical, language, cognitive and social developmental domains describing expected development at a specific age. Developmental milestones are rooted in this theory.	Children's development is seen as genetically pre-determined and unfolding in a specific, predestined sequence, ignoring the impact of race, culture and economic status of children. The developmental milestones can guide the planning of age-appropriate activities in the toy library. Milestones provide guidance on what

Categories of theories	Theorist and theory	Relevance to the study	Implications for toy library programmes
			children may be able to do at a certain age (Jalongo & Isenberg, 2012:148).
The ecological theory looks at the impact of the environment on children's development	Bronfenbrenner (1994:39): ecological systems theory	<p>Children's development is impacted by social and cultural influences within the child's environment (ecological context). Five social systems influence the others and affect the child's development (Excell &amp; Lington, 2015: 22):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The microsystem is the environment where the child lives. Frequent interaction occurs over a period of time (Bronfenbrenner, 1994:39). Examples of microsystems are family, peers, religious settings and early childhood settings (such as a toy library). Children are exposed to people, such as toy librarians and parents, and activities, such as play-based learning in the toy library, which shape the child's development (Bronfenbrenner, 1994:39).</li> <li>b. The mesosystem as described by Bronfenbrenner (1994:40) links two or more of the child's microsystems, for example the connection between the family and the toy librarian (Excell &amp; Lington, 2015:22). Within the settings various associations and actions take place.</li> <li>c. The exosystem as explained by Bronfenbrenner (1994:40) refers to the interaction, linkages and</li> </ol>	<p>The microsystem or family a child lives in will determine whether the child is given the opportunity to access a toy library, since parents decide whether they want to join and participate in the toy library programme.</p> <p>The mesosystem involves the linkages and processes taking place between the young child and the toy library operations, which include elements such as the toy librarian's use of play materials and access to play-based learning opportunities. How a toy library operates determines whether children would have access and what programmes will be offered at the toy library. The social interactions between the young child and the toy library environment, play materials and the toy librarian will influence the young child's development.</p> <p>The exosystem in which, for example, non-profit organisations are located that offer</p>

Categories of theories	Theorist and theory	Relevance to the study	Implications for toy library programmes
		<p>processes between two or more settings, with the developing child being outside at least one of the settings; for example, changes in the educational system such as the NIECDP (DSD, 2015), which identifies toy libraries as a service delivery mechanism to young children. The NIECDP will influence how young children are given opportunities to access early learning.</p> <p>d. The macrosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1994:40) includes factors that are more distant from the child's specific life world, such as values, political beliefs, bodies of knowledge, material resources, life-styles, opportunities, poverty, laws and customs of a child's culture which are passed on from one generation to another (Excell &amp; Linington, 2015:22; Jalongo &amp; Isenberg, 2012:123). The macrosystem setting refers to the societal blueprint of where the young child finds himself and can also be referred to as the child's culture.</p> <p>e. The chronosystem as defined by Bronfenbrenner (1994:40) includes the dimension of time causing change, not only in the characteristics of the person, but also of the environment in which that person lives (Excell &amp; Linington, 2015:22).</p>	<p>toy library programmes will determine where to locate toy library services. The child may not be located in the exosystem, but is influenced by the decision where to locate toy libraries.</p> <p>The macrosystem includes values, customs and beliefs relating to play in general, as well as play-based learning, are passed on from one generation to another. The toy library programme and provision of access to play-based learning opportunities will be influenced by the values, customs and beliefs surrounding the young child (Gosso &amp; Carvalho, 2013:2).</p> <p>The chronosystem explores the notion that child development occurs over a specific period of time. Young children live in a specific environment which is subject to change as time pass on. The change can either be helpful or not with regard to the young child's development. The theoretical assumption is that including the services of a toy library into the environment or life space of the young child as early as possible will have greater benefits than introducing it later.</p>

### **3.5 Play-based early learning sessions and pedagogy**

A toy library that serves young children and promotes play-based learning is specifically designed and set up as an environment where young children learn through play. Toy librarians design play-based early learning sessions in line with developmentally appropriate practice principles. Play-based pedagogy is considered a developmentally appropriate strategy when working with young children. Toy librarians need to be skilled to encourage and optimise learning opportunities which are both child-directed/initiated and adult-directed. The toy library environment needs to encourage and promote play by the way the space is designed, equipped and furnished. Toy librarians need skills to guide children's play, which include scaffolding, co-construction (Jordan, 2009:42) and sustained shared thinking (Siraj-Blatchford, 2009:1) strategies.

The concept "scaffolding" as conceptualised by Vygotsky (1978:102) refers to the child being in charge of the focus of the activity, with the adult providing the next stepping stone for the child to move learning and understanding to a higher level. Learning and development happen when an adult is able to plan the next step which will result in learning for the child.

Jordan (2009:42) introduced the term "co-construction", which implies that adults co-construct learning with children. Adults include interactions with children where the adult hears what the child says, gets to know what the child thinks, is aware of the child's interests, does not interrupt the child, allows for silences, follows the child's lead, values the child's activities, verbalises what the child is doing and finally checks or seeks permission from the child for the assistance the adult intends to provide.

Sustained shared thinking involves two or more individuals (the adult and child or children) working together in an intellectual way to solve problems, explore and clarify a concept, evaluate activities or extend a narrative (Siraj-Blatchford, 2009:3). The adult and child share the control in terms of how the play and learning unfold. The role of a framework of quality standards for toy libraries is outlined next.

### 3.6 Quality standards for toy libraries

#### 3.6.1 Exploring the concept of quality

The concept “quality” has various interpretations and connotations. Williams (1995:36) explains that the quality of a programme can be measured for quality control, quality assurance or quality management. Quality control aims to create uniformity and standardising processes and to detect any errors. Quality assurance looks at the efficiency of systems, aims to be preventative and is concerned with coordination between systems. The third type of quality measure is that of a total quality management programme which is aimed at improving outcomes for users. Quality is viewed as an opportunity to improve impact, and quality improvement is regarded as a continuous cycle.

Dahlberg, Moss and Pence’s (2002:93) explanation of quality:

*“The concept of quality is primarily about defining, through the specification of criteria, a generalisable standard against which a product can be judged with certainty. The process of specification of criteria, and the systematic and methodological application, is intended to enable us to know whether or not something – be it a manufactured or service product – achieves the standard.”*

Standards are grouped to create quality criteria either relates to structural and process criteria. Structural criteria refer to group size, qualifications and content of a curriculum and are perceived as easy to measure (Bredenkamp, 2011:14). Process criteria refer to what takes place in a setting in terms of interaction, suitability of materials, relationships with parents and children (Miles Gordon & Williams Browne, 2016:15). Quality criteria also evaluate curriculum, materials and equipment, environment, children’s behaviour and the effectiveness of adult’s interaction with the children (Essa, 2011:156).

The definition provided by Dahlberg, Moss and Pence (2002:93) does not adequately describe the multifaceted, complex nature of the concept of quality. Greater access



to early learning opportunities for young children is only meaningful if it reduces disparity by providing quality programmes ensuring actual improvement in children's developmental outcomes (Britto, Yoshikawa & Boller, 2011:3). Quality ECE is linked to improved child well-being, and the quality of ECE programmes has to be improved and sustained throughout the period of service delivery (Britto *et al.*, 2011:8). Quality in ECE has multiple dimensions, such as cultural appropriateness, staff skills, intensity and duration as well as features of physical and social environments, each dimension requiring adequate measurement (Britto *et al.*, 2011:3). A "one size fits all" approach is not appropriate for evaluating quality. A perspective on quality that applies Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1994:37) allows quality to be measured in the proximal social settings of child development and the interactions therein as well as across levels of systems that are important for programme or policy implementation, according to Britto *et al.* (2011:9).

Quality measurement is grounded in country and community contexts, values and needs. Quality measures vary by setting of the service provision as well as by world regions. High-income countries include quality dimensions relating to safety and adequacy of physical environments, the nature of teacher- or caregiver-child interactions, the content knowledge and pedagogy of staff, staff education and training. Domains related to family and child functioning are also included (Britto *et al.*, 2011:10). Low- and middle-income (LAMI) countries also include cultural feeding, caregiving practices and survival issues, training of health service providers and combination of physical growth and psychosocial interventions in quality measures (Britto *et al.*, 2011:10). The purpose of quality measurement in LAMI countries is mostly linked to policy advocacy rather than to evaluation or improvement of the quality of ECE programmes.

Britto *et al.* (2011:10) advocate integration of ecological systems levels with cross-cutting quality dimensions, as illustrated in Figure 3.4. The ecological systems level is divided into settings and systems and five sets of quality dimensions, which cut across and impacts at various levels in the system.

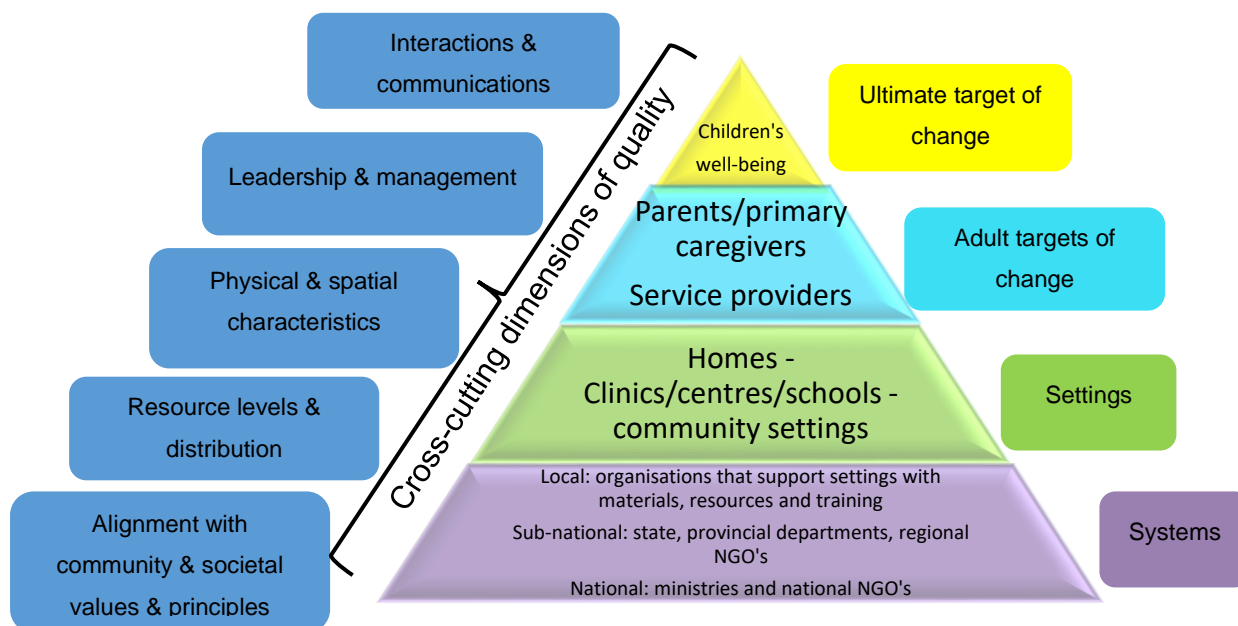


Figure 3.4 Ecological settings and systems levels and cross-cutting quality dimensions (adapted from Britto et. al., 2011:10).

Figure 3.4 shows five cross-cutting dimensions of quality alongside the ecological levels in the pyramid and the systems, settings, adults and children influencing the ultimate outcomes for children shown on the right of the pyramid. A brief discussion of each of the dimensions of quality in relation to the ecological settings and systems follows.

ECE programmes need to be aligned with the community and societal values and principles it is located in. The first dimension of quality links closely to the ecological systems and settings, impacts not only the adults participating or delivering a programme but also the children receiving the services. Programmes delivered in an urban versus a rural area may be radically different. The values associated with children and play-based learning differ across societies, and principles guiding beliefs about how children and adults interact will influence quality indicators within systems and settings. Second, resource levels and their distribution within a system and various settings are important quality dimensions to consider. Resources include both human and material resources (Britto et al., 2011:13). Human resources within various settings will differ; so will the accessibility and quality of materials. Third, the physical and spatial characteristics are important to reduce the likelihood of accidents and unanticipated threats where ECE programmes are provided. Fourth, the role of

leadership and management in the quality of ECE programme is critical in making decisions about resource allocation, which includes staffing, professional development and managing collaboration with multiple stakeholders. Lastly, supportive and reciprocal interactions and communication between providers, parents and children are important. Communication strategies aligned with the target audience to promote the programme are an important quality aspect (Britto *et al.*, 2011:14).

At the top of the pyramid are the child and the adult, the targets of change. The quality of ECE programmes lies mostly in the interactions of children with adults and peers. This aspect of quality is typically measured by caregiver characteristics, responsiveness or behaviour management approaches. Some programmes target adults, parents, caregivers, child care providers, health and other service providers, or relatives or friends who care for children (the second level of the pyramid). Children may or may not be present in the programmes. Quality is measured through characteristics of adult-adult interactions (Britto *et al.*, 2011: 11).

The setting and systems aspects of Figure 3.4 focus on quality at a local programme or setting level. In ECD centre-based programmes, the quality criteria focus on structural aspects such as staff-child ratios, qualifications and remuneration of caregivers, materials and physical features and the process criteria focus on the quality of instruction and interactions. These measures of quality can extend to any physical spaces within which ECD services are implemented (Britto *et al.*, 2011:11; Bronfenbrenner, 1994:37). Such spaces can be either physically or temporally bound, and they may include health clinics, social networks and centre or community settings such as toy libraries. Target populations and service provider roles are flexible and often merged in LAMI countries.

In Figure 3.4 the systems refer to larger organisations or institutional structures within which ECD services are situated and which can be at three levels: local support, sub-national and national. Local support systems provide direct support and training to local programme sites, but may rely on a supervisory structure that is national or sub-national. It is essential to include this level in quality frameworks as the frontline workers implementing the programme. The support systems may be located in NGOs,

provincial or district governance structures. The sub-national systems level includes regions within countries and state, provincial, city or municipal levels. They may be responsible for administering local support systems or individual programmes or may directly support local programmes. The national systems level includes countrywide institutions such as ministries of finance, education or health, national and international NGOs or for-profit companies responsible for aspects of ECD programmes (Britto *et al.*, 2011:12).

Jaramillo and Mingat (2006:29), Engle *et al.* (2007:79) and Ebrahim *et al.* (2013:69) created a list of the elements required for a quality non-centre-based programme, such as toy libraries. The characteristics can be grouped into policies, services, learning and staffing. ECE programmes that are governed by laws and policies which express specific programmatic structural aspects such as children to staff ratio, group size and the physical environment in early childhood advance the quality of the ECE programme. Quality ECE programmes are coordinated and integrated and include health, nutrition, education, social and economic development ensuring collaboration between governmental agencies and civil society (Ebrahim *et al.*, 2013:70).

Quality ECE programmes are further characterised by the fact that the ECE programme is community driven, resulting in a demand for the services being offered. ECE programmes which focus on providing direct services to disadvantaged younger children are another quality characteristic identified by Engle *et al.* (2007:79) and Jaramillo and Mingat (2006:13). In addition, the services offered must be of good quality and have the right intensity and duration to make an impact (Engle *et al.*, 2007:79). Ebrahim *et al.* (2013:69) support this view, confirming that quality ECE programmes offer services in partnership with parents and families to support children's development and include parents in active parenting and skill-building activities, including demonstration and information-sharing elements. Understanding child-rearing practices and cultural beliefs and blending this with evidence-based approaches are hallmarks of quality ECE programmes (Ebrahim *et al.*, 2013:70).

Opportunities should be provided for children to initiate their own learning and exploration of their surroundings with age-appropriate activities (Jaramillo & Mingat,

2006:13). The quality of an ECE programme is enhanced if more child-initiated play activities and small-group play activities rather than large group activities are included to promote cognitive development (Ebrahim *et al.*, 2013:70).

Another characteristic of a quality ECD programme is that it systematically provides early child development staff with in-service training and provides support and continuous supervision while equipping the ECD workforce with learning material support and observational methods supported by good practice to monitor children's development. Within quality ECD programmes, the focus is on an early childhood practitioner that can guide children's play, who is warm and responsive and is able to include a variety of activities (Ebrahim *et al.*, 2013:70).

The explanation above provides a conceptualisation of global quality indicators, whereas the subsequent section explores a local, South African quality measurement tool in ECE.

In South Africa, attempts have been made to measure the quality of ECE programmes through the development of the Early Learning Outcomes Measure (ELOM). ELOM is South Africa's first population level preschool assessment tool and can be administered within 45 minutes by an experienced ECD practitioner. It includes direct assessment of children's performance and a teacher's assessment of the child's social and emotional functioning and orientation to tasks. ELOM is targeted at children aged 50-69 months and consists of three parts: a direct assessment, assessor observation and a teacher assessment. The direct assessment has 23 items clustered in five equally weighted domains: gross motor development, fine motor coordination and visual motor integration, emergent numeracy and mathematics, cognition and executive functioning and emergent literacy and language. The assessor observation section scores social and emotional development and awareness as well as task orientation (persistence, attention and concentration). The teacher's assessment covers self-care, social relations with adults and peers and emotional functioning (Dawes, Biersteker, Girdwood, Snelling and Tredoux, 2017:1).

ELOM monitors early learning programme outcomes, guides programme improvement and tests programme effectiveness. The early learning development standards per domain can be used to judge the progress of children's development compared with socio-economic reference groups expressed in quintile groups one to five, with quintile one being the most disadvantaged children and quintile five the most advantaged children. This enables children from the same background to be compared around the country. ELOM has been designed to measure the effectiveness of a range of programmes, including toy libraries, home visiting, playgroups and ECD centres. The results provide a baseline against which to assess improvements in the quality of early learning programmes over time (Hall, Sambu, Berry, Giese & Almeleh, 2017:34). ELOM considers children's home backgrounds and will measure whether high-quality programmes can indeed compensate for the deficits in home backgrounds that are associated with significant deprivation and limited parental resources and education (Dawes *et al.*, 2016:6).

A combination of quality characteristics ensures successful early childhood intervention programmes. Programme quality measures are embedded in these characteristics. The quality characteristics described above provide guidance on what quality characteristics to include in a toy library framework.

### **3.6.2 Framework of quality standards for toy libraries (FQSTL 2017)**

The framework of quality standards for toy libraries (FQSTL 2017) was informed by three critical aspects: the quality indicators relating to administration and programme delivery for early childhood education (ECE), the norms and standards for South African ECD programmes and the findings of this research.

In South Africa, early childhood education programmes are not only found in ECD centres, but are also provided at toy libraries (DSD, 2015). The quality frameworks of early childhood education were used as a point of reference to construct the FQSTL 2017 framework, since most principles of quality in a toy library setting overlap with those of quality early childhood education principles.

Talan and Bloom (2004:1) state that:

*“High quality programs are run by providers who are intentional in their work with children and families, committed to ongoing professional development, engaged in ethical practice, and savvy about accessing community resources to enhance the effectiveness of their programmes.”*

Table 3.3 summarises quality tools focused on the administrative elements within ECE programmes. The Program Administration Scale (second edition (Talan & Bloom, 2004) and the Business Administration Scale for Family Child Care (Talan & Bloom, 2009) are summarised below.

Table 3.3: Summary of quality tools focusing on ECE programme administration

<b>Program Administration Scale Second Edition (Talan &amp; Bloom, 2004:8).</b>	<b>Business Administration Scale for Family Child Care (Talan &amp; Bloom, 2009:10)</b>
Purpose: Evaluates administrative practices of ECD programs	Purpose: Evaluates business practices in family child care settings
Scale items: Human resource development	Scale items: Qualifications and professional development
Personnel cost and allocation	Income and benefit
Centre operations	Work environment
Child assessment	Fiscal management
Fiscal management	Recordkeeping
Programme planning and evaluation	Risk management
Family partnerships	Provider-parent communication
Marketing and public relations	Community resources
Technology	Marketing and public relations
Staff qualifications	Provider as employer

The quality tools listed by Talan and Bloom (2004:8; 2009:10) focus on the administration of the programme and the business. Categories with similar characteristics were given the same colour code. Each colour code denotes a different category, which was derived by combining similar elements. In Table 3.3 similar elements were given the same colour and a category name was provided, resulting in five categories relating to the administration of a toy library. The first quality category (yellow) relates to human resources (staff qualifications and professional

development). Category two (purple) relates to financial management (staff cost, income and benefit and risk management). The third category (green) relates to operations (the work environment, recordkeeping, the provider as employer and the use of technology). Category four (teal) focuses on partnerships with families and community resources. The fifth category (orange) is marketing and public relations. The elements of child assessment and programme planning and evaluation have been included in the programme implementation categories. The five categories that emerged after colour coding and grouping similar topics together are human resources, financial management, operations, partnerships and marketing.

Toy libraries need adequate administration systems, but must also ensure the provision of quality play-based early learning sessions. The quality tools focusing on programme delivery include the Early Childhood Rating Scale (revised edition, ECERS-R) developed by Harms, Clifford and Cryer (2005:10) and ECERS-E (the Four Curricular Subscales Extension to the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition with Planning Notes) by Sylva, Siraj-Blatchford and Taggart (2011:26) were compared and analysed with the view to crystallise the most important programmatic quality indicators. Table 3.4 indicates how similar themes were colour coded and similar categories were grouped together and renamed. The language reasoning and literacy categories were colour coded blue and renamed literacy learning. The personal care routine and programme structure was colour coded peach and merged under the heading programme structure. The yellow block refers to parents and staff, which were incorporated in Table 3.3 under the heading human resources. The following eight categories for programme implementation emerged: environment (space and furnishings, indoor space, room arrangement for play, child-related display, gross motor play), literacy learning, (language reasoning, encouraging children to communicate, using language to develop reasoning skills, informal use of language, books, pictures, adult reading with children, sounds in words, emergent mark-making or writing, talking, listening), numeracy learning (counting, numbers, shapes, sorting, matching, comparing), science (natural materials, science activities), activities (fine motor, art, music/movement, block, sand/water, use of technology), interaction (supervision, staff-child and child-child interaction), inclusion (child



assessment, individual learning needs, disability) and programme structure (routine, free play, group time, health and safety practices, evaluation).

Table 3.4: Summary of quality tools focusing on ECE programme delivery

<b>Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale Revised Edition (ECERS-R). (Harms <i>et al.</i>, 2005:10)</b>	<b>ECERS-E The Four Curricular Subscales Extension to the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (Sylva <i>et al.</i>, 2011:26)</b>
Purpose: Evaluates early childhood environments (includes disability and cultural diversity as quality elements)	Purpose: Guides literacy, mathematics, science /environment and diversity
Scale items: Space and Furnishings (indoor space, furniture for routine care, play and learning, furnishings for relaxation and comfort, room arrangement for play, space for privacy, child-related display, space for gross motor play and gross motor equipment)	Scale items: Literacy (print in the environment, book and literacy areas, adult reading with the children, sounds in words, emergent writing/mark-making, and talking and listening)
Personal care routines (greetings/departure/meals/snacks, nap/rest, toileting/diapering, health practices and safety practices)	
Language-reasoning (books and pictures, encouraging children to communicate, using language to develop reasoning skills and informal use of language)	
Activities (fine motor, art, music/movement, blocks, sand/water, dramatic play, nature/science, maths/number, use of TV, video and/or computers and promoting acceptance of diversity)	
Interaction (supervision of gross motor activities, general supervision of children, discipline, staff-child interactions and interactions among children)	Mathematics (counting and application of counting, reading and representing simple numbers, mathematical activities: shapes, sorting, matching and comparing)
Programme structure (schedule, free play, group time and provision for children with disabilities)	
Parents and staff (provision for parents, provision for personal needs of staff, provision for professional needs of staff and opportunities for professional growth)	
	Science and the environment (natural materials, areas featuring science/science materials, science activities: non-living, living processes and food preparation)  Diversity (planning for individual learning needs, gender and race, equality and awareness)

The various frameworks were combined to create a framework of quality standards for toy libraries. ECE quality frameworks informed the framework of quality standards for toy libraries.

Another aspect that informed the FQSTL 2017 is the Norms and standards for South African ECD programmes stipulated in section 94(2) of the Act and elaborated in Part II National Norms and Standards for Early Childhood Development Programmes. The norms and standards deal with the provision of appropriate developmental opportunities, encourage programmes to help children realise their full potential, provide care in a constructive manner as well as provide support and security, ensure the development of positive social behaviour, respect and nurture the culture, spirit, dignity, individuality, language and development of each child, meet the emotional, cognitive, sensory, spiritual, moral, physical social and communication development needs of children (South Africa, 2010). The norms and standards (Appendix N) are applicable to all ECD programmes and were incorporated in the FQSTL 2017, barring the eight that were deemed inappropriate.

When critically evaluating the 54 norms and standards in the Act, eight norms and standards are inappropriate for toy libraries to adhere to. The following standards are inappropriate: 3(b) (iv, v) which requires toilets, a washing basin and bathing facilities for the children; 3(b) (viii) (bb) at least one meal per day, (cc) all meals and snacks should meet the nutritional requirements of children; 5(b) educators must use one medium of instruction in class and (c) children must be allowed to communicate in the language of their choice and preference outside class.

Toy libraries that offer direct services such as play-based early learning sessions would need to ensure there are adequate toilets, hand washing and bathing facilities for young children. Bathing facilities in a toy library are not required. Providing a meal or snack to children requires compliance with the Department of Health regulations, which is an additional process requiring a certificate of compliance with regard to food preparation. Toy libraries will also be required to register their facilities (building) as partial care facilities, for which there are an additional set of norms and standards which are intended for ECD centres and not toy libraries. The issue of what language to use when working with children is contentious. Young children should be served by

toy librarians in their home language as opposed to another language, and the using the term “class” is not suitable for a toy library, where the space of play and learning is referred to as a play space. Clearly, the South African national norms and standards need to be reviewed for non-centre-based settings such as toy libraries. The development of the norms and standards preceded the NIECP and require alignment of the act to the NIECP (DSD, 2015).

The framework of quality standards for toy libraries lists the most critical quality dimensions as identified by Britto *et al.* (2011:10), Harms *et al.* (2005:10) and Sylva *et al.* (2011:26). Table 3.5 lists the various standards as contained in the FQSTL 2017.

Table 3.5: Framework of quality standards for toy libraries (FQSTL 2017)

<b>Section 1: Administration</b>
1.1 Recordkeeping
1.2 Human resources
1.3 Financial management
1.4 Marketing
1.5 Technology
<b>Section 2: Toy library environment</b>
2.1 Operations
2.2 Space and furnishings
2.3 Interaction
2.4 Programme structure
2.5 Activities
<b>Section 3: Play-based early learning sessions</b>
3.1 Play time
3.2 Guiding play
3.3 Playfulness indicators
3.4 Characteristics of play-based learning

The setting of a toy library has the potential to provide play-based learning opportunities for young children. The first section of FQSTL 2017 explores the administration in a toy library, which must support access to quality early learning opportunities. The toy library environment section ensures that play-based early learning sessions can take place in a conducive setting designed for young children to play and learn. The third section focuses on standards associated with the provision of play-based early learning sessions, which need to incorporate developmentally appropriate practice principles.

Table 3.6 compares the ECE quality categories with FQSTL 2017. All the ECE quality categories have been incorporated into the framework of quality standards for toy libraries.

Table 3.6: List of ECE quality categories and FQSTL 2017 quality standards

<b>International ECE quality categories</b>	<b>Framework of Quality Standards for Toy Libraries 2017 (FQSTL 2017)</b>
Human resources	Section 1: Administration
Financial management	1.1 Recordkeeping
Operations	1.2 Human resources
Partnerships	1.3 Financial management
Marketing	1.4 Marketing
Environment	1.5 Technology
Literacy learning	Section 2: Environment
Numeracy learning	2.1 Operations
Science learning	2.2 Space and furnishings
Activities	2.3 Interaction
Interactions	2.4 Programme structure
Inclusion	2.5 Activities
Programme structure	Section 3: Play-based early learning sessions
	3.1 Play time
	3.2 Guiding play
	3.3 Playfulness indicators
	3.4 Characteristics of play-based learning

### 3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter the conceptual framework was discussed. The conceptual framework was diagrammatically depicted and tabulated. Chapter four is devoted to outlining the research design and methodology employed to answer the research questions.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

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*“All play is associated with intense thought, activity and rapid intellectual growth.  
The highest form of research is essentially play”.*  
(Scarfe, 1962:120)

### **4.1 Introduction**

Chapter three provided the conceptual framework of this study. Chapter four explains the research design and methodology employed to collect and analyse the data. It starts with an explanation of the research methodology followed in the research. My worldview and role as researcher are explained. The research design, participant sampling procedure and selection of research sites are described. The phases of data production, the data production tools, organisation and analysis are elaborated on. The quality measures employed to ensure trustworthiness and the ethical considerations are explored in the final section of the chapter. The research methodology is explored first.

### **4.2 Research methodology**

This study is a qualitative research approach including the case study method located in an interpretive paradigm to investigate how toy libraries provide play-based learning opportunities for young children. A qualitative approach employing the case study design allows for gathering in-depth information about how toy libraries are providing play-based learning opportunities for young children. The toy librarian's lived experiences contribute significantly to understand the meaning individuals, such as toy librarians, ascribe to a social phenomenon such as toy libraries. This approach allowed me to study the toy library systems and people's functioning within their natural settings (Creswell, 2014:185).

The toy librarians shared their day-to-day operations of the toy library through photographs and through participation in the focus group discussions. I was able to

gain insight into and create meaning of how each toy librarian experienced their reality (Creswell, 2014:186; Yin, 2016:9; Thanh & Thanh, 2015:25). I was able to see the toy library phenomenon through their subjective eyes, allowing me to create a description of how they view quality, create access, operate the toy library and implement play-based learning in the context of the toy library (Creswell, 2014:186).

The qualitative research process involves data production in the participant's real-world setting, in this case the toy library, with inductive data analysis identifying general themes and allowing me to understand their context by interpreting the data. I value an inductive style of research, where I focus on individuals' contribution and meaning, allowing an exploration of the complexity of the phenomenon (Patton, 2001:39). My worldview is explained in the next section.

### **4.3 Worldview**

Researchers have access to an array of methodologies that seems to present more of a maze than an orderly research pathway. The inconsistent and often contradictory manner in which research terminology is used requires clarification of the philosophical underpinning of my research. In this section the aim is to provide an understanding of how a specific view of ontology and epistemology informed the selection of the methodology and methods in this study.

As a researcher I bring assumptions about reality and knowledge to my work. These raise questions such as what kind of knowledge will be contributed by my research and what characteristics I believe knowledge to have. Also, how do I view reality – as absolute or forever changing? My assumptions or worldview provide me with a general philosophical orientation to the world and influences how I approached this research. The term “worldview” is also referred to as a paradigm (Creswell, 2014:7; Nieuwenhuis, 2016:52; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011:3) or a basic set of beliefs that guide action. Having arrived at an understanding of these notions, I realised that where I stand and what I believe affects what I want to know and understand from my research.

Researchers need to be able to explain their way of understanding and how they know what they know. This is referred to as epistemology. I find the simplification of the concepts ontology and epistemology offered by Hamilton and Corbett-Whittier (2013:24) useful: ontology simply means "what can be known" and epistemology means "how it can be known".

Lincoln, Lynham and Guba (2011:97) confirm that a variety of worldviews exist. Research approaches are primarily divided into quantitative and qualitative approaches. Although mixed methods are also used, they are not relevant and therefore not applied to this study. Table 4.1 explains the link between a particular worldview, ontological and epistemological assumptions and the primary research paradigm (adapted from Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013:26).

Table 4.1: Worldview, assumptions and research paradigm

<b>Theoretical stance (worldview)</b>	<b>Ontological assumptions (nature of reality)</b>	<b>Epistemological assumptions (how can reality be known?)</b>	<b>Research paradigm</b>
Positivist	Realism	Objectivism	Quantitative
Constructivism	Relativist	Socially constructed	Qualitative

Two epistemological positions, namely positivism and constructionism, are briefly explained. Having an objectivist worldview means that the researcher sees meaningful reality as existing apart from the operation of any consciousness (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013:26). Realism and objectivism result in a view that is objectified in the people being studied, and as researchers their belief is that the objective truth can therefore be fully captured (according to Nieuwenhuis, 2016:57) and discovered if the research is conducted scientifically. A hypothesis or theory is used as a starting point which is proved or disproved through deductive reasoning (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013:26). Generally, quantitative research is associated with a positivist worldview.

Constructivists reject the positivist worldview. Truth or understanding happens because humans engage in reality, and meaning is not discovered, but rather

constructed. Reality is viewed as relative. Relativist ontology understands that people construct meaning in different ways, even if it relates to exactly the same phenomenon, within a historical and social context. Reality is constructed by an individual in a subjective manner and reflects the individual's interpretation of "reality". Research from a constructionist perspective leans towards qualitative research. Nieuwenhuis (2016:53) maintains that qualitative research relies on words rather than numerical data. Qualitative research is naturalistic and focuses on settings where interaction occurs.

My research on the role of toy libraries in providing access to play-based learning opportunities is located within the constructivist worldview, underpinned by the ontological assumption of relativism. The epistemological assumption is that reality is socially constructed, which places the research in the qualitative paradigm (Guba, 1990:26; Corbett-Whittier, 2013:26). Realities exist in the form of multiple mental constructions which are based on social interaction and experiences, are local and specific and depend on the person holding the reality in terms of what the form and content of the reality is (Guba, 1990:26). The epistemology of constructivism is subjectivism. The researcher and participant become a single entity. The findings of research are the creation of the process of interaction between the researcher and participant. The methodology of constructivism is also both hermeneutic and dialectic. The participant's construction of the toy library is elicited, refined hermeneutically and compared and contrasted dialectically, eventually generating one (or a few) constructions on which both the researcher and participant have reached substantive consensus (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013: 26).

Constructivism is aligned with interpretivism. An interpretivist, such as myself, views the world through the perceptions and experiences of those who participate in the study. In accordance with the interpretivist worldview, I believe that access to reality is only possible through accessing the meanings participants assign to the phenomena. Reality is not objective and therefore cannot be replicated by others (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013:26; Mukherji & Albon, 2010:23).



Accepting multiple viewpoints from different individuals in different contexts made my study inclusive and comprehensive, allowing a 360-degree view of the toy library and play-based learning phenomena being investigated. I obtained in-depth and insightful information through this research. I am interested in toy librarians' experiences, understanding and perceptions as they relate to the toy library programme. The phenomenon of toy libraries and its link to play-based learning is complex and requires an understanding of the phenomena instead of focusing on numbers, as is occasionally the case with quantitative research (Thanh & Thanh, 2015:24; Yin, 2014:4).

#### **4.4 My role as a researcher**

My role is that of a constructivist researcher doing qualitative research (Creswell, 2014:8). I am not a clinical observer. My own experience and knowledge relating to toy libraries and play-based learning is required and can be incorporated with that of the participants. I used the data I gathered and the experiences I had during the study to further construct and expand my knowledge and understanding of toy libraries and play-based learning. I understand knowledge as being constructed through dialogue, that what I discovered as a result of this research is located in a particular context, situation and time and that it is open to re-interpretation and negotiation as subsequent conversations emerge (Cohen & Crabtree, 2008:336). I concur with Rowlands (2005:81) that knowledge can change, is gained through experience and that knowledge is socially constructed and interpreted.

As a researcher, I acknowledge the bias I bring to this study, and I agree with McMillan and Schumacher (2014:356) that I bring my personal and professional self to this study. In this study, I am a reflective researcher and therefore I am acutely aware of the notion of reflexivity. Reflexivity is defined by Mukherji and Albon (2010:25) "as the impact of research on the researcher and the effect of the self of the researcher on the research". Being aware of the concept of reflexivity enabled me to apply rigorous self-scrutiny throughout the research process. In order to control my bias, I used a reflection journal. The reflection journal enabled me to record my observations, ideas and personal reactions throughout the data production process as I documented my

observations, insights and feelings (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014:358; Rule & John, 2011:35). I influenced the process of research, but most importantly my perceptions were shaped by the process of research. My own background, which is culturally and economically different to the participants in this study, and work experience in toy libraries informed my interpretations. I made my own meaning and interpreted the meanings of others in relation to toy libraries (Creswell, 2014:187; Mukherji & Albon, 2010:159).

I wish to declare that I have set up and managed toy libraries serving young children in six locations within South Africa. I have been the treasurer of ITLA since 2014. I provide input into activities of the Toy Library Association of South Africa, which is linked to Cotlands, a non-profit South African organisation, on the board of which the founder of toy libraries in South Africa, Cynthia Morrison, served from 2013 to 2015. I have practical working knowledge of how toy libraries operate and know that this bias may influence my interpretation of data unless I employ measures such as a reflection journal and member checking to safeguard against this declared bias.

In order to make that which is familiar strange and to equalise the power relations, only one of the research sites was a site I was familiar with, the other six sites were sites unknown to me and where I had no influence or power over the toy library programme. At the research site where I was involved staff were given the opportunity to participate in the study by employing the principles of informed consent and voluntary participation.

This section explored constructivism as a worldview, locating this study in the qualitative research approach employing a multiple case study design, purposively selecting sites and using documents, photographs, focus group discussions and observation to collect data. The following section describes the research design.

#### **4.5 Research design: Case study research**

This research qualitatively investigated how toy libraries provide play-based learning opportunities for young children. This section provides a brief overview of the various

case study methods. The selected case study type and the rationale for selecting it will be explained.

#### **4.5.1 Types of case study methods**

Yin (2012:29) argues that case study methods can either be exploratory, explanatory or descriptive. Yin explains that if the research question contains the word “what” combined with case study research, an exploratory case study method is used. Questions containing the word “how” lend themselves to an explanatory case study method, whereas a descriptive case study tends to be used when the researcher knows a great deal about the phenomenon and plans to provide a focused and detailed description.

The main research question in my study contains the word “how”, indicating an explanatory case study research method. Explanatory case study research characteristically examines current events in a natural environment, obtaining information from the people involved in the event (Yin, 2012:29). The above rationale confirms that case study research is best suited for my study.

#### **4.5.2 Multiple case study design**

After consulting the literature of Mukherji and Albon (2010:81), Rule and John (2011:3), Thomas (2011:141) and Yin (2014:57), I opted for a multiple case study method to gather and analyse data from the participating toy library sites and toy librarians. First, each site was studied independently as a single case (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014:371). The case study method made it possible to focus the study on a single phenomenon, namely toy libraries, using multiple cases or sites to gain deeper understanding of the toy library (Yin, 2014:57). Employing a multiple case design increased the robustness of the study. A total of seven sites were selected. Investigating the seven cases individually and then seeking to identify similarities and differences helped me to generate rich information (Thomas, 2011:44). Using a multiple case study design enabled me to highlight the realities and complexities of providing play-based learning opportunities in the toy library. I was able to study the

day-to-day functioning of the toy libraries “as it happened”, without disturbance (Mukherji & Albon, 2010:85).

Case study research has particular strengths and limitations. The fact that the study takes place in a natural setting produces in-depth, thick and rich descriptions which allow themes and subthemes to emerge organically is a strength of the case study research design. The limitations of a case study are that it cannot be generalised to a population as a whole (which is not the intention in any case) and that the findings are not easily replicable by another researcher. The researcher’s bias in the selection of cases and how the data is recorded and finally analysed is a limitation I had to acknowledge and manage (Mukherji & Albon, 2010:87).

The multiple case study method using data collected via documents, photographs, focus group discussions and observation enabled me to obtain information on how toy libraries provide play-based learning opportunities for young children.

An explanation of the sampling procedure follows.

#### **4.6 Participants and research sites**

The seven toy library sites were selected through purposive sampling (Silverman, 2013:148; Elo, Kääriäinen, Kanste, Pölkki, Utriainen & Kyngäs, 2014:4). Participants who had knowledge of the research topic were selected, which increased the trustworthiness of the study. The selected cases displayed the required features of play-based learning and toy library operations. They also met the pre-determined set of criteria, which were informed by the research questions (Creswell, 2014:189). A number was allocated to each site. The anonymity of the toy librarians was ensured by providing each participant with a participant number. The participants and research sites were linked to a toy library located in a specific province. Initially, the management boards of ten potential sites were invited, by e-mail, to participate in the study and requested to return a signed consent. The signed consent form included an “expression of interest section”, which had to be completed by participating sites (Appendix F). The invitation letter included the selection criteria, which enabled

management to determine whether their toy library was eligible to participate in the study (Aubrey, David, Godfrey & Thompson, 2000:131; Mukherji & Albon, 2010:197).

A total of seven toy library research sites were selected from the initial ten, applying the following selection criteria:

- a. The toy library had to serve children younger than six years through come-and-play or mobile toy library play-based early learning sessions.
- b. In order to include as many provinces as possible, the toy library's location and whether service delivery was located in a rural or urban setting were considered.
- c. The toy library had to provide play-based learning opportunities using educational toys.

The selected toy library sites all served children six years and younger and offered play-based learning opportunities at the toy library, or play-based early learning sessions using a mobile toy library. The seven sites represent five of South Africa's nine provinces, namely Gauteng, Mpumalanga, the Free State, KwaZulu-Natal and North West. Four of the toy library sites were urban sites and three rural sites. A brief description of each site follows.

### **Site one**

Toy library site one is a refurbished container fitted with windows, shelving and doors. The container is located in an urban informal settlement in the province of Gauteng. In another container on the premises, a playgroup programme is operated and adjacent to the toy library is a disability centre that makes use of the toy library. The toy library was established in 2010 to serve the surrounding community and to accommodate support programmes offered by the non-profit organisation. The toy library operations are guided by a programme policy file detailing the day-to-day operations, which include play-based early learning sessions. In addition, a mobile toy library unit takes toys to ECD centres to provide them with resources.

### **Site two**

Toy library site two was established in 2014 and is located in rural Mpumalanga. The toy library is a well-built, spacious brick building, located within a non-profit

organisation focused on working with orphaned and vulnerable children living with HIV. The toy librarian works alongside community health care workers, nurses and social workers. Children are transported to the toy library in a six-weekly cycle. Neighbouring ECD centres borrow toy boxes from the toy library together with a manual on how to use the toys.

### **Site three**

Site number three is located in the rural Free State, in a well-built brick building attached to the office space from where the organisation is operating. The toy library facilitators provide play-based early learning sessions which focus on school readiness. Young parents, grandparents and caregivers attend play-based early learning sessions with the children. In addition, the facilitators are able to advise on child nutrition, health, immunisation and birth registration.

### **Site four**

The fourth site is owned by a non-profit organisation and is located in Kwazulu-Natal. The setting is rural; the young children are widely spread and not concentrated in one area. The five toy libraries and one mobile unit allow children, their parents and ECD workers to access resources. Play-based early learning sessions are provided for children and training sessions on how to play to learn are provided to parents. Included in this site's services is a five-day training session, which includes training in toy library administration, preparation of materials and using play resources to facilitate learning.

### **Site five**

Toy library site five is located within a peri-urban community library next to an informal settlement in North West. The toy library is located within the children's section of the book library. Programmes are provided to encourage a love of reading. ECD centres participate in programmes and borrow toys from the toy library. A space is demarcated in the book library equipped with child-sized tables, chairs and miniature toy furniture, which encourages children's play.

### **Site six**

Toy library site six is located within a school serving children with severe cognitive disabilities. The toy library is located in an intervention centre and gives parents and their children access to toys.

### **Site seven**

A public children's hospital is the setting of the seventh toy library site. The toy library forms part of the physiotherapy and occupational therapy departments of a hospital. Doctors refer children to the department, after which a treatment plan is developed by either the occupational therapist or the physiotherapist. A toy librarian assists families to select toys, bearing the therapy plan in mind.

The sites provided the required data, enabling me to answer the research questions as well as to generate new knowledge and understanding of toy libraries. Although each site is presented as a case, the contributions from individual participants (the manager, toy librarian and critical stakeholders) were included in the data production process. A total of 42 participants attended the focus group discussions across the seven sites, and three sites comprising of seven toy librarians were included in the observations while facilitating play-based early learning sessions. Only seven toy librarians from three sites were included in the observations because they were the only toy librarians implementing play sessions, since managers and other stakeholders do not provide play sessions.

Each individual participant made a unique contribution to the study. The managers of the toy library programme provided access to the toy library documentation. The toy librarians used photovoice to depict the toy library's activities by taking the photographs, which were discussed during the focus group discussion, as well as for facilitating the play-based early learning sessions. The small size of the sample made it manageable, yet varied enough to allow thorough exploration of how toy libraries provide play-based learning opportunities for young children. A detailed description of the data production phases is provided in the following section.

## 4.7 The phases of data production

The data production process included three phases within a particular timeframe. Table 4.2 provides an overview of the data production phases and timeframes

Table 4.2: Data production phases and timeframes

Phases	Timeframe
Phase one: site selection	May
Phase two: planning	June
Phase three: data production	July, August, September

The collecting of data was guided by the following primary research question: How do toy libraries provide play-based learning opportunities for young children?

The secondary research questions, derived from the primary question, are:

1. How do toy libraries create opportunities for young children to access play-based learning activities?
2. How do South African toy libraries implement play-based learning, if any?
3. Why do South African toy libraries need a quality framework?

The documentation, photographs, focus group discussions and observations provided enough data to enable triangulation of the data. The research process is depicted in three phases as diagrammatically presented in Figure 4.1.

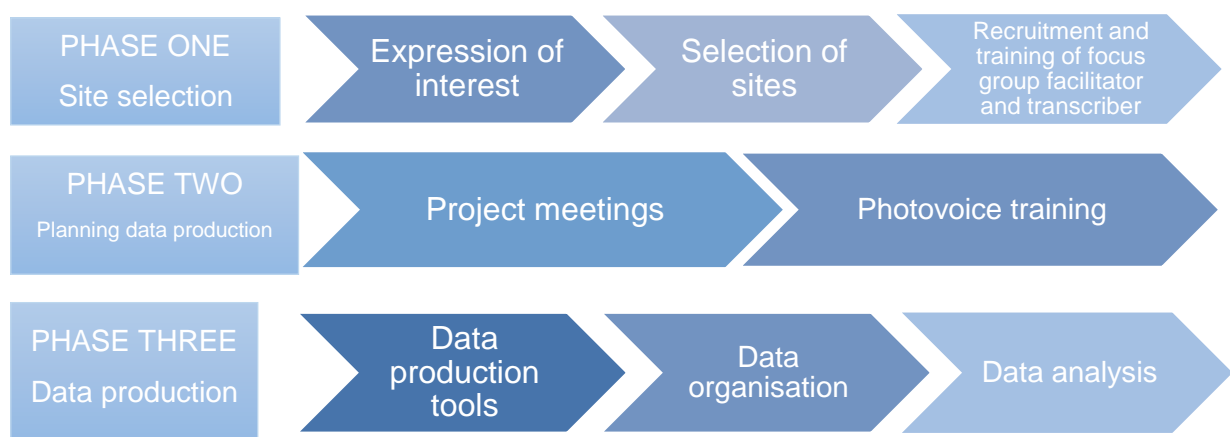


Figure 4.1: Phases of the data production process



Phase one focused on site selection, phase two on the planning of the data production and phase three on collecting the data. **Phase one** focused on the selection of the sites. The data production process was initiated by e-mailing the letter of invitation with the expression of interest section to ten prospective organisations. Organisations indicated their willingness to participate in the study and returned their signed expression of interest forms (Appendix F). I selected seven sites and informed the sites that were not selected. During this phase the focus group facilitator and transcriber were recruited and trained by me. I requested assistance from the Cotlands board to recruit an intern who, amongst other tasks, was assigned to assist me with this study in the capacity of transcriber.

The recruited intern has a degree and had the required knowledge and skills to do the transcriptions of the focus group discussions. The transcriber was trained by me in a two-and-a-half-hour training session. The training was reduced from three days to two and a half hours due to the transcriber's existing experience, knowledge and skill set. The training session included an overview of the purpose of the research and the ethical considerations which had to be adhered to. In the transcriber's letter of appointment and acceptance the expected role of the transcriber was explained (Appendix I). In addition, the data labelling and indexing framework were discussed and electronically created. A dry information filing run was done in line with the framework, and the transcriber did it correctly. The dates when the transcriber was required to be available were confirmed. As the final component of the training, the transcriber had to transcribe an audio recording of 30 minutes and to calculate the time it took her to complete the transcript. The practical transcription task gave the team the opportunity to test the audio and video equipment to ensure all was in good working condition. At the end of the training session, the letter of appointment and acceptance was signed.

Cotlands' board seconded a staff member who is an experienced focus group facilitator to the research project for a maximum of 20 days during the period June to September. The focus group facilitator attended a three-hour workshop prior to the focus group discussion. Initially, three days of training were set aside for in-depth training to accommodate an inexperienced focus group facilitator. However, the focus

group facilitator that I selected is an experienced facilitator and therefore required only three hours of training. The training included an overview of the purpose of the research, an explanation of the research questions and the ethical considerations which had to be upheld during the research. The role of the focus group facilitator as detailed in Appendix H: Focus Group Facilitator Letter of Appointment and Acceptance was discussed. I shared the focus group discussion procedure with the focus group facilitator and emphasised the importance of following the same procedure at each of the seven focus group discussions. The focus group discussion procedure included welcoming and introducing the people in the room to each other, followed by an icebreaker activity to create rapport and make participants feel welcome. The focus group facilitator and I discussed the research questions to create an in-depth understanding of what content was required in order to answer the research questions.

Appendix G was included in the ethical clearance and was approved; however, after the training of the focus group facilitator I included an introduction section, amended the order of the questions and added two additional questions which were suggested by the focus group facilitator. I also linked each suggested question to the research questions in an attempt to adequately prepare the focus group facilitator. During the training of the focus group facilitator we agreed on how much of the one-hour slot should be spent on each group of questions. We agreed that the first half-hour was to be used to collect consent forms, sign the attendance register and doing the icebreaker. This would make the group feel at ease and allowed the facilitator to establish rapport with the group. Focus group discussions generate an enormous amount of data, and to keep the transcribed data manageable and the conversation focused an hour was allocated for the focus group discussion.

**Phase two** involved the planning steps of the study. Telephonic contact was made with the selected sites and a face-to-face project meeting date secured. The project meeting details, agenda and manager's consent letter (Appendix D) were e-mailed to participating sites. The agenda of the project meeting included welcome, introduction, finalising the agenda and signing the attendance register. The research rationale, ethics, informed consent and the related consent forms (Appendix A, D, E, J), as well as the data production process were discussed. The date of the focus group

discussion and the logistics pertaining to the focus group discussion were finalised. The PowerPoint presentation used at the meeting was e-mailed to each site after the meeting. This enabled me to do a preliminary analysis of the documentation during the time photographs were being taken. Initially, seven hours were set aside for the project meeting, which included training on photovoice. However, the project meeting and photovoice training sessions ranged from two to three hours.

The project meeting was followed by a photovoice training session, which was attended by the toy librarian and the manager. The training session started with a welcome and introduction session and the signing of the attendance register. The purpose of the research and photovoice as a data production tool was explained. At six of the sites the toy librarians used their own cellular phones to take the photographs; at site seven I provided the cellular phone with which the photographs were taken. The selection of ten to fifteen photographs and preparing the photographs for use in the focus group discussion was explained to the participants. Between 30 to 45 minutes were spent on the role of the toy librarian with regard to obtaining consent to take the photographs of the toy library operations and children participating in the play-based learning activities.

The observation of the play-based early learning sessions took place eight months after the initial focus group discussions were scheduled. Once the focus group data was analysed, three of the seven sites were selected for observation of their play-based early learning sessions.

**Phase three** included the data production tools, organising and analysing discussed in the following section.

#### **4.8 Data production tools**

Collecting data in this study is viewed as a constructivist process, where data was constructed and reconstructed by the participants and myself as the researcher, and therefore the term data production is used instead of data production. Data was constructed by using four data production tools that were most appropriate for the

selected research design. These tools enabled me to study how toy librarians provide access to play-based learning opportunities for young children in their respective toy libraries. In order to generate the rich information required for this multiple case study research, the following four data production instruments were used: documents, photographs, focus group discussions and observation.

Data production starts with setting boundaries in terms of which data production tools to use, considering the advantages and disadvantages of each tool and establishing protocols (Appendix K) for consideration when using the tools (Creswell, 2014:191), as listed in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Advantages and disadvantages of the data production tools

<b>Data production tools and options</b>	<b>Advantages of the tool</b> (Creswell, 2014:192; Rule & John, 2011:66)	<b>Disadvantages of the tool</b> (Coffey, 2013:2)	<b>Selected option for this study</b>
Documentation: Public documents – annual reports, training manuals, websites, private documents – journal, diaries, letters	Obtain access to language being used in setting. Unobtrusive source which can be accessed at a time convenient to the researcher. Written evidence that does not need to be transcribed.	Researcher needs to search in hard-to-find places for documentation. Documents need to be scanned so they can be saved digitally. Documents may be outdated, incomplete, not authentic or inaccurate.	Documentation detailing procedures of the toy library. A reflection journal was used to note concerns, questions, insights, opinions and to note links I wished to explore during analysis.
Audio-visual materials: Videotapes Photographs	May be unobtrusive way to collect data. Participants share their reality. Creative in that it captures information visually, making it accessible to low literacy or multilingual audiences.	Interpretation may be complicated. May not be accessible. Photographer may be disruptive and influence outcome of what is collected.	Photographs were used to portray the day-to-day operations of the toy library.
Interviews: Focus group – interview participants in a group	Useful when direct observation is not feasible. Participants can provide information that may not be written elsewhere.	Information is selected and filtered by the participants. Information is not obtained from a natural setting.	Focus group interview using the photographs to elicit conversation. Audio recordings were transcribed.

<b>Data production tools and options</b>	<b>Advantages of the tool</b> (Creswell, 2014:192; Rule & John, 2011:66)	<b>Disadvantages of the tool</b> (Coffey, 2013:2)	<b>Selected option for this study</b>
	Researcher controls the line of questioning.	Responses might be biased due to the researcher's presence. Participants might not be articulate. Variety of languages spoken in the group.	
Observation: Complete observer (researcher observes without participating)	First-hand experiences with participants. Information is recorded as it happens. Unusual aspects can be noted. Useful when studying topics that may be uncomfortable for participants to discuss.	Researcher may be intrusive. Unethical practice may be observed that must be reported. Researchers may lack observation and recording skills. Children may react negatively to the observer.	Complete observer: observation without participating.

A description of the selected data production tools (documentation, photographs, focus group discussions and observation) follows.

#### **4.8.1 Documentation (including a reflection journal)**

The documentation used in toy libraries provided valuable sources of information. Documentation that related to the research question in a variety of formats (printed, handwritten, electronic) format was included. The toy library documentation was a rich data source which I was able to access at a time convenient to me. I specifically requested access to the toy library's documents relating to the operational procedures and processes. The documentation includes policies, budgets, minutes of meetings, annual reports, training materials, operational manuals, job descriptions, the code of conduct, newspaper clippings, magazine articles, pamphlets, forms, websites and video footage (Creswell, 2014:192).

My qualitative research on the role of toy libraries in providing play-based learning opportunities for young children took place in the toy library setting, which was "documented" in various ways. Coffey (2013:2) explains that documentation can be

grouped into official records (organisational records of action and activity), everyday documents (operational, routine documents), private papers (diaries and letters), social research documents (maps, photographs, newspaper reports), technological as well as digital and social media (SMS texts, websites). I was particularly interested in the everyday documents and websites of the participating toy library sites, which lie at the heart of the toy library's everyday practice (Coffey, 2013:3) and also included websites as part of the documents I used to collect data. Documents can be seen as vehicles for making sense of practices. In this study, the question relating to what operational characteristics toy libraries should possess in order to provide play-based learning opportunities for young children was answered by studying the relevant documentation. Documents are regarded as social constructs and therefore can tell a researcher much about a social setting, such as a toy library. Coffey (2013:6) argues that a document's value does not only lie in the content it provides, but also in how it relates to other documents. I used a thematic approach to analyse the documentation that was provided by the toy librarians, linking it to the themes that emerged during the focus group discussions (Coffey, 2013:6).

I ensured that I kept a reflection journal to note concerns, questions, insights, opinions and links I wished to explore during analyses of each focus group and observation session (Merriam, 2009:223). A reflection journal is viewed as being biased, since it is a personal reflection of events. I mitigated the bias by including member checking, sharing the focus group transcriptions with the participants to remove the element of bias from the study.

The advantage of using documentation as a data production tool was that it provided the opportunity to triangulate the collected data. However, the disadvantage was that the materials provided by the participants was incomplete, unpublished or not verifiable in terms of authenticity and accuracy (Creswell, 2014:192). Only three of the seven sites provided documentation relating to the toy library. The documentation that was shared included a toy library members borrowing sheet, annual reports retrieved from websites, toy library guideline, lesson plans which indicate the routine and activities per routine, toy library attendance register, toy librarian monthly report, outlines of toy library training courses, classification system used to categorise play

materials, toy library membership forms, stock lists or cards and a toy librarian job description.

#### **4.8.2 Photographs**

Photo-based research, referred to as photovoice, was the second data production tool I used. Wang and Burris (1997:370) developed this method, which was initially used to understand health issues of rural woman in China. Subsequently, photovoice has been used widely in the social sciences as a data production tool. Requesting toy librarians to take photographs allowed greater ownership of the data being collected, effectively making the toy librarian a fieldworker in the research (Wang & Burris, 1997:370).

I ensured that I included the important ethical considerations when working with photographs in the design of this study. The minimum effective practices (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001:564) include obtaining written consent from those who are being photographed, a photovoice training session, written information about the study which the toy librarian gave to people willing to be photographed and providing mentoring to the toy librarian on the ethical principles underlying photovoice methodology. Every effort was made to ensure that people who were photographed were informed how their photographs would be used (Appendix B).

The selected photographs were discussed in the focus group discussions. As a research method, photo discussions, referred to as photo elicitation (Harper, 2002:13), are primarily used in the field of sociology, but they have also been used in psychology, education and organisational studies. Collier (1957:857) first reported on the notion to talk about photographs. He confirmed that the pictures elicited longer and more comprehensive interviews, but at the same time helped subjects overcome the fatigue and repetition of conventional interviews. It is for this reason I chose to incorporate the photographs in the focus group discussion.

Harper (2002:20) expanded Collier's view (1957:857) by stating that photographs do not automatically elicit useful conversation and that it is useful to take photographs

which portray the ordinary in an extraordinary manner. Portraying the ordinary in an extraordinary manner is achieved when photographs are taken from unusual angles, such as from above or close up, or by zooming in on something (Harper, 2002:21). Photographs of this nature enabled participants to see the ordinary everyday events in a different way, which contributed to richer conversations about the photographs. Each toy librarian was encouraged to take photographs of the ordinary in an extraordinary manner so as to gain new perspectives, as aptly described by Harper (2002:21):

*“... photographs can jolt subjects into a new awareness of their social existence. As someone considers this new framing of taken-for-granted experiences they are able to deconstruct their own phenomenological assumptions. The idea behind breaking the frame is that photographs may lead an individual to a new view of their social existence”.*

Each toy librarian selected 15 photographs for discussion during the focus group. Each photograph was numbered for ease of reference to the photograph during the focus group discussion. Prior to the focus group discussion, I made A4 prints of each photograph, which were projected during the focus group discussion for all to see. Each toy librarian provided a caption for every photograph.

The advantages of using photographs as a data production tool are that photographs allow for greater participation by stakeholders such as the toy librarians, because they can share their reality (Creswell, 2014:192). The data collected through the photographs provided evidence of the operations and was useful for triangulation with other sources of data. One of the disadvantages of using photographs was that the toy librarians often focused on one aspect of the toy library operations instead of portraying a variety of toy library procedures and activities. In addition, the unpacking and discussions resulted in large amounts of data that was time consuming because it needed to be transcribed, coded and analysed (Creswell, 2014:192).



### **4.8.3 Focus group discussions**

The purpose of the focus group discussions in this study was to talk about the photographs in order to generate data. At each site a focus group discussion was arranged with four to eight participants (Creswell, 2014:191). Although the toy librarian was the primary stakeholder, I also included managers and parents in the focus group discussions at the sites. The toy librarian decided who to include as participants in the discussion. The duration of the focus group discussion was between 55 minutes and one hour 21 minutes, with the longest focus group discussion lasting one and a half hours. The selection of participants was heterogeneous, with the prerequisites being that the participants in the focus groups had to provide access the toy library services or be involved in the management, registration or funding of the toy library programme. A total of 42 consent forms were completed by focus group participants (Appendix E).

In order for the participants to feel comfortable and to encourage optimum participation, each focus group was conducted in settings which were familiar to the participants. At all the sites the usual meetings or training spaces were used for the focus group discussions. Participants were encouraged to contribute to the discussion in their home language. A multilingual focus group facilitator (Appendix H) was responsible for the facilitation of the focus group discussion, which strengthened the design of the focus group and overcame my restricted language skills, which are limited to English and Afrikaans.

A transcriber (Appendix I) formed part of the research team. The transcriber's role was to audio and video record the focus group discussions. Following the focus group discussion, the transcriber compiled verbatim transcripts using the audio recordings and incorporating my notes where appropriate. In addition, the transcriber created an electronic and hard copy filing system enabling the retrieval of data.

At one site, we arrived to conduct the focus group discussion, but were unable to proceed because the toy librarian had not prepared for the discussion, so that we had to reschedule the discussion. All the sites returned the transcriptions after having checked them. Two sites made amendments to the transcripts. The requested

changes concerned either terminology or spelling errors. The changes were made before commencing with the data analysis. Participants attending the focus group discussions signed off the transcriptions as a true reflection of what has transpired during the focus group discussion.

My role as researcher during the focus group discussion was that of an informal observer. I made field notes focusing on the dynamics of the group, noting significant body language and interactions amongst the participants. Between myself and the focus group facilitator, we agreed that if I wanted to indicate to the focus group facilitator that a topic was adequately answered or that the conversation needed to be focused, I made use of non-verbal cues such as rubbing my ear to indicate to move on, and touching my nose to indicate that the conversation needed to be more focused.

The focus group discussions formed part of both the data production and analysis. The key outcome of the focus group discussions was to move from a literal description of the photographs to exploring the deeper significance and meaning in relation to the research questions (Rule & John, 2011:66). Since this study is phenomenological, it was imperative that the focus group discussion allowed the participants to portray the toy library through their eyes, best summarised by Harper (2002:24), who quoted Lewis Hine as saying "If I could tell the story in words, I wouldn't need to lug a camera."

The advantages of using focus group discussions as a data production tool is that they allowed for a variety of meanings, clarification and probing through questioning (Creswell, 2014:191). However, one of the disadvantages was that not all the participants were equally articulate, and drawing the quiet voices into the conversation was an important role of the facilitator (Creswell, 2014: 191).

#### **4.8.4 Observation**

Observation is commonly used in qualitative studies. I used observation as another data production tool. The toy librarians were the primary participants and the children secondary participants during the observations. I observed the toy librarians to see

how they provided play-based learning opportunities for young children. Observation of the children enabled me to determine which play-based learning aspects children participated in during a play session at the toy library (Berkhout *et al.*, 2012:1326). I included observation of play-based early learning sessions because it provided an open-ended opportunity to obtain additional data from participants. I tried to be an objective observer, honestly recording what I saw against the elements of the checklist. I did not participate in the activities that were taking place (Creswell, 2014: 191). Observation enabled me to take field notes on the behaviour and activities of toy librarians at toy library sites while they were conducting play-based early learning sessions.

The play sessions I observed at the three toy library sites were also video recorded, for which I obtained prior consent. The intention was not to decode the video recordings, but to use them to refer back to, since the moment of observation is fleeting and I could have missed elements during the first observation. Berkhout *et al.* (2012:1326) claim that video recording is increasingly being used to study children's play skills. The primary advantage of video recordings was that the recordings were accessed as and when required during the data analysis process, enhancing the trustworthiness of the observation data. An added advantage of video recording the play sessions was that the continuity of what took place during a play session was captured. In addition, the authentic view of what took place was available if the data analysis process was to be audited. During the analysis process I was able to observe the whole group, smaller groups of children as well as individuals in the group while using the observation checklist to identify which of the elements on the observation checklist were present during the early learning play sessions.

The question what to observe was firstly guided by the main research question: how toy librarians provide play-based learning opportunities for young children (Creswell, 2014:190). Observation is inadvertently influenced by the number of things that can be observed, the researcher's theoretical framework and the problem under investigation (Merriam, 2009:119). I considered elements likely to be present in the toy library setting listed in Table 4.4 and as proposed by Merriam (2009:122),

Table 4.4: Observation elements to consider during observation

Element	Explanation of each observation element
The physical setting	What is the physical environment like? What is the context? What kind of activity is the setting designed for? How is space allocated and used? What play materials can be found in the setting?
The participants	Who is part of the scene that is being observed (the people and their roles)? What are the relevant characteristics of the participants?
Activities and interactions	What is going on? What is the sequence of activities? How do participants interact with the activity? How do participants interact with each other? How are people and activities connected?
Conversations	What are the conversations about? Who speaks to whom?
Subtle factors	What does not happen? Non-verbal communication Unobtrusive measures such as physical cues
My own behaviour	Am I as much part of the scene as the participants? How is my role affecting the scene while observing? What do I say and do that may influence the observation? How will I record the observations?

I used Table 4.4 as a guide to develop the observation checklist presented in Table 4.5. I opted to indicate whether I observed or did not observe something by using a tick (✓) or an (✗).

Table 4.5: Checklist for observing play-based early learning sessions

Observation element	Observed/Yes ✓ Not observed/No ✗	Comments
Did the children have enough time for uninterrupted and prolonged play?		
Is the toy library physically safe?		
Is the toy library emotionally safe?		
Did the toy librarian observe play activities to determine children's need and preference?		
Did children play with a variety of culturally appropriate play materials?		
Did the toy librarian join in the children's play?		
Did the toy librarian enhance children's learning by asking questions?		
Did the children play indoors and outdoors?		

Observation element	Observed/Yes ✓ Not observed/No ✗	Comments
Does the toy librarian ask questions, offer suggestions or share content knowledge linked to children play?		
Does the toy librarian sometimes direct children's play?		
Did you observe any of the "choice" playfulness indicators?		
Did you observe any of the "wonder" playfulness indicators?		
Did you observe any of the "delight" playfulness indicators?		
Stages of social play observed:		
Unoccupied play – no purpose		
Solitary play – alone, unaware of others		
Onlooker play – aware of others, copies their play but plays alone		
Cooperative play – group play, sustained, roles and goals		
Types of play development observed:		
Constructive play (creating and building using various object e.g. blocks, puzzles)		
Physical play: running, jumping, kicking		
Expressive play: creative art (writing, drawing, painting), drama, music, writing		
Fantasy play: dress up, taking on roles, including others		
Digital play: play using a device		

The advantages of using observation as a data production tool included the fact that I had first-hand experience of three play sessions ranging between two and two and a half hours per site, totalling seven and a half hours of observation. The activities that were photographed and described during the focus group discussions were "brought to life" during the observation.

Observation as a data production tool also has its disadvantages and limitations. Most notably, I only had one camera and was not always able to video record all of the play activities all of the time, since some of the play activities took place out of view of the video camera. In addition, reporting on the observations, using the observation checklist and revisiting the video footage to specifically find elements listed in the observation checklist was extremely time consuming (Berkhout *et al.*, 2012:1327). Furthermore, the children were initially slightly disturbed by my presence, or towards the end tried to engage with me, which left me feeling that I was intruding in their

space. Although I arrived before the start of the play session and tried to find an unobtrusive place to sit, the children were curious about who I was and tried to engage with me. I paid little attention to their attempts, and they soon began to ignore me and continued playing.

The data collected via documentation, photographs, focus group discussion and observations was systematically organised in preparation for the data analysis process.

#### **4.9 Data organisation**

The collected data was systematically organised as advised by Rule and John (2011:76). I created a data labelling and indexing outline which assisted with keeping each site's data systematically organised and easy to retrieve as well as an electronic and hard copy filing system. Seven sections were created, one for each site. Each site's signed consent letters, documentation, photographs, focus group audio recordings and transcripts, as well as my observation notes, were filed accordingly.

Once the data had been organised, the first reading of the data took place. The aim was to get a sense of what information was contained in the transcripts. Every paragraph and document was hand coded. The coding allowed for a systematic data trail, making it possible to trace the origins of the data if required.

#### **4.10 Data analysis process**

Bengtsson (2016:8) confirms that several data analysis methods can be used in qualitative research. The purpose of data analysis is to organise and elicit meaning from the collected data. Bengtsson (2016:9) suggests that qualitative content analyses involve presenting data in words or themes, making it possible to interpret the results. Thomas refers to qualitative data analysis (2006:238) as an inductive analysis approach, described by him as referring to "approaches that primarily use detailed readings of raw data to derive concepts, themes, or a model through which interpretations are made from the raw data by a researcher". In this study I describe

what the participants actually said, combined with what was visible and obvious in the photographs and during the observation of play-based early learning sessions. I managed my bias by remaining aware of what participants said and presenting appropriate units in the report as quotations.

The images and text data that were generated were dense and rich. I was not able to use all the information I had gathered as data. Data coding was done by hand. As the first step of the data analysis I had to winnow the data, which helped me to disregard parts of the data in order to focus on data I needed to answer the research questions and disregard data unrelated to the study (Creswell, 2014: 195; Bengtsson, 2016:12). Each toy library site was deemed a unit of analysis (Yin, 2014:186). The data generated as a result of studying the cases was analysed using a series of steps (Creswell, 2014:197).

Figure 4.2 depicts the steps involved in qualitative data analysis.

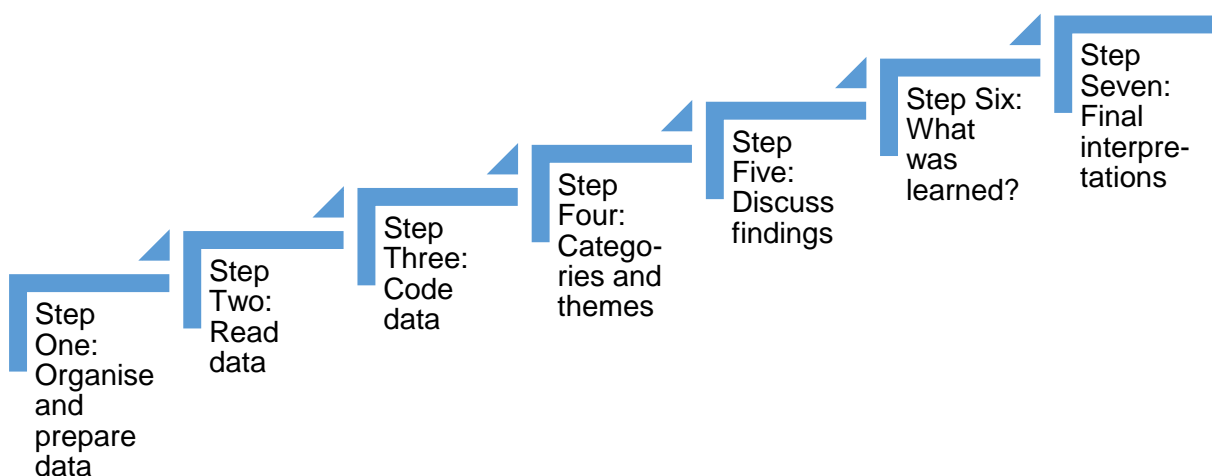


Figure 4.2: Steps in qualitative data analysis (Creswell, 2014:197)

As depicted in Figure 4.2, the first step was to organise and prepare the data. During this step the documentation was collected and scanned, the photographs were uploaded and numbered, the focus group discussions were transcribed and the observation notes were typed up. In step two I read through the data several times to gain a general understanding of the content present in the data. As the third step I started coding all the data. The coding process allowed me to organise the data by

identifying chunks of data and then labelling it with a word that represented a category. In step four the coding process was used to generate a description of the setting, participants, categories or themes that emerged. The themes are presented as the major findings in chapter six. Step five included a description of the themes as a narrative passage that conveyed the findings of the analysis. In step six I interpreted what was learned, and step seven provided the final interpretations of the themes, validating the descriptions against existing literature so as to answer the research questions.

Determining “what goes with what” assisted me to note patterns and to cluster themes into categories (Rule & John, 2011:78; Thomas, 2006:241). Thomas (2006:241) suggests that continuous revision and refinement of the themes is required to “sharpen understanding” and to “see things and their relationships”. In qualitative research it is typical for data analysis, data production and the write-up of findings to occur concurrently (Creswell, 2014: 195). Yin (2016:186) refers to the “back and forth” process associated with qualitative data analysis.

Once I had organised and read the data, I used universal codes for the focus group transcriptions, observation checklists and the reflection journal. After the allocation of the codes, I identified three themes and nine subthemes.

The trustworthiness aspect of my study is explained in the following section.

#### **4.11 Trustworthiness as a quality measure**

Research must be open to criticism and evaluation (Bengtsson, 2016:13). Scholars are divided as to whether the same quality criteria should be applied to qualitative and quantitative research. In quantitative research the terms validity, reliability and generalisability are used; in qualitative research the term trustworthiness, which includes credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability, is proposed. Qualitative research generates text-based data that is analysed, after which the results of the analysis are reported. The validity of research is determined by how the results are reported (Elo *et al.*, 2014:1). The qualitative validity refers to the steps undertaken



to check the accuracy of the findings and is also referred to as trustworthiness, authenticity or credibility (Creswell, 2014:201).

Since the mid-1980s, numerous works have attempted to describe and list the factors that increase the trustworthiness of qualitative research and, by implication, of qualitative content analysis (Loh, 2013:5; Creswell, 2014: 201; Bengtsson, 2016:9). The debate about the most appropriate term to assess the validity of qualitative research is ongoing (Elo *et al.*, 2014:1; Creswell, 2014:201; Yin, 2016:161).

In this study the term trustworthiness is used to describe the quality criteria employed in this study. Lincoln and Guba (1985:263)<sup>4</sup> argue that trustworthiness validates a study to a level where it is worth paying attention to. Table 4.6 lists the four criteria, namely credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:263) and the strategies researchers have to employ to enhance the trustworthiness of their research.

Table 4.6: Four criteria of trustworthiness (Adapted from Lincoln & Guba, 1985:263)

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Provisions made by the researcher</b>
Credibility	Adoption of appropriate, well-recognised research methods Prolonged engagement Persistent observation Triangulation (different types of participants, different sites) Member checks of data collected Thick description of phenomenon
Transferability	Thick description Provision of background data to establish context of study
Dependability	Employ overlapping methods Dependability audit or methodological description (examining how data was collected, kept and analysed)
Confirmability	Triangulation to reduce researcher bias Recognition of shortcomings in study's methods and potential effects on study Audit trail – depicted in diagram (to attest that the findings, interpretations and recommendations are supported by data)

<sup>4</sup> Original source

Each of the trustworthiness criteria is discussed in relation to this study.

#### **4.11.1 Credibility**

Credibility in qualitative studies is achieved when the researcher includes the following strategies when designing and executing the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:263): adoption of appropriate, well-recognised research methods, prolonged engagement, triangulation, peer scrutiny, member checks of data collected, thick description of the phenomenon and referential adequacy (archiving of data).

I adopted a case study research design which has been widely used and of which the required elements were incorporated in my study. In addition, I gave participants and my supervisors (to a lesser extent) an opportunity to verify the verbatim transcriptions soon after the data was collected. Creswell (2014:201) refers to this as member checking, which he defines as "... a process whereby the final report or specific description or themes are taken back to the participants". I opted to share the verbatim transcriptions of the focus group discussions with participants during the data production phase as opposed to sharing the final report. Member checking is an essential step to increase trustworthiness, as it reduces the likelihood of falsifying or misrepresenting findings as a result of researcher bias. Noble and Smith (2015:35) refer to this criterion as respondent validation. Bengtsson (2016:12) argues that member checking can pose a risk to trustworthiness, as the time delay between data production and analysis may result in unreliability of a participant's memory. An additional risk posed by member checking is that participants may not recognise how data is presented. In light of the above risks, it is better to obtain confirmation of the content during the data production phase.

Prolonged engagement with participants was achieved by organising a project meeting, requesting appropriate documentation and returning to all seven sites for data production during the focus group discussions (Cohen & Crabtree, 2008:336). Additional visits were undertaken to three of the seven sites where play-based early learning sessions had been observed. An acceptable period of prolonged engagement enabled me to gain the cooperation of the gatekeepers, build trust and gain a better

understanding of the various sites without influencing my professional judgement (Lincoln & Guba, 1985: 260).

I used triangulation as an additional quality measure. The data production phase employed a variety of methods (documents, focus group discussions, photographs and observations); this allowed the combined strengths of the methods to overcome the shortcomings of each individual method. Different types of participants and different sites were selected. A second form of triangulation was the use of a wide range of participants. The contributions of a range of stakeholders provided an opportunity to verify viewpoints and comments. Selecting seven sites allowed for a third form of triangulation across sites. Similar findings across different sites further enhance the credibility of this study (Elo *et al.*, 2014:2).

During the research project I invited colleagues and my supervisors to provide me with feedback, which was incorporated to strengthen the study. I presented the study at two conferences and incorporated suggestions made. This strengthened the research design and the arguments I presented.

Finally, I provided thick descriptions of the phenomenon being studied. I accurately described the actual situations that were investigated and the context surrounding the investigations. I interpreted the human experiences of the participants in such a way that other people who share that experience can immediately recognise the descriptions. Elo *et al.* (2014:2) point out that if a researcher identifies and adequately describes the participants, the credibility of the sampling procedures and participant size is increased.

#### **4.11.2 Transferability**

Transferability is achieved within qualitative research if the researcher presents sufficient descriptive data to allow comparisons. Transferability is more the responsibility of the person wanting to transfer the findings to another situation or population than that of the initial researcher (Bengtsson, 2016:13). Qualitative studies do not aim to generalise findings and therefore make very limited claims in this regard

(Bengtsson, 2016:13). Qualitative studies are more about profound examination of smaller samples than about generalising findings to larger populations. Providing sufficient contextual information about the selected toy library sites might enable a practitioner in a similar setting to transfer the findings. Rich, thick descriptions are an important strategy linked to transferability, not with the intention to replicate the study, but rather to truthfully reflect participants' view of their realities or context, so that the reader can transfer what is applicable (Elo *et al.*, 2014:2). To this end I have provided the number and locations of sites taking part in the study, the number of participants involved, the data production methods and the scope of the data production.

#### **4.11.3 Dependability**

Dependability and credibility are closely related. A detailed description of the research design is provided to enable future researchers to repeat the design. I have devoted sections to the research design and implementation as well as to the data production processes and an evaluation of the effectiveness of the process of investigation (Elo *et al.*, 2014:2). In addition, I selected four different data production instruments (documents, photographs focus group discussions and observations) making it possible to triangulate the data (Noble & Smith, 2015:35), thereby increasing the trustworthiness of this study as suggested by Creswell (2014:201) and Yin (2016:161).

#### **4.11.4 Confirmability**

Confirmability considers the objectivity or neutrality of the data (Bengtsson, 2016:13). The researcher has to ensure that the findings are the result of the participants' experiences and not of those of the researcher. Self-reflection and the use of triangulation reduce the effect of researcher bias. An audit trail tracing the step-by-step course of the data production process in particular and how the data leads to the findings ensures that the criterion of confirmability is adhered to. I compiled rich, thick verbatim descriptions of the participants' discussions during the focus groups, as well as of each case study. In addition, I also ensured that the reader has a sense of sharing in the experience (Creswell, 2014:199). The data production process included multiple cases, which enabled cases to be compared, specifically searching for

similarities and differences across the cases to ensure that different perspectives are represented (Yin, 2014:57). The process of data analysis and the subsequent interpretation of the findings were outlined (Noble & Smith, 2015:35).

I used a reflection journal to enable me to reflect on any biases. In addition, I declared my personal biases in the section on the role of the researcher in this chapter (Creswell, 2014:188; Noble & Smith, 2015:34). Bengtsson (2016:8) confirms the importance of self-reflection and a researcher's prior understanding to minimise the researcher's bias and influence during the study. I was transparent about the recordkeeping practices, explaining that a clear decision trail informed the data interpretation, resulting in consistency when the data was interpreted (Noble & Smith, 2015:35).

#### **4.12 Ethical considerations**

I view adherence to ethical requirements as being part of every step in the research process, starting with understanding the impact of my worldview on the design of my study, planning the research, gathering the data, as well as during the analysis process, writing up my findings and recommendations, and finally during the publication stages of my study (Creswell, 2014:95). Research ethics are defined as "the moral philosophy or set of moral principles underpinning a project" (Aubrey *et al.*, 2000:156). Ethical approval was granted by the Gauteng Department of Education (Appendix L) and the University of Pretoria.

Adherence to the following ethical principles guided the research process and ensured ethical conduct during the research: informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality and anonymity, privacy, safety and trust (Silverman, 2013:161). A brief exploration of each principle follows.

##### **4.12.1 Voluntary informed consent**

In order to ensure voluntary informed consent, letters detailing each participant's role in the research process were drawn up requiring each participant to make a decision

on their willingness to participate in the study (Creswell, 2014:96; Yin, 2016:49). The children also had to assent before I commenced with the data production. Informed consent ensures that research participants are fully informed about the research process and its purpose at all times. Informed consent also implies that gatekeepers are approached to gain permission to conduct the research. This included getting permission from different administrative levels of the various toy library sites (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013:67; Mukherji & Albon, 2010:37). Appendix F (Management board invitation and expression of interest letter) and Appendix D (Manager letter of consent) gave an outline of the study, including a tentative timeline, site criteria and ethical principles. One of the research sites was situated on school property, requiring consent from the Gauteng Department of Education as well (Appendix L).

In order for research to be conducted in an organisation, permission and an expression of interest were required from the management board (Appendix F). I used the toy library data base I have access to and e-mailed Appendix F to ten prospective sites. I received an expression of interest from four like-minded organisations. I then approached three more toy library sites to participate in the research, because they complied with the selection criteria and represented other toy library models than the first three toy libraries.

The toy librarian's consent form (Appendix A) explained how the photographs and photovoice would be used as a data production tool, the important role of the toy librarian with regard to the success of the research, the total duration of participation, the photovoice training session, an explanation of the photograph discussion in the focus group session and the potential use of the photographs in presentations aimed to educate or advocate on behalf of South African toy libraries. Furthermore, the consent form contained an assurance that the toy librarian would incur no costs to participate in this research and a disclaimer regarding compensation in the unlikely event of physical injury. The voluntary nature of participation and the right to withdraw processed and unprocessed data at any time were explained, access to research results was granted and the names, contact numbers and e-mail addresses of the researcher and my supervisor were provided.

The toy librarian was responsible to obtain consent from adults who were photographed (Appendix B). Adults who were photographed included colleagues, parents, early childhood development practitioners and officials who visited the programme. The toy librarian also had to obtain consent from the parents and guardians of children younger than six years whom she photographed. The consent letter of the adults and children being photographed contained information about the study, the toy librarian's involvement in the study, the potential use of the photographs in the research report and in subsequent sessions and the use of the results in articles and conferences. It also stated that allowing the photographs to be taken would not result in a financial reward or costs. Children are minors and are regarded as a vulnerable group of participants when conducting research, and the parents or legal guardians also gave written consent for the photographs to be taken and used in the study (Appendix C).

The children also had to consent to their photographs being taken (Appendix J). The toy librarian, as the photographer, obtained consent from people being photographed (Appendix B) and the parents or guardians of the young children being photographed (Appendix C). The parent or guardian was assisted by the toy librarian to complete the assent form (Appendix J). The children were asked to write their names in a large rectangle. It did not matter if the children were unable to write their names; they could be scribbled or drawn, any format was acceptable. The parent or guardian then had to ask the child if a photograph could be taken of them. If the answer was yes, the child coloured the happy face and if the answer was no, the child coloured the sad face. The parent or guardian had to complete the assent form by filling in their name, the name of the child, their e-mail address and contact number. No incidences were reported where children did not want to be photographed.

Consent was obtained from the manager. The information included in the consent letter was the same as that of the toy librarian, except that the manager was requested to make documentation relating to the operations of the toy library available to me (Appendix D). The consent form which the critical stakeholders completed is reproduced in Appendix E. It informed the critical stakeholder about their participation

in the focus group discussion and outlined the same information as previously mentioned.

The section below explains the concepts of voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity and safety in participation.

#### **4.12.2 Voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity and safety in participation**

The principle of voluntary participation assures participants that they may withdraw from the research at any time (Creswell, 2014:97). Signing the letter of consent prior to the data production process promotes the principle of voluntary participation. The identity of participants, as well as the data provided by participants, was kept confidential and was only used for the purpose of this study (Creswell, 2014:96). Anonymity was assured by replacing site and participant identities with codes (Yin, 2016:280). The study respected the privacy of participants, ensured that the data production process was not intrusive and allowed participants to contribute information they wanted to share during the focus group discussions. Participants were not placed at risk of any kind or harmed during the research (Silverman, 2013:162).

#### **4.12.3 Trust**

Lastly, I ensured that the ethical principle of trust was embedded in my research. Data could only be obtained if a trusting relationship existed between myself and the participants. In the data production and data analysis phases, the principle of trust was applied. No unexpected ethical dilemmas arose during the study (Creswell, 2014:92). No participants were subjected to any act of deception or betrayal during the research process.

Adhering to the principles of ethical conduct during research resulted in the research having no negative consequences for the participants. The findings of the study provide stakeholders with information on how toy libraries provide play-based learning opportunities for young children.



### **4.13 Conclusion**

The ultimate aim of this chapter was to describe the research design and methodology used in this study. In chapter five the data analysis and the findings are presented.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

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*“I’m proud of the toy library because when you have brought the children here for sessions, you see their faces as they are so happy. They continue to talk about what they did at the toy library and a week can pass by and they are still talking about it (S5P2;9;198)”.*

### 5.1 Introduction

In chapter four, the research design and methodology employed in this study were outlined. This qualitative study, situated in the interpretivist paradigm, utilised a case study research design. The data production instruments were documents, photographs, focus group discussions and observations. The focus group discussions were audio recorded and the play session observations were documented on an observation checklist. The transcribed interviews, observation checklists and entries in the reflection journal were manually analysed and processed into emerging themes.

The purpose of chapter five is to present the data analysis and the research findings, which have been coded into three themes and nine subthemes. The chapter is introduced with a brief reflection of the data production procedure, selection of participants and the data analysis procedure. Each theme and subtheme is introduced and linked to play-based learning opportunities of young children in toy libraries.

In order to protect the identity of participants, each participant was given a participant number (P1, P2 etc.); the facilitator’s code was F. Each segment of conversation was coded using the formula S1P1;2;1. The S1 refers to the site, P1 to the participant who made the comment, 2 refers to the page number of the transcription and 1 refers to the paragraph on that specific page. The code S1P1;2;1 therefore refers to site 1, participant 1, page 2 paragraph 1. In addition, every photograph was assigned the site number and photograph number such as S1P1, where S1 refers to the site and P1 to

the first photograph of that specific site. Numbering the photographs enabled participants to refer to the photographs during the focus group discussion using the numbers. The documentation that was submitted was coded as S1D1 (site 1 document 1).

Seven toy library sites participated in the study. All the sites served children younger than six years. However, only sites one, two and four provided play-based learning sessions for young children. Initially, all sites indicated that they offered play-based early learning sessions, but after the focus group discussions it became apparent that only three of the seven sites actually did. One of the selection criteria was that sites had to be located in a variety of provinces. Five of South Africa's nine provinces were represented, namely Gauteng, Mpumalanga, the Free State, KwaZulu-Natal and North West. Four of the toy library sites were urban sites and three rural sites. Four of the seven sites are owned by non-profit organisations. One site is part of a public library, another is included in a public school setting and the seventh site is located in a public hospital. A reflection on the data production process follows.

## **5.2 Data production process: a reflection**

The use of documentation, photographs, focus group discussions and observation of play-based early learning sessions for children younger than six years and a reflection journal made the collection of data possible. Data production started with a study of documentation. The range and quality of the documentation provided were not adequate, and focus group discussions were added to obtain rich, useable data. The focus group discussions made use of the photographs that were taken and selected by the toy librarian; these portrayed some aspects of the toy library operations and how it supports play-based learning for young children. After an analysis of the focus group discussion, observation of play-based early learning sessions was conducted at sites one, two and four, which enabled me to gather data focusing on how the toy library play-based early learning sessions reflected the characteristics of play-based pedagogy. The data was verified by triangulation, as the data production tools complemented each other and filled identified gaps. I documented the toy librarian's knowledge of toy library procedures and observed the play-based early learning

sessions. Observation revealed discrepancies between theory and practice. Cognitive development, social-cultural, psychosocial, biological and ecological theories (discussed in Table 3.1) informed the elements to be observed during the play-based early learning sessions and eventually to be incorporated into a quality framework of play-based early learning sessions.

### 5.3 The participants: a reflection

Initially, an invitation to participate in the study was sent to ten prospective toy library sites. Seven of the ten sites were selected. A total of 42 individuals participated in the study. Three of the seven sites were selected for observation, because play-based learning opportunities were provided through play-based early learning sessions to children younger than six years. The toy library site located in the Free State stopped doing play-based early learning sessions a month after I had done the focus group discussions. The toy library linked to a special needs school in Gauteng rarely had children in a group setting due to the children’s disabilities, and the toy library linked to a public hospital played with children on an individual basis as therapy rather than as a play session.

Table 5.1 gives a breakdown of the critical stakeholders that participated in the focus group discussions – six managers, eight toy librarians, twelve parents, eight home visitors, three social workers, three therapists (speech therapist, occupational therapist, physiotherapist), one data capturer and one senior library assistant.

Table 5.1: Participant breakdown

<b>Stakeholder group</b>	<b>Number</b>
Managers	6
Toy librarians	8
Parents	12
Home visitors	8
Social workers	3
Therapists	3
Data capturer	1
Senior library assistant	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>42</b>

#### **5.4 Data production and analysis process: a reflection**

The focus group discussions took place on the first day of data production. The selected photographs were discussed using the following questions to elicit conversation, seek clarity or focus the conversation:

1. Tell me about the photographs you have selected.
2. Why did you select these photographs?
3. Which photographs did you not select, and why?
4. What happened before you took this photo, what happened after you took this photo?
5. Which photo is your favourite photo, and why?
6. Categorise your photographs into those which showcase the operations in the toy library, those which showcase playful learning and those which show critical stakeholder engagement. Ask the opinion of the other participants
7. What are you proud of in terms of the toy library operations?
8. What do you think can be improved in the operations of the toy library?
9. What are you proud of in terms of how you create playful learning opportunities?
10. What do you think can be improved when providing playful learning opportunities?
11. Explain what children learned using one of your photographs.
12. What guides the planning you do for the playful learning sessions?

Observation of the play-based early learning sessions was guided by the following indicators:

1. Did the children have enough time for uninterrupted and prolonged play?
2. Is the toy library physically safe?
3. Is the toy library emotionally safe?
4. Did the toy librarian observe play activities to determine children's need and preference?
5. Did children play with a variety of culturally appropriate play materials?
6. Did the toy librarian join in the children's play?
7. Did the children play indoors and outdoors?

8. Does the toy librarian ask questions, offer suggestions or share content knowledge linked to children play?
9. Does the toy librarian sometimes direct children's play?
10. Did you observe any of the "choice" playfulness indicators?
11. Did you observe any of the "wonder" playfulness indicators?
12. Did you observe any of the "delight" playfulness indicators?
13. Which of the stages of social play were observed?
14. Which types of play were observed?
15. Which 21<sup>st</sup> century skills were observed?

During the observations I made handwritten notes, and afterwards I analysed the notes using the observation checklist (Annexure 2 and 3). Where applicable, relevant data was triangulated with the documentation, photographs and focus group discussion.

My reflection journal was used to make process notes, but also to reflect on the focus group discussions. An entry made after the third focus group discussion is a representative sample of similar entries.



The trip to the site in the mobile toy library today truly helped me understand the conditions the toy librarian was working in. During the 45 min. drive she shared her journey, starting as a cleaner, then receiving level 4 ECD training and then being asked to get her driver's licence so she could work in the mobile toy library. She told me how she forgets about her stress at home when she is playing with the children. She shares how well the children do when they go to school and she knows it's because of the toy library. Watching her interact with the children, reading stories to them, playing a skipping game and eventually making sure all the toys were packed back in the truck makes me realise how powerful this programme can be.

## 5.5 Research findings

The data was read and re-read and eleven broad categories emerged. The data was coded and concepts belonging to a category were grouped together. The data was initially grouped into eleven categories: toys or games, learning, stakeholders, new concept, operations, access, challenges, play-based learning, planning, theory and qualifications. Similar categories were grouped together, resulting in three clusters of categories as depicted in Table 5.2 (Creswell, 2014: 200).

Table 5.2: Data categories

Category A	Category B	Category C
Learning Theory link National Curriculum Framework (NCF) link with toys and activities Access	Operations Toy lending Staffing Services Challenges Stakeholders Play materials	Play-based learning Play-based early learning sessions Pedagogy Environment Planning Qualifications

The categories were refined into themes and subthemes, which were informed by the research questions and literature review (Rule & John, 2011:78; Creswell, 2014:196).

Table 5.3 depicts the three main themes as young children and learning, toy library operations and play-based early learning sessions:

- Theme 1: "Young children and learning" explores what academic learning and skills of the 21<sup>st</sup> century children need to learn.
- Theme 2: "Toy library operations" explores the toy library operations in terms of administration, play materials, services and challenges.
- Theme 3: "Play-based early learning sessions" focuses on how play-based early learning sessions are conducted in terms of developmentally appropriate practice, play-based learning pedagogy and the characteristics and indicators of play-based learning.

Table 5.3: Themes and subthemes

Themes and subthemes		
Theme 1: Young children and learning	Theme 2: Toy library operations	Theme 3: Play-based early learning sessions
What?	Where?	How?
Subtheme 1.1 Academic learning	Subtheme 2.1 Administration	Subtheme 3.1 Developmentally appropriate practice
Subtheme 1.2 Skills of the 21 <sup>st</sup> century	Subtheme 2.2 Play materials	Subtheme 3.2 Play-based learning pedagogy
	Subtheme 2.3 Services	Subtheme 3.3 Characteristics and indicators of play-based learning
	Subtheme 2.4 Challenges	

I chose to present the case studies as a word picture, meaning that I provided thick narrative descriptions of each theme, linking and synthesising the results across the cases (Rule & John, 2011:118; Creswell, 2014:200).

### 5.5.1 Exploring theme 1: Young children and learning

Participants were asked to explain what children learned by coming to the toy library, linked to question 11, which was posed during the focus group discussion. Participants referred to the photographs during the discussion. Toy librarians linked the work they did to play and learning and the importance thereof, as expressed in the quote below:

*“We (toy librarians) show the importance of play and learning”.*  
*(S3P7;4;87)”.*

The importance of play in toy library settings was confirmed by comments such as:

*“We focus much on the children playing (S4P4;4;48)”.*

A participant felt strongly that the role of community members is also important for elevating the status of play:

*“The community are key stakeholders in terms of raising the profile of toy libraries and the value of play in the community (S4P5;7;123)”.*



A parent echoed that toy librarians knew which toys developed certain aspects in children. Participant 2 remarked:

*“Play is important, especially here, they know which toys teach what (S3P2;7;189)”.*

During the discussions it became evident that the learning that happens at the toy library is not only limited to the children, but that teachers also learn when visiting the toy library, as stated by participant 4:

*“The children enjoy coming here, because they learn something new and even when the teachers come here they learn something different (S2P4;7;121”.)*

Participants linked children’s learning to play and viewed toys as an important element to help children learn. Participant 3 from site 5 stated:

*“Children learn through play and toys make play more interesting and fulfilling (S5P3;10;214)”.*

A key element highlighted was the issue of variety in term of types of play as well as toys. Participant five stated:

*“There is variety of play going on, so I can see block play, fantasy play and I can see playing with construction toys (S4P5;3;22)”.*

### **5.5.1.1 Subtheme 1.1: Academic learning**

Academic learning by young children is generally associated with pre-literacy and pre-numeracy skills. Toy librarians are aware that toys promote learning, but when asked to explain what specific learning was linked to a toy, the answers were not specific, as appears from the response of participant 3 from site 4:

*“Also in the picture you can see children playing with blocks and there is a lot that they can learn from that, and these kids aren’t told what to do, they do it on their own (S4P3;5;71)”.*

Participant 4 from the same site also vaguely refers to learning

*“When the children come they learn the things that they should have learned or should be learning (S4P4;3;26)”.*

One toy librarian clearly indicated that goals are needed in order to assure that learning takes place at the toy library:

*“Again, as a toy librarian, when children come, I make sure I make a goal for that day. Like if we are doing shapes and colours or whatever, I make sure children leave with the knowledge of either knowing the shape or the colour. So my belief is for me to teach the child and making sure that they are learning (S5P1;3;35)”.*

Upon further analysis of participants' responses with regard to learning, the learning was linked to the National Curriculum Framework for Children Birth to Four and the most appropriate early learning development areas (ELDA) within the curriculum.

Table 5.4: Early learning developmental areas of the National Curriculum Framework

<b>ELDA 1: Wellbeing</b>	<b>ELDA 2: Identity and belonging</b>	<b>ELDA 3: Communi- cation</b>	<b>ELDA 4: Exploring Mathematics</b>	<b>ELDA 5: Creativity</b>	<b>ELDA 6: Knowledge and under- standing of the world</b>
Being well nourished	Children are aware of themselves as capable and confident learners	Children listen to sounds and speeches	Children show awareness of and are responsive to numbers and counting	Identification, searching for creating solutions to challenges through solving problems	Children explore and investigate their life world
Having good health	Children have a strong sense of self- care	Children speak using different styles of communi- cation	Children sort, classify, make comparisons and solve problems	Identifying, searching for and creating solutions to challenges through play and make- believe (fantasy play)	Children explore, design, make items and use technology
Being safe and secure	Child builds strong relationships	Children make meaning by “reading” what they	Children explore shape, space and measurement	Identifying, searching for and creating solutions to challenges	Children explore and investigate time and place

<b>ELDA 1: Wellbeing</b>	<b>ELDA 2: Identity and belonging</b>	<b>ELDA 3: Communi- cation</b>	<b>ELDA 4: Exploring Mathematics</b>	<b>ELDA 5: Creativity</b>	<b>ELDA 6: Knowledge and under- standing of the world</b>
		see, hear, feel, taste and touch		through visual art activities	
Developing physical abilities and interest in physical activities	Children have a sense of group identity and a sense of celebrating differences	Children record their experiences and ideas through languages, sounds, art, drama, and later on through “writing”		Identifying, searching for and creating solutions to challenges through music, dance and drama	
Building resilience					

The link indicates that activities planned in the toy library were linked to the NCF (DSD, 2015). The children served by the toy library were younger than six years. Therefore, the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement for Foundation Phase Gr R-3, abbreviated as CAPS, was not applicable; instead, the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) was used to analyse the data. Academic and skills learning are integrated in the curriculum as listed in Table 5.4.

During the focus group discussions, participants made reference to what children were learning in relation to the photographs. Figure 5.1 and 5.2 list the participant responses linked to the respective ELDAs in the NCF.

### **ELDA 1: Wellbeing**

Participants' responses that link to ELDA 1 include:

- *take care of it better than your own stuff (S6P3;2;10)*
- *balance (S1P7;11;193)*
- *discipline (S2P5;2;7)*
- *eye and hand coordination (S4P4;6;75/S5P2;3;24/S7P3;2;5)*
- *snacks (S3P8;4;66)*
- *fine motor skills (S2P5;3;14/S3P7;2;19/S6P4;2;8/S6P1;3;30/S6P3;4;34/S6P7;4;39/S7P1;2;4) also referred to as small muscles (S5P2;2;6) which includes hand function (S7P1;2;2); grasp (S7P1;2;2), holding a paint brush (S4P3;3;16)*
- *go to the toilet (S3P8;4;66)*
- *large muscles (S5P2;2;6)*
- *memory (S3P6;2;26)*
- *obedient (S2P5;2;7)*
- *stringing (S6P7;4;39), screwing on lids (S6P3;4;34)*
- *senses: hearing and touching texture (S3P6;3;28).*

### **ELDA 2: Identity and belonging**

Participants' responses that link to ELDA 2 include:

- *encouraging them to finish (S7P3;5;58)*
- *expressing feelings (S7P2;2;8)*
- *pack their toys and tidy up, they also sweep (S2P3;4;56).*
- *sharing (S3P6;5;103)*
- *help each other (S5P4;2;18).*
- *to care (S3P7;5;100/S5P1;2;13)*
- *learn to focus (S4P4;5;61), concentrate and pay attention (S4P3;3;16)*
- *responsible (S3P5;1;7)*
- *self-confidence (S2P5;2;7)*
- *social emotional development (S4P5;6;73/S3P6;5;103).*

### **ELDA 3: Communication**

Participants' responses that link to ELDA 3 include:

- *communicate (S4P1;5;64)*
- *speech (S6P4;2;8)*
- *interact with one another (S4P3;5;71)*
- *language (S3P6;2;26/S3P6;5;103/S5P1;2;13/S6P6;4;38/S6P7;4;39).*

Figure 5:1: ELDA 1, 2, 3 linked to participants' responses

#### **ELDA 4: Exploring mathematics**

Participants' responses that link to ELDA 4 include:

- *cognitive skills (S6P7;4;39/S7P1;2;4)*
- *colours (S2P1;4;37/S3P4;3;30/S5P4;2;16/S5P4;2;18, S6P3;4;32/S6P7;4;39/S7P1;2;2)*
- *count (S1P5;3;321/S2P1;4;37/S3P6;5;105/S5P4;2;18/S6P2;3;31)*
- *graphs (S7P1;2;2)*
- *measurement (S1P3;11;188)*
- *maths skills (S6P8;4;40)*
- *numbers (S1P5;4;41)*
- *weight: heavy, light and is scale tipping? (S1P3;11;189)*
- *patterns (S1P6;3;22)*
- *position in space: on top, underneath, next to (S6P7;4;39)*
- *object permanence (S6P7;4;39)*
- *sequence (S1P4;5;66)*

#### **ELDA 5: Creativity**

Participants' responses that link to ELDA 5 include:

- *colouring (S7P3;2;10)*
- *drawing, creativity (S4P4;5;72)*
- *fantasy play (S2P5;4;52/S3P7;5;100) also referred to as acting (S5P1;2;13)*
- *creative (S3P7;2;19)*
- *problem solving (S6P3;4;34)*
- *thinking skills (S3P7;2;19)*
- *improvised toys: make toys from waste (S7P2;4;31); as part of my operational duty, I have to improvise so here they are using toilet rolls, so that is improvised (S1P3;7; 105).*

#### **ELDA 6: Knowledge and understanding of the world**

Participants' responses that link to ELDA 6 include:

- *build (S5P2;2;20), construction (S2P5;6;103)*
- *knowledge: identify different animals, call them by names (S2P1;4;48/S6P6;4;38), distinguish between domestic animals and wild animals; they are even learning where a cow lives (S2P3;4;51), they learn transport and different types of cars and how they drive on the road (S3P7;2;19)*
- *science (S1P7;3;23)*
- *"it also shows they creative as they building what they want on their own". (S1P7;3; 23).*

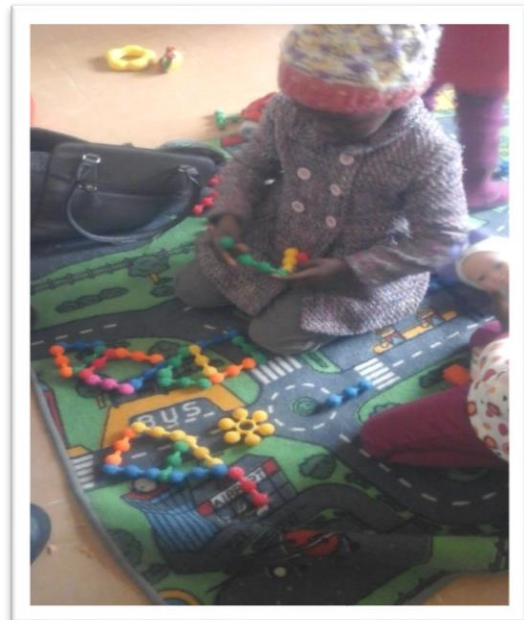
Figure 5.2: ELDA 4, 5, 6 linked to participants' responses

## Photographs of children learning at various sites

Photograph 5.1 depicts children engaged in playing in a sandpit at the toy library. Wallace *et al.* (2010:398) confirm that mathematical concepts such as volume and capacity can be learned while playing with sand and water. Children's concentration and fine motor skills are developed when they are given an opportunity to access play materials such as portrayed in Photograph 5.2. The child's concentration is focused as she has to connect the parts by clicking them into place, which in turn strengthens her fine motor skills (Grissmer *et al.*, 2010:1015).



*Photograph 5.1:*  
*Physical development (S1PH2)*



*Photograph 5.2: Concentration,*  
*fine motor skills (S3PH8)*

The girl in Photograph 5.3 is playing at a kitchen sink with another child, and a conversation is taking place. Children's social and emotional development is enhanced when they are provided with the opportunity to participate in make-believe play (Weiland & Yoshikawa, 2013:2125; Razza *et al.*, 2012:312).



*Photograph 5.3:  
Emotional development (S2PH10)*

The data obtained from observation will be presented in the text box, such as the one that follows.

During the observation a variety of commercially produced toys were present during the play-based learning sessions as noted in Annexure 2 and 3. At site 2 one of the toy librarians demonstrated to a child how to match a puzzle piece with dots to the right numeral. She showed the child how to count the dots and then read out the numerals to him. He had to identify which numeral matches the number of dots.

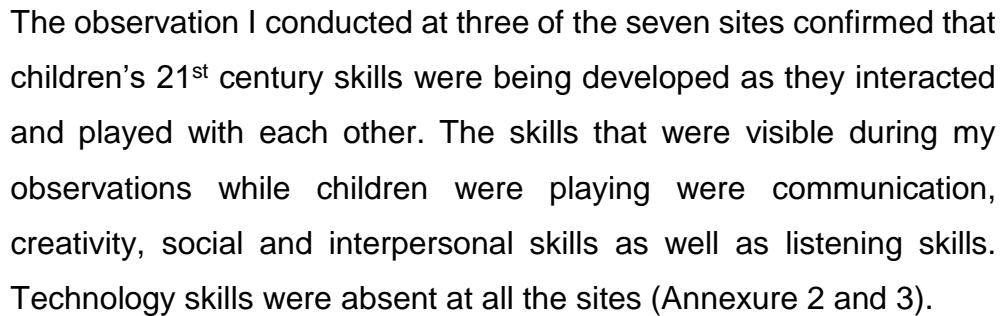
#### **5.5.1.2 Subtheme 1.2: Skills of the 21<sup>st</sup> century**

It was evident that toy librarians are aware that children learn skills, such as sharing and concentrating, while playing at the toy library.

*“They didn’t know toys and how to share (S3P6;3;33)”.*

*“They are concentrating and enjoying what they are doing  
(S5P2;6;100)”.*

*“It also shows they are creative as they are building what they want  
on their own (S1P7;3; 23)”.*



The observation I conducted at three of the seven sites confirmed that children’s 21<sup>st</sup> century skills were being developed as they interacted and played with each other. The skills that were visible during my observations while children were playing were communication, creativity, social and interpersonal skills as well as listening skills. Technology skills were absent at all the sites (Annexure 2 and 3).

Toy libraries provide a service (site 3) that gives access to play materials in communities where children do not have anything to play with (site 2). A variety or range of toys (site 2, 5, 6) and equipment (site 4) is organised (site 1, 6) and/or labelled (site 6) on the shelf and categorised (site 1), rotated amongst members (site 2, 5) and borrowed (site 4, 5, 6, 7) for 21 days (site 6) or for a month (site 5). The toy library cultivates civic virtues relating to sharing and punctuality; toys need to be returned on time (site 4) because someone else will need the toys (site 1). Toy lending is managed by the toy librarian using an administrative system (ranging from simplistic to advanced). Advanced toy lending systems use software technology (site 6), while the most simplistic systems are paper-based notes of toys borrowed in a diary or on a form (site 3, 4, 5, 7). A stock management system is required to know which toys the toy library has (site 4). Toy management includes dealing with lost, stolen (site 4, 7), broken (site 4) and dirty toys (site 4, 5, 6), as well as maintenance activities such as replacing batteries in toys (site 6). The administrative competence across the seven sites varied greatly. Toy library administration can be categorised into managing memberships, play materials and keeping written records of memberships and toys in the toy library.



## Managing membership



*Photograph 5.4: Applicant filling out a membership form (S5PH14)*

Analysis of toy library documentation confirms that any person wishing to access the services provided by a toy library needs to become a member, as explained in the extract obtained from a toy library's operations manual (S1D1) relating to the management of toy library membership, as well as Photograph 5.4: applicant filling out a membership form (S5PH14).

Play materials management forms part of the administrative procedures of a toy library. Organising the toy library play space (S6PH12) ensures easy access to toys, as well as being able to account for toys. In photograph 5.5 participants explained the importance thereof:

"Anyone accessing any of the toy library programmes:

- Come & Play
- Go & Play (Mobile)
- Lend & Play

**must have a signed membership form.**

- Any person borrowing toys from the toy library must have a **signed membership form** and **paid up membership fees."** (S1D1)



*Photograph 5.5: Organising toys in a toy library using categorisation (S6PH12)*

Photograph 5.5 illustrates the categorisation and organisation of play materials in a toy library. As noted by Cotlands (2017:1) and Letcee (2011:1), managing play materials is a critical administrative skill required by the toy librarian. The following comments further illustrate this point:

*“... put it [toys] in a correct place so I can identify it quickly (S6P8;3;12)”*; and

*“Okay like what I first said in photograph 5.5 it shows organisation, like they are organised in packing their toys, making it easy to the children and also the parents and teachers (S1P7;6;101)”*.

Categorising toys is another aspect of organising toys in a toy library, as explained by participant 8 of site 3:

*“Every Friday we take out the toys and categorise them. We have a book which tells us where toys should go, even according to themes/topics (S3P8;5;110)”*.

Toy lending is managed either by filling out a handwritten form (Document S4D1) or by using computer software, as mentioned by participants:

*“... software that is used to identify the toy and it also gives the picture of the toy when we as parents are taking it out. I mean, every toy has a picture and a code and the date it supposed to come back, there’s even a reminder that it prompts to give parent to bring the toys back (S6P6;5;71)”.*

*“The toy librarian has their own forms, and when you take the toys, they record which ones you have taken and when you bring them back all the toys it must correlate with the numbers the toy librarian has (S4P3;6;82)”.*

Document S4D1 shows an example of how the toy lending process is managed in terms of play materials management and recordkeeping.

TOY LIBRARY MEMBERS BORROWING SHEET				
MEMBER INFORMATION				
Name				
Cell No				
Comments				
Date	STOCK NO & NAME OF Toys borrowed	Members signature	Librarians signature	Date to return

(S4D1)

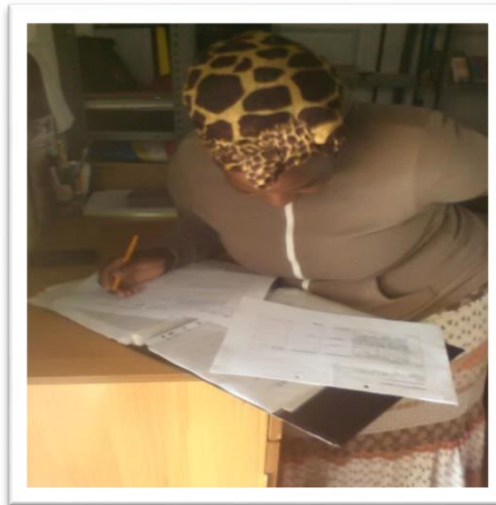
Administration relating to the management of play materials involves aspects such as cleaning toys, as explained by participant 8 at site 6:

*“It’s important to clean the toys which is why I wash them with sterilizer. Some just get wiped down and once everything is nice and tidy I then put it back into the box. So that the next person also enjoys using the toy (S6P8;6;82)”.*

Recordkeeping involves financial records, attendance registers of children, stock taking and toy lending records, as explained by a participant from site 4:

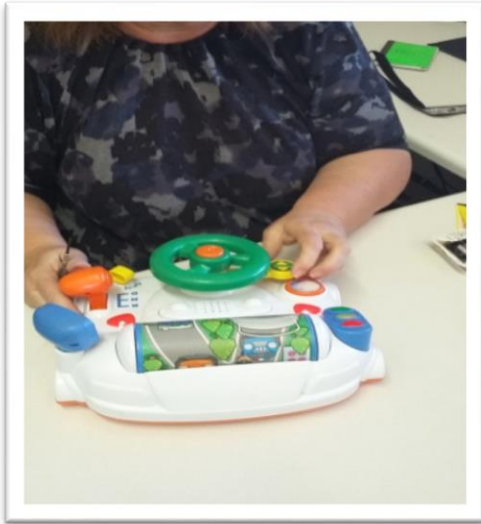
*“... take stock of what’s there and what’s not before putting it in a take away box for people to come and borrow. And this is important so we know what toys there are and if any toys are lost or broken, we need to make sure that it is recorded accurately (S4P3;6;78)”.*

Photograph 5.6 relates to administration tasks of a member filling out a form and the toy librarian completing her records of toys borrowed by members, which Livingstone (2016:1) and Talan and Bloom (2004:8) confirm to be essential recordkeeping elements that contribute to the overall quality of early childhood programmes.

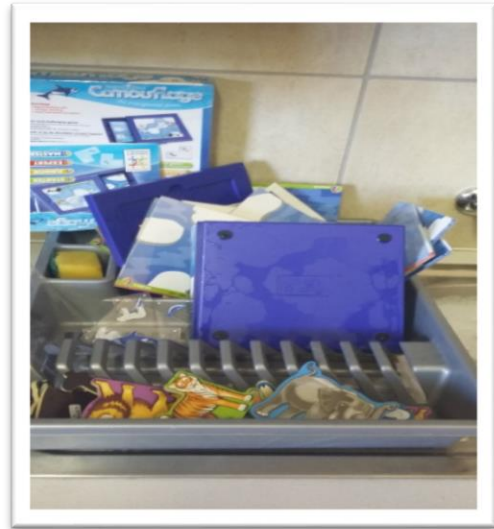


*Photograph 5.6: Recording toys being borrowed (S5PH14)*

In Photograph 5.7 the toy librarian checks that a battery-operated toy is working after changing the batteries, and in Photograph 5.8 toys are washed and left to dry once members have returned them, which is standard practice Cotlands (2017:1).



*Photograph 5.7: Checking battery-operated toy (S6PH14)*



*Photograph 5.8: Washing toys when returned (S6PH6)*

When I arrived for the observation session at site 1, I had the opportunity to ask the toy librarian to show me some of her forms and to explain how the toy library was organised. I noticed during the subsequent visits that both sites 2 and 4 were similarly organised and that toys were categorised, as per the notes I made in Annexure 2, Site 4. The categorisation was not the same at every site. At site 4 the toy librarian used the acronym “SPICE” to categorise toys in her mobile. The acronym refers to the developmental domains social, physical, intellectual, creative and emotional.

### **5.5.2.2 Subtheme 2.2: Play materials**

During the focus group discussions and observation, a variety of toys was being used in play-based early learning sessions and were made available to lend out. The toys that were represented in the photographs and that were discussed in relation to providing play-based learning opportunities were categorised into the developmental

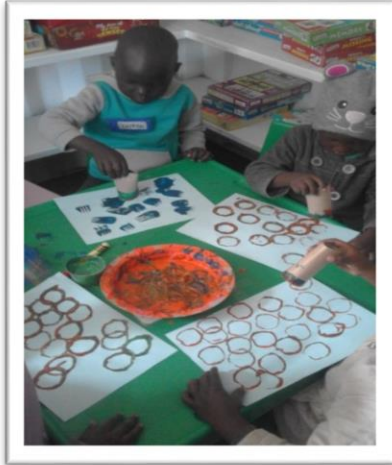
domains of physical, cognitive and social-emotional development, as depicted in Table 5.5.

Table 5.5: Play materials linked to developmental domains

Physical development, including gross and fine motor skills (incorporates creative art)	Cognitive development, including language, mathematics and perceptual development:	Social-emotional development, including fantasy play
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>outside play equipment (S2P5;4;52);</i></li> <li>• <i>scooters (S2P3;8;139); trampoline (S1P3;3;15); bean bag (S4P4;6;75); sand pit (S1P7;3;23); buckets and spades (S1P7;3;23);</i></li> <li>• <i>skipping rope (S5P2;2;6);</i></li> <li>• <i>tyres as cars (S6P7;6;96);</i></li> <li>• <i>board (S4P4;5;72);</i></li> <li>• <i>paint (S1P6;3;22);</i></li> <li>• <i>brush (S4P3;3;16);</i></li> <li>• <i>art (S3P8;4;66);</i></li> <li>• <i>toilet rolls (S1P4;7;106);</i></li> <li>• <i>jars (S6P3;4;34);</i></li> <li>• <i>threading beads (S7P3;7;104);</i></li> <li>• <i>mud (S1P2;3;14).</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>stacking rings (S7P1;2;2);</i></li> <li>• <i>form puzzle with different coloured shapes and sizes (S7P1;2;2);</i></li> <li>• <i>she will use a telephone when you talk to her and say hello and try to press the numbers to get some sort of stimulation going to help her (S7P1;2;7)</i></li> <li>• <i>games (S4P5;3;24; S7P1;3;23) such as Scrabble (S5P2;3;26) and Monopoly (S6P8;4;40);</i></li> <li>• <i>picture books (S3P6;2;26) and books (S1P7;3;23 &amp; S5P2;2;2 &amp; S4P5;3;24 &amp; S7P3;5;69);</i></li> <li>• <i>construction (S6P8;3;12): blocks (S4P4;3;26 &amp; S1P5;3;19), soft blocks (S3P2;1;4), Lego blocks (S2F;4;45 &amp; S6P3;2;10), Duplo (S3P6;5;101)</i></li> <li>• <i>scale (S1P6;3;22);</i></li> <li>• <i>vinegar and balloon (S1P4;11;191);</i></li> <li>• <i>shapes (S1P2;3;14) and colours (S1P2;3;14);</i></li> <li>• <i>puzzles (S3P8;4;66; S4P2;2;7; S6P3;2;10; S5P1;2;13).</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>fantasy play (S3P8;4;66):</i></li> <li>• <i>doll (S4P2;5;65; S3P5;1;7; S2P3;4;49; S5P1;2;13),</i></li> <li>• <i>cot bed (S2P3;4;49), chef hat, clothes (S1P6;3;16);</i></li> <li>• <i>police cap (S4P3;5;67); stove, baby;</i></li> <li>• <i>blanket, large amount of material (S4P5;6;73); broom (S1P7;9;151); hammer, toys and cups (S6P4;4;35);</i></li> <li>• <i>Lego tractor (S3P7;2;15);</i></li> <li>• <i>cars (S4P1;5;62; S1P5;4;41);</i></li> <li>• <i>animals (S3P7;2;15; S2P1;4;48);</i></li> <li>• <i>toy horse (S5P2;2;2);</i></li> <li>• <i>activity mat (S3P6;5;101).</i></li> </ul>

Below is photographic evidence of how children's physical, cognitive and social-emotional development is enhanced by using play materials. Although written consent was obtained from parents and assent from the children to use their photographs, I chose to hide children's faces if they were clearly visible in the photographs as an additional measure to protect the children's identity.

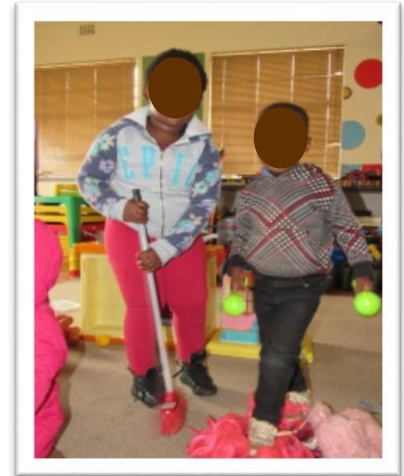




*Photograph 5.9: Physical development (S1PH9)*



*Photograph 5.10: Cognitive development (S2PH13)*



*Photograph 5.11: Social-emotional development (S2PH15)*

In Photograph 5.9 four children are doing printing using paint and toilet rolls, which is beneficial for children's physical development relating to fine motor skills. In Photograph 5.10 a boy is putting puzzle pieces onto a puzzle that makes the sound of the animal when it is placed in the slot. In Photograph 5.11 two girls are participating in make-believe play involving sweeping, using the broom provided. The interaction between the girls is beneficial for their social development, and being able to participate in make-believe activities is associated with emotional benefits for children. The physical, cognitive, social and emotional benefits of play are confirmed by Mardell *et al.* (2016:4), Kamii (2014:77), Zosh *et al.* (2014:469), Cheng (2011:72), Han *et al.* (2010:99), Whitebread & Basilio (2013:77, 78), McClelland *et al.* (2000:309), McClelland *et al.* (2013:320), Razza *et al.* (2012:312), Jarvis (2010:62), McVeigh *et al.* (2004:983), Shisana *et al.* (2013:17), Prince *et al.* (2013:184) and Goddard Blythe (2011:1).

Participant 3 at site 7 explained how she determined which toys were age and developmentally appropriate when selecting toys or advising parents on the suitability of toys:

*"I sit with the child and the parent and do an assessment, like knowing if the child knows basic concepts, sizes, colours and that,*

*and then I take it from there and issue toys according to their developmental needs and age levels (S7P3;8;114)”.*

An additional selection criterion for toys is that it is fun to play with, as pointed out by participant 8 from site 6:

*“We give them something to stimulate, something regarding the issue that they’ve got and something for fun (S6P8;3;22)”.*

It is interesting to note that in this list, there are only three toys which are considered toys that are not manufactured, but created by the toy librarian. The improvised toys that were mentioned includes jars with lids (S6P3;4;34), vinegar and balloon (S1P4;11;191), and toilet rolls that were used to paint with (S1P4;7;1). Only one participant made reference to the importance of the cultural relevance of toys, in that she believed playing with tins helps children learn:

*“Yes, the tins and stuff like that which is still fine because those were like our indigenous games I suppose as it is one of those things that still stimulate children and all that (S1P3;9;148)”.*

The infinite possibilities of toys were commented on by a participant:

*“So we have a wooden toy at home and it has balls and sometimes kids want to throw it and play with it differently so you need to be a little more creative on that end. And the wooden hammer, the parent can bang on a surface and make a rhythm and then the child can repeat after that, so there are many different ways to play with a toy (S6P3;3;28)”.*

Choice is important in terms of play materials:

*“Some parents choose their own toys (S6P8;3;22)”.*

The management of toys includes cleaning, repairing and replacing toys:

*“Yes, I do I always count it when they take it and document it on the sheet of mine and when they bring it back I count it as well. But the moms always tell me if they lost anything. And if they have a look and it’s not there they pay for the lost/broken toy (S7P3;4;50)”;*



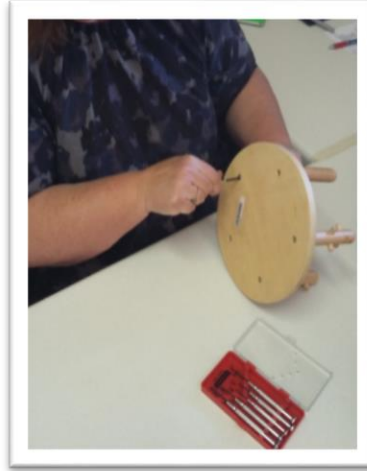
*“... sterilise and wash toys (S6P8;2;6)”*; and

*“... a toy that has been used needs to be cleaned (S4P4;3;21)”*.

Photographs showing toy washing and repair:



*Photograph 5.12: Toy washing (S4PH9)*



*Photograph 5.13: Toy repair (S6PH3)*

Photographs 5.12 and 5.13 show that play materials need to be washed and repaired.

Observing the play-based learning sessions confirmed that the toy librarians had a range of toys, mostly commercially produced, and no digital play was included in the toy library (Annexure 2 & 3).

### **5.5.2.3 Subtheme 2.3: Services**

Toy libraries are able to provide “a treasure chest of services”. Access to toy library services ranges from free to the member (sites 1, 2, 4, 7) to a nominal contribution of R2 for special events (site 5) to membership fees ranging from R50 to R80 for a 12-month period (site 6).

*“The fact is that it is free. It’s a community service and it’s accessible to everyone that might need to use it (S1P1;9;145)”*; and

*“Toy library children pay R2.00 to participate in those activities, where they make something to take home (S5P1;5;78)”.*

The reviewed literature confirms that the core services provided by toy libraries are toy lending and play-based early learning sessions; however, in this study it was confirmed across all seven sites and by 17 of the 42 participants that additional services such as providing a snack (site 1, 2), health assessments by a nurse, (site 2) home visits by a community health worker (site 2), developmental assessments (site 7), referrals to doctors or therapists (site 2, 7), referrals to social workers (site 1, 3) and access to a Down syndrome support group (site 7) are services offered by the toy library.

A snack is provided at the toy library, as part of the services offered:

*“They all get snacks and if we like got an Easter egg or whatever, and that’s [the toy librarian’s] job, they sit outside, eating snacks (S2P5;7;109)”.*

Health observations are provided:

*“Here the child is going for observation, after we have taken the length, the temperature; we take them [to the sister] to observe the child (S2P1;3;18; S2P4;3;24)”.*

Home visits are done:

*“... we do home visits (S2P5;8;158)”.*

Developmental assessments:

*“I sit with the child and the parent and do an assessment, like knowing if the child knows basic concepts, sizes, colours and that, and then I take it from there and issue toys according to their developmental needs and age levels (S7P3;8;114)”.*

Referrals linked to the identified needs:

*“We do get people who phone where they are worried about their children’s fine motor skills, but we would get them [children] into*

*therapy and then it's the therapist who would refer them [children] to the toy library (S7P1;4;33)".*

#### Support or specific support groups

*"People have social issues and sometimes as a parent/client, they will approach us and ask for help and it depends whether they need a social worker or we can intervene and help the children (S3P7;4;87)";*

*"We do run a Down syndrome support group, so there are moms that do attend the toy library and there is a guy who does come here who's from the Down Syndrome Association and gives a support group for the moms (S7P1;3;27)"; and*

*"I think also because we were part of a special needs school, the assumption would be that we would help a lot of special needs children, even a single parent who needs support; which is why we have support groups (S6P7;5;58)".*

Toy librarians provide services directly related to play and toys, such as conducting workshops training adults (parents and practitioners), either to play with toys or to make toys from waste:

*"I make sure to show the parents how to play with it (S7P3;8;118)";*

*"So they like got a manual which we give with every box, so when they open the box, they know what [toy] is for creative play, the fantasy play (S2P5;7;105)";*

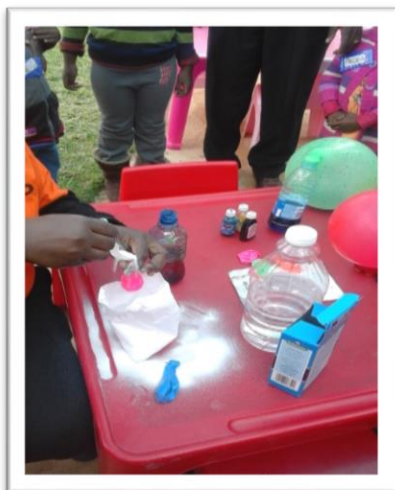
*"... show parents all these games (S7P3;4;50)";*

*"Toy librarian is showing them how it's done so they [practitioners] will know when they have to teach the kids how to do it (S4P2;2;7);*

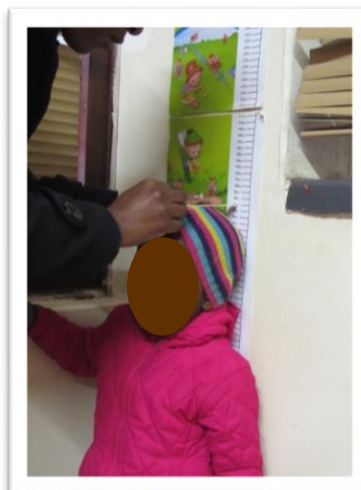
*"The parents don't know what to do either so we have to educate them, this is how old your child is, this is what they are supposed to be doing and these are the toys that can help them to get to those places (S7P1;3;23)"; and*

*“... helping them to know that they can make toys from waste  
(S7P2;4;31)”.*

In Photographs 5.14 the toy librarian is training ECD practitioners how to mix vinegar and bicarbonate of soda in a science experiment (Jackson *et al.*, 1991:29).



*Photograph 5.14: Training  
(S1PH11)*



*Photograph 5.15: Health  
observations (S2PH2)*

#### **5.5.2.4 Subtheme 2.4: Challenges**

Challenges listed by toy librarians include space, weather; damaged, broken, stolen or lost toys; quantity of toys; accommodating children living with disabilities and raising awareness of the toy library.

Not having adequate space, both indoors and outdoors, was viewed as being problematic by at least two sites (S3P7;8;202):

*“... to have an open field so that they can get more stimulated  
outside and having a different environment and using their big  
muscles; instead of them sitting at a table and getting more out there  
and being able to explore (S7P3;5;73)”.*

Rainy weather impacts both mobile toy library programmes, which are conducted outside at sites 3 and 4, and where the toy library space is too small and activities have to be set up outside, as is the case with site 1.

*“It depends on how it rains. If it pours, then we go inside the truck.*

*(S3P8;4;74)”*; and

*“... rains (S4F;4;38)”*.

Toys are used by children, and the toy librarian must be aware that:

*“Kids must look after the toys and these toys can come back scratched, filthy or whatever (S7P2;3;24)”*.

Toys getting lost or stolen, as reported by sites 4 and 5, is a problem, with site 5 listing broken toys as a challenge:

*“... make sure toys aren’t stolen (S4P4;7;116)”*;

*“... or lost (S5P4;7;127)”*; and

*“We wash them [toys] as toy librarians, but not always; other pre-schools don’t look after them when they bring them back, they are either broken (S5P4;7;127)”*.

Toys that are lost have to be replaced:

*“If a piece of the puzzle is missing the parent pays for it (S6P8;6;78)”*.

Toy librarians from site 1, 2 and 7 mentioned an insufficient quantity of play materials as a challenge. Participant 7 at site 1 said:

*“Quantity... I believe quantity because I would count the items and the following week it’s not there because it wasn’t returned and that has a big impact so maybe we can have a kind of calendar, to say that this week the theme will be transport, so can we book toy cars on a certain day (S1P7;9;155)”*.

At site 2 participant 3 also identified the quantity of toys as problematic and commented:

*“... adding more toys (S2P3;8;137)”*.

Participant 3 at site 7 highlighted the same need:

*“... get more toys (S7P3;5;71)”.*

Children living with disabilities were mentioned as being a challenge and an area that needs to be improved, as suggested by participant 3:

*“Children living with disabilities need more attentive intervention, for me that is one of the things that are still lacking. So yah, we must just be able to accommodate them and to see what their needs are so that they are able to utilise all the resources that are there as well. Because at the end of the day they’re also children and they are not necessarily being accommodated and they continue to lack services (S1P3;9;157)”.*

Creating awareness of the toy library is perceived as another challenge (site 1).

*“In terms of awareness as well, because I come across a lot of people and they don’t even know what a toy library is, soon as you start talking they like “... you, you, you - A library for toys?” So it’s a new concept to some people especially in the communities where we are working. So I think in terms of creating awareness, I think if we can do that, more people will understand such a service and then it becomes accessible and we can have more people become members of toy libraries (S1P1;10;166)”.*

Access to the toy library and exclusion of children from the play-based early learning sessions being offered was cited as another challenge; in the words of participant 7 from site 1:

*“I think also maybe transport, where we can book your own transport and fetch kids to come and play, as many other ECDs are not able to come because they cannot afford transport to take all these kids there (S1P7;9;158)”.*

Accessibility is not only linked to geographical location, as above, but also refers to having enough toy libraries available, as one participant recommended:

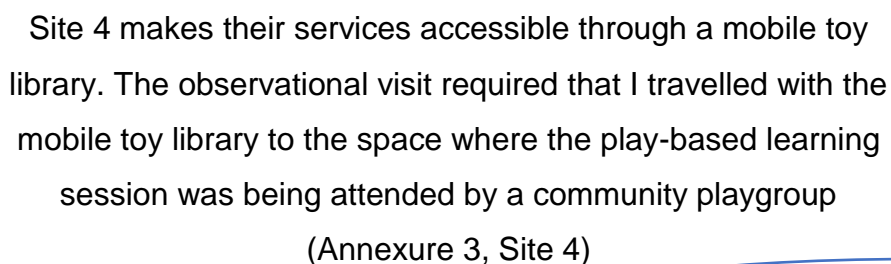
*“I think it can be frustrating to have a child with challenges and then thinking about the toys in which you need to get to stimulate and*

*some toys she can get tired of it very quickly and you would be forced to buy another one. So it is such a relief to know that there are places like this where we can go to with all the toys and be able to pick one and pick another one when you can, so it's like a life-time problem is solved by just a Toy Library. It's a beautiful thing. I would recommend more of such because it would help a lot of people. I mean it lowers the pressures of having a disabled child (S6P5;7;110)"; and*

*"There are a few parents who don't have access to what we have. So an expansion to the TL would help a lot of parents as being the only therapeutic help in which they [disabled children] can gain. So there must be more advices to parents and ways in which parents can get help (S6P5;7;115)".*

Access to information relating to children and toys is emphasised by participant 1:

*"And I also think there is a huge need for any parent to get in contact with other parents. It's hard especially when you are at home so it would help to have places, such as the toy library, where you can get reliable information from (S6P1;7;112)".*



Site 4 makes their services accessible through a mobile toy library. The observational visit required that I travelled with the mobile toy library to the space where the play-based learning session was being attended by a community playgroup (Annexure 3, Site 4)

### **5.5.3 Exploring theme 3: Play-based early learning sessions**

Setting up and facilitating play-based early learning sessions requires that toy librarians receive some form of training that will equip them to successfully guide children's play during play-based early learning sessions.

The data indicates that at three of the seven sites toy librarian staff have an Early Childhood Development Level 4 qualification (site 1, 3, 4). At site 4 the toy librarian was trained on an International Child Development Programme which improves relationship skills. At sites 1 and 4 toy librarians are skilled through short courses which focus on toy library set-up and administration. At one site the toy librarian had no qualification (site 6), at another the toy librarian was qualified as an occupational technician (site 7) and at another as a librarian (site 5). Participants described a toy librarian's qualities as having to be friendly (site 6), having an interest in children (site 6) and a love for toys (site 6), being organised (site 6) and the ability to listen carefully (site 6).

Play-based early learning sessions, referred to as come-and-play sessions by toy librarians at site 1, take place at scheduled times (site 3) at the toy library or at a designated space in the community where the mobile toy library is set up (sites 1, 2, and 4), following a pre-planned structure (site 3) or system (site 4) with sessions lasting anything from two (site 1) to three (site 3) to four hours (site 4). These sessions are characterised by ensuring that the children and adults using the toys know how to use the toy (site 2, 4), by showing or demonstrating (site 7) and those using the toys understand what developmental gains there are for children as a result of playing with the particular toy (site 2, 6, 7). A first aid box is present at the play-based early learning sessions (site 4).

#### **5.5.3.1 Subtheme 3.1: Developmentally appropriate practice**

Developmentally appropriate practice has a number of principles. Responses listed below indicate that toy librarians implement a number of these principles when conducting play-based early learning sessions at the toy library:

- *“It is one of those pre planned, activity plans that are set out to say, this is what we will be doing so now the children will be doing what the teacher explained how it should be. And this child is exploring and doing what she has seen, reading, being attentive and doing it herself (S1P3;7; 105)”* – children learn when they are actively engaged, exploring and focusing their attention.



- *“Well with me is that many ECDs is not familiar with what is happening around them so like for us, we would have themes like June 16th and we want to teach children what is happening around us and like last week it was environment day so we did a theme on that and some ECD centres don’t do that (S1P4;10;173)”*, links to the principle of making learning meaningful and providing a context.
- *“Picture 10 children playing in the sand pit, I see teacher’s feet and they are there to supervise the children and the children also have buckets and spades, the teachers are also there to monitor and supervise (S1P7;3; 23)”* – principle of creating an emotional and physically safe environment.
- *“Well, I’m proud of the fact that I teach children with what they see, I also know that all children like to play so as soon as the child sees the toys, they will come straight to those toys. Children like to play, while they are playing they don’t know that they are learning (S1P6;10;172)”*.
- *“I see that the child is playing with blocks; I can see that there is enough for everyone to play [PHOTO: 2] (S1P5;3;19)”*.
- *“Well I like the fact that it improves the vocabulary of the children, because as much as you can teach as a teacher at your centre, you can never stand there and go broom brrooom, you know. But if there is a broom in the toys they’re able to say, teacher look, even if they say it in their own language (S1P7;9;151)”* - children need real objects to learn because learning progresses from concrete to abstract.
- *“Yes, children can choose whatever they want to choose to play (S2P1;4;35)”*.
- *“Children can see what goes on around them and they tend to copy us, and therefore we as adults need to be good examples (S4P3;5;71)”*.
- *“I think it’s important to show the child this is what you do so that they can copy you as well (S7P2;3;20)”*.

Toy librarians mentioned that children need a variety of activities, and that the environment impacts children's learning, as stated here:

*"I often felt that children who are very unstimulated they tend to not have a good understanding on how to interact with the environment, they tend to be quite clumsy and disorganised. We often tell moms that their children need a sensory, rich environment. So they don't need toys at the beginning stages, but things like playing with mud, sand and water play and having cream and foam and messy play and lots of rough and tumble play, swing, taking them to parks. Because what happens is that they come in and they are scared of everything and they don't know how to interact with the environment, they don't know how to play with anything as they've never been exposed, so the mom who doesn't have a lot of resources at home, there are things that she can do with the children to make them developmentally appropriate and knowing how to interact with the environment (S7P1;5;74)".*

### **5.5.3.2 Subtheme 3.2: Play-based learning pedagogy**

Child-directed play is identified and valued by toy librarians, as commented on by two participants from the same site:

*"In this picture, the child is at the kitchen, she is developing social skills and no one has instructed her how to play, but she is automatically doing it on her own. There is no one guiding her (S1P6;3;16)".*

*"Okay so with picture number two; I can say it is playful because there are a lot of toys here on the carpet and children are exploring and they can choose which ones they want to play with and what kind of toys they will want to construct and they are creative as well. Yah! (S1P6;8;122)".* and

*“So as much as we want them to do things our way, we should also give them enough time to discover it, if they don’t discover it then that’s when you can explain (S1P7;7;118)”.*

Toy librarians understood that in order for children to learn, well-timed guidance of their play activities is important, as remarked by participant 4 from site 1:

*“Over here you have planned your lesson, you know what you want children to develop in this activity and that is why you need to explain what they must do in that activity. As I’ve said, children will not always do what you have told them, the child will explore in their own way. You can’t say no, don’t play like that play like this. But you need to explain, because there are kids who will just sit, not knowing what to do with the toy. And you, behind your planning you know what children are going to develop (S1P4;7;112)”.*

Participants 4 and 3 showed that they understood their role in terms of guiding children’s play using direct instruction, in order to impact learning positively:

*“I need to explain how to play, I can’t just leave them to play. I can’t just leave them at the tables, even though sometimes they do not do exactly what you have told them to do but at least you have explained to them how it works (S1P4;6;102)”;* and

*“If you not gonna at least guide the child and say what I need from this activity is one, two, three, four, five you cannot as a toy librarian measure what are your outcomes that are intended for that activity (S1P3;7;116)”.*

Demonstrating or showing children and their parents how to play with toys or games is a strategy used by toy librarians to guide children’s learning, as explained below:

*“Parents don’t know how it works, but I so make sure to show the parents how to play with it (S7P3;8;118)”;* and

*“And we show parents all these games and they will say “Oh no, I didn’t know that my child had to play with this kind of toy”. I think they get so much joy in learning what the toy can actually do and*

*what the children can learn from these kind of different toys  
(S7P1;3;23)".*

Toy librarians assist and encourage children during play:

*"You would have to assist them and encourage them and tell them  
what to do (S7P3;8;116)".*

Children's learning is scaffolded, as described by participant 1 from site 7:

*"Sometimes if a child isn't coping with a specific game and they take  
it home, number 1 would (correct me if I'm wrong) but she would see  
what the child can do and if the child can't, she will downgrade it,  
making it easier for the child so at least they can get success out of  
it. So instead of giving them a ten-piece puzzle, she might give them  
a four or five, to see that they are still getting success and it's not  
completely overwhelming for the child (S7P1;5;65)".*

The toy librarian's personality influences her interactions. Beneficiaries explain that a toy librarian needs to be:

*"Friendly and express love (S6P4;6;94)".*

In addition, training to improve interaction and relationships between toy librarians, parents and children, was mentioned:

*"It is a short course that is tiered, so it is to improve the interaction  
and their [toy librarian's] relationship with people (S4P5;8;145)".*

The environment and how it is set up is remarked on by the following participants, who see it as their duty to do:

*"Photo number fourteen shows that as part of my duties as a toy  
librarian, I need to set up (S1P4;6;102);*

*"Toy librarians know that they need to set up different areas with  
different activities (S4P5;4;32)"; and*

*"On [photo] number one, it is one of those pre-planned activity plans  
that are set out to say, this is what we will be doing so now the*

*children will be doing what the teacher explained how it should be.  
(S1P3;7; 105)”.*

Photograph 5.16 shows how the toy librarian sets up the toy library space before the children arrive for the play-based early learning session.



*Photograph 5.16: Setting up a play-based early learning session (S4PH5)*



*Photograph 5.17: Adult demonstrating (S3PH3)*



*Photograph 5.18: Guiding a toddler to page through a book (S3PH13)*

In Photograph 5.17 a toy librarian working in a mobile toy library is demonstrating to children how to play with the play materials, and in Photograph 5.18 a toy librarian is guiding a toddler to page through a book and engaging with a boy handing her another book. The interactions between the toy librarians and the children are important

features of a quality programme (Hirsh-Pasek *et al.*, 2009:29; Banaji and Spelke, 2010: 606 and Excell *et al.*, 2015:32).

An emotionally and physically safe environment, such as depicted in Photograph 5.19, enhances learning (Newfoundland Labrador Education and Early Childhood Development, 2016:1; Siraj-Blatchford and Sylva, 2004:722; Hirsh-Pasek *et al.*, 2009:1, Pramling Samuelsson and Carlsson, 2008:631 and Miller and Almon, 2009:22). Participant 1 from site 1 elaborates:

*“I chose this picture because it showcases one of the objectives of the toy library as it should be a safe place for children; I mean you can even see the smiles of the children as they come in and how the toy librarian welcomes them (S1P1;4;27 & S1PH13)”.*



*Photograph 5.19: An emotionally safe environment*

### **5.5.3.3 Subtheme 3.3: Characteristics and indicators of play-based learning**

Play-based learning is characterised as being joyful, actively engaging, meaningful, iterative and socially interactive, as expressed in the following remarks by participants:

*“They are enjoying the games that they are playing (S4P2;5;68 & S4PH4)”;*

*“The child is in the kitchen, she is developing social skills and no one has instructed her how to play, but she is automatically doing it on her own. There is no one guiding her (S1P6;3;16)”*; and

*“... doing what she has seen, reading, being attentive and doing it herself (S1P3;7;105)”*.

The characteristic of being socially interactive is depicted in this photo (S4PH4):



*Photograph 5.20: Socially interactive characteristic of play (S4PH4)*

McClelland *et al.* (2000:309) confirm that a group of children playing together develop a range of social skills (Photograph 5.20).

Play-based learning indicators include aspects of choice, wonder and delight. Toy libraries provide children with opportunities to make choices, as reflected in the following quotes:

*“Okay so with picture number two; I can say it is playful because there are a lot of toys here on the carpet and children are exploring and they can choose which ones they want to play with and what kind of toys they will want to construct and they are creative as well. Yah! (S1P6;8;122 & S1PH2)”*; and

*“Yes, children can choose whatever they want to choose to play (S2P1;4;35)”*.



Children learn when they are curious, surprised and fascinated while playing and learning. Exploring and being able to improvise are indicators in the category “wonder” of a play-based learning opportunity, as reflected in this quote:

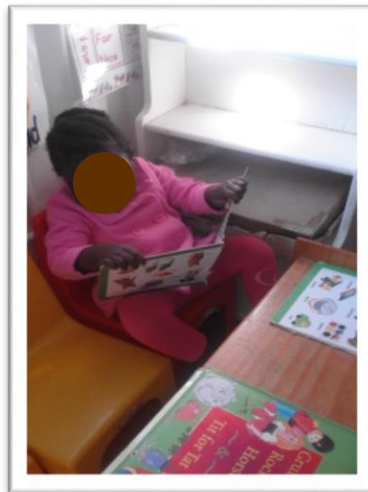
*“And this child is exploring and doing what she has seen, reading, being attentive and doing it herself (S1P3;7; 105 & S1PH12)”*;

*“We should also give them enough time to discover it, if they don’t discover it then that’s when you can explain (S1P7;7;118)”*.

Children involved in play-based learning are likely to experience a sense of delight, which is seen when children are happy, smiling, joyful and achieving success. Toy librarians describe children’s experiences at the toy library as joyful.



*Photograph 5.21:  
Choice (S1PH2)*



*Photograph 5.22:  
Wonder (S1PH12)*



*Photograph 5.23:  
Delight (S3PH14)*

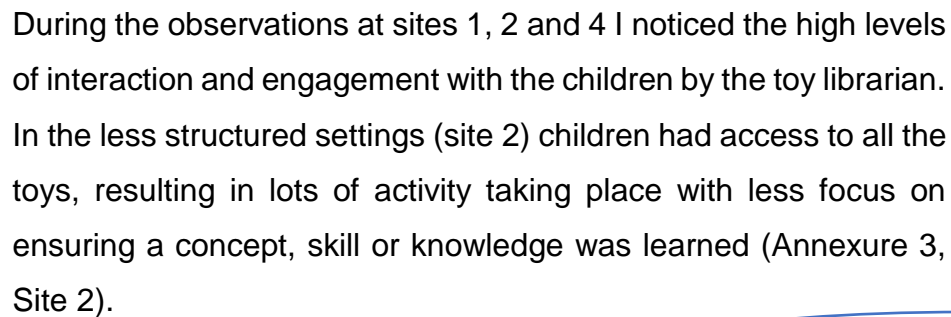
Photograph 5.21 shows a group of children playing with a variety of blocks on a carpet. The children choose what they want to build with the blocks (Mardell *et al.*, 2016:7). The girl paging through a book in Photograph 5.22 exhibits elements of wonder and surprise as she discovers each picture in the book, while being focused on the activity. The two girls in Photograph 5.23 created a story associated with the toys they are playing with, and the joy, fun or delight they experience is visible in the photograph.

*“Children are free and happy (S1P7;3; 23)”*;



*“They are concentrating and enjoying what they are doing  
(S5P2;6;100)”; and*

*“... excited every time she comes here (S6P5;2;7)”.*



During the observations at sites 1, 2 and 4 I noticed the high levels of interaction and engagement with the children by the toy librarian. In the less structured settings (site 2) children had access to all the toys, resulting in lots of activity taking place with less focus on ensuring a concept, skill or knowledge was learned (Annexure 3, Site 2).

## **5.6 Conclusion**

The data production and analysis procedure was guided by the conceptual framework. Toy librarians indicated an understanding that children learn through play and that the learning is related to both academic and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. The toy library operations include administrative aspects such as toy lending, managing play materials, providing services and dealing with the challenges experienced in running a toy library. Planning for and setting up play-based early learning sessions in line with developmentally appropriate practice was demonstrated by toy librarians in terms of their awareness of scaffold learning. Toy librarians demonstrated an awareness that some activities in the play-based early learning sessions are child-directed and that others are adult-directed. Setting up the environment and including a variety of activities was demonstrated through their responses and confirmed during the observations. The primary characteristics of playful learning that were listed included being happy and smiling. Elements of choice were referred to as an indicator of playful learning.

In chapter six the research findings of the study are compared with the literature in terms of supporting the existing evidence, contradicting evidence, silences in the literature and new insights gained as a result of the findings.

# CHAPTER SIX

## COMPARISON OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS WITH THE LITERATURE

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*“Toy librarians show the importance of  
play and learning”  
(S3P7;4;87).*

### **6.1 Introduction**

Chapter five presented the data analysis and research findings, grouped in three themes and nine subthemes. The themes and subthemes were derived after the data was analysed and manually coded. In chapter six I present a summary of the findings from the study and compare the results with existing literature about toy libraries and play-based early learning sessions. The supportive evidence, gaps, silences and insight into the topic of toy libraries and play-based early learning sessions are highlighted.

### **6.2 Summary of literature and empirical research findings**

For further analyses and refinement of the themes and subthemes and comparison with the literature, four tables were created: supportive evidence, where a comparison is made between the findings and existing literature, contradictory evidence, silences highlighting the gaps in literature, and new insights where the new knowledge and innovation of the study is reported (Ebersöhn, 2009). Creswell (2014:200) states comparing findings with existing literature is a strategy used by qualitative researchers.

#### **6.2.1 Comparison of results with existing knowledge: supportive evidence**

Table 6.1 provides a summary of how existing literature and relevant theories supports the research findings. Each of the similarities is described in an interpretive style. The themes and subthemes emerged from the analysed data. The sources that support the findings are listed and related to the literature studies in chapter two, which

explored toy libraries and play-based early learning sessions. The findings column refers to the results found from analysing the documents, photographs, focus group discussions and observations. The interpretive discussion was based on the similarities between the literature, the themes and subthemes.

Table 6.1: Comparison of results and existing knowledge: supportive evidence (adapted from Ebersöhn, 2009)

Themes and subthemes	Existing knowledge (literature)	Findings	Interpretive discussion
<p><b>Theme 1:</b> Young children and learning</p> <p><b>Subtheme 1.1:</b> Academic learning</p> <p><b>Subtheme 1.2:</b> Skills of the 21<sup>st</sup> century</p>	<p><b>Play-based learning and the NCF</b> Young children learn through play (The LEGO Foundation, 2017:13). Not all play is learning (Mardell <i>et al.</i>, 2016:4;). South Africa's NCF is a play-based ECD curriculum that guides what adults should do and what to expect from children (OECD, 2011:86; DBE, 2015:8; 16).</p>	<p><b>Play-based learning and the NCF</b> Participants stated what children were learning at the toy library. Linking the learning to NCF confirmed that children learn through play (S5P1;3;35; S3P7;4;87; S4P4;4;48; S4P5;7;123; S3P2;7;189; S2P4;7;121; S5P3;10;214; S4P5;3;22). This finding links to Gesell's (1933:209) maturation theory where children develop is linked to their age. Gardner's (1983:77) theory of multiple intelligences is embedded in the NCF since it encourages developing children's linguistic, mathematical, musical, spatial, bodily, interpersonal, intrapersonal and naturalist intelligences.</p>	<p>The literature and research findings agree that young children can access early learning opportunities through play-based learning activities provided by a toy library.</p> <p>The current literature confirms that play-based learning opportunities provided by the toy library encourage academic and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills.</p>
	<p><b>Academic learning</b> ECD curricula improve literacy, language, mathematics and emotional development in young children (Weiland &amp; Yoshikawa, 2013:2125).</p>	<p><b>Academic learning</b> Participants were able to explain how playing with toys enhances children's academic skills relating to literacy and numeracy skills (S4P3;5;71; (S4P4;3;26; S5P1;3;35). Piaget's (1952:21) cognitive development theories underpin the notion that children's thinking, reasoning and perception is developed as opportunities for learning is created.</p>	

Themes and subthemes	Existing knowledge (literature)	Findings	Interpretive discussion
	<p><b>Play benefits the whole child</b>            Play benefits cognitive, social and emotional development (Mardell <i>et al.</i>, 2016:4; Kamii, 2014:77; Zosh <i>et al.</i>, 2014:469; Cheng, 2011:72; Han <i>et al.</i>, 2010:99; Whitebread &amp; Basilio, 2013:77, 78; McClelland <i>et al.</i>, 2000:309; McClelland <i>et al.</i>, 2013:320; Razza <i>et al.</i>, 2012:312; Jarvis, 2010:62, McVeigh <i>et al.</i>, 2004:983 Shisana <i>et al.</i>, 2013:17; Prince <i>et al.</i>, 2013:184, Goddard Blythe, 2011:1).</p>	<p><b>Play benefits the whole child</b>            Participants described how the toy librarians have knowledge about toys and are able to share how playing with a particular toy benefits children’s cognitive, social, emotional and physical development. Play enhances creativity and school readiness (S4P3;5;71; S4P4;3;26; S5P1;3;35). This links to Vygotsky’s concept of zone of proximal development. Bandura’s (1989:47) social cognitive theory linked to observational learning where children learn by watching and imitating others is confirmed by this finding.</p>	
	<p><b>Play and learning 21<sup>st</sup> century skills</b>            Play promotes the learning of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills such as experimenting, exploring, being creative (Hirsh-Pasek <i>et al.</i>, 2009; Wintrop &amp; McGivney, 2016:4).</p>	<p><b>Play and learning 21<sup>st</sup> century skills</b>            Social behaviour, communication, sharing and packing up were mentioned as being learned when children play. These skills are described in the literature as essential 21<sup>st</sup> century skills highly regarded in the workplace of the future (S3P6;3;33; S5P2;6;100; S1P7;3; 23). Socio-cultural theories of Vygotsky (1978:102) and Parten (1932:249) underpin this finding.</p>	
<p><b>Theme 2:</b>            Toy library operations  <b>Subtheme 2.1:</b>            Administration  <b>Subtheme 2.2:</b>            Play materials</p>	<p>The operations of a toy library consist of three main elements which relate to administration, play materials, services and managing challenges.</p>		<p>The operations in a toy library focus on administration and play materials and include services such as lending and/or play-based early learning sessions.</p>

Themes and subthemes	Existing knowledge (literature)	Findings	Interpretive discussion
<p><b>Subtheme 2.3:</b> Services</p> <p><b>Subtheme 2.4:</b> Challenges</p>	<p><b>Administration</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Membership management – fee, numbers of users, which relates to keeping statistics (Cotlands, 2017:1);</li> <li>• Play materials management – organising play materials, lending process, categorising, processing, maintaining (clean or repair), and procurement of toys (Cotlands, 2017:1; Letcee, 2011);</li> <li>• Recordkeeping – finances, attendance registers, stock (lost/broken/new), toy lending (Livingstone, 2016:1).</li> </ul>	<p><b>Administration</b></p> <p>Toy library administration involves managing memberships (S1D1, Photograph 4.6), play materials (S6P8;3;12; S1P7;6;101; S3P8;5;110; S6P6;5;71, S4D1) and recordkeeping (S4P3;6;82; S4P3;6;78). Bronfenbrenner’s (1994:39) ecological systems theory supports the notion that an environment such as toy libraries impact on children’s development.</p>	<p>Literature and research findings from this study confirm that making age, developmentally culturally and linguistically appropriate play materials available to young children positively impacts children’s development.</p>
	<p><b>Play materials</b></p> <p>Toy libraries provide play materials that are age, developmentally, culturally and linguistically appropriate which can be borrowed for a period from the toy library (DBE, 2015a:24; Ozanne &amp; Ozanne, 2011:265,275; Livingstone, 2016:1; Nwokah <i>et al.</i>, 2013:203; Rettig, 1998:229; Cottrell, 2013:1; Kapellaka, 1992:55; Cotlands, 2017:1).</p>	<p><b>Play materials</b></p> <p>Toy librarians are able to do a basic assessment of children’s development and based on the needs of the child select or advise on age, developmentally, culturally and linguistically appropriate play materials (whether the toy is borrowed or used during a play-based early learning session) based on two primary selection criteria:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To stimulate development (S7P3;8;114; S6P8;3;22)</li> <li>Perceived as being “fun” to play with by children (S6P8;3;22).</li> </ol>	<p>The research and literature confirm that toys need to be sterilised, washed, repaired and replaced when required.</p>

Themes and subthemes	Existing knowledge (literature)	Findings	Interpretive discussion
	<p>Toys need to be sterilised, washed, repaired and replaced (Cotlands, 2017:1).</p>	<p>Toys are sterilised, washed, repaired and replaced after use (S7P2;4;31; S7P3;4;50; S7P1;3;23; 7P3;4;50; S6P8;2;6; S4P4;3;21).</p>	
	<p><b>Services</b> The literature refers to toy libraries as providing a treasure chest of services (Powell &amp; Seaton, 2007:36; Kapellaka, 1992:54).</p> <p>Toy libraries provide training (Livingstone, 2016:1; Cotlands, 2016b; DSD, 2015:104; Heckman, 2011:5; Nwokah <i>et al.</i>, 2013:203).</p> <p>The service of providing play-based early learning sessions is discussed in theme 3.</p>	<p><b>Services</b> Services provided by toy librarians are either free or paid for (S1P1;9;145; S5P1;5;78).</p> <p>Toy library services extend beyond toy lending and include providing a snack (S2P5;7;109), health observations (S2P1;3;18; S2P4;3;24), home visits (S2P5;8;158), developmental assessments (S7P3;8;114), referrals(S7P1;4;33) and access to social services support and parent support groups (S3P7;4;87; S7P1;3;27; S6P7;5;58).</p> <p>Toy librarians provide training to adults such as parents and ECD practitioners on how to use toys (S7P3;8;118; S7P3;4;50; S4P2;2;7; S2P5;7;105) and how to select age, developmentally, culturally and linguistically appropriate toys to stimulate children’s development (S7P1;3;23), as well as making toys from waste (S7P2;4;31).</p>	<p>Toy library services extend beyond toy lending and include training on toys, providing a snack, health observations, home visits, developmental assessments, referrals, social service support and parent support groups.</p> <p>Toy librarians provide training to adults on how to select and use the play materials.</p>

Themes and subthemes	Existing knowledge (literature)	Findings	Interpretive discussion
	<p><b>Challenges</b> The toy librarian has to deal with a number of challenges when providing services and managing a toy library, e.g. lack of space; lost, stolen, broken toys; quantity of toys; accommodating children living with disabilities - being inclusive, marketing aimed at creating awareness of the toy library and accessibility.</p> <p>Space for toy library activities is limited and has an influence on services offered (UNCRC, 2013; Ozanne &amp; Ozanne, 2011:270).</p> <p>Toys and play materials get damaged, broken, stolen or lost, which results in fewer toys being available as a result of lack of funding to replace toys (Trawick-Smith <i>et al.</i>, 2014:249; Kapellaka, 1992:55; Heckman, 2011:5; Nwokah <i>et al.</i>, 2013:203). The quantity, variety and suitability of toys is a challenge (DBE, 2015a:24).</p>	<p><b>Challenges</b> The challenges experienced by toy libraries are expanded on below.</p> <p>Toy library activities are influenced by the availability of space, resulting in children not having the physical space to play indoors and/or outdoors at a toy library. This impacts on the number of toy libraries providing play-based early learning sessions and by implication children's development (S7P3;5;73).</p> <p>Play materials used by children will get damaged, broken, stolen, lost and dirty (S7P2;3;24; S4P4;7;116; S5P4;7;127).</p> <p>There is a need for an increase in the number and variety of toys at toy libraries (S1P7;9;155; S2P3;8;137; S7P3;5;71).</p>	<p>The literature and research agree that toy librarians experience challenges in relation to space; lost, stolen, broken toys and the quantity of toys; accommodating children living with disabilities - being inclusive; marketing of the toy library to create awareness about the toy library, and accessibility.</p> <p>The study and available literature confirm that the use of toys results in toys being damaged, broken, stolen, lost and dirty.</p> <p>Toy libraries are not adequately including children living with</p>



Themes and subthemes	Existing knowledge (literature)	Findings	Interpretive discussion
	<p>Accommodating children living with disabilities – being inclusive (Cottrell, 2013:1; USATLA, 2016:1; ETL, 2014:4; TLA, 2016:1; Cotlands, 2016b:2; Ozanne &amp; Ozanne, 2011:266).</p> <p>Toy library services must be marketed in order to promote the services offered and to increase usage of the toy library (Talan &amp; Bloom, 2004:8; Cotlands, 2017:1).</p> <p>The accessibility of a toy library is critical in order to sustain the toy library and for it to have impact in communities where it is located. The physical location of a toy library must be carefully considered to maximise accessibility. Barriers to access should be removed (DSD, 2015:43; Powell &amp; Seaton, 2007:38; DAC, 2015:27; Barros De Oliveira, 2015:66).</p>	<p>Toy libraries are not adequately including children living with disabilities (S1P3;9;157).</p> <p>Marketing of the toy library services raise awareness about the services being offered by toy libraries, as well as the importance of play-based learning (S1P1;10;166).</p> <p>The physical location of toy libraries can be a barrier to accessing toy library services (S1P7;9;158). Not having enough toy libraries is another access barrier (S6P5;7;110). Toy libraries need to consider providing access to information relating to play and learning (S6P1;7;112).</p>	<p>disabilities, which is confirmed in the literature.</p> <p>The literature and study emphasise the importance of marketing the services of the toy library to ensure that the community is aware of the services and the increased access to the services.</p>
<p><b>Theme 3:</b> Play-based early learning sessions <b>Subtheme 3.1:</b> Developmentally appropriate practice <b>Subtheme 3.2:</b></p>	<p>The NCF and CAPS curricula promote free-play, teachable moments, teacher-guided and child-initiated activities (DBE, 2011a:20) termed play-based learning (DBE, 2011c:13).</p> <p>Developmentally appropriate practice promotes young children’s optimal learning and development (Cople &amp;</p>	<p>The findings that relate to play-based early learning sessions are linked to the literature listed in column one.</p> <p>Young children need access to early learning opportunities that are age,</p>	<p>The literature and study confirm that toy librarians give young children access to age, developmentally, culturally and linguistically appropriate activities.</p>

Themes and subthemes	Existing knowledge (literature)	Findings	Interpretive discussion
Play-based learning pedagogy <b>Subtheme 3.3:</b> Characteristics and indicators of play-based learning	Bredekamp, 2009:16; Excell <i>et al.</i> , 2015:18; Miller & Almon, 2009:13).	developmentally, culturally and linguistically appropriate (S6P6;2;5).  Developmentally appropriate practice is characterised by children that learn by doing - actively involved (S1P3;7; 105), learning is meaningful and contextualised when concrete or real objects are used to explore and learn (S1P4;10;173; S1P7;9;151). A physically and emotionally safe environment promotes learning (S1P1;4;27). Children's social-emotional development is underpinned by Erikson's stages of social-emotional development (Erikson, 1984:265).	
	<p><b>Play-based learning pedagogy</b>            An approach which is developmentally appropriate and leads to achieving educational goals (Smith, 2012:1; Siraj-Blatchford, 2009:2).</p> <p><b>Child directed/initiated</b>            The child initiates and directs the play, which creates an opportunity for learning because the child's interest and active involvement motivate learning (Pardhan <i>et al.</i>, 2012:19; O'Gorman &amp; Ailwood, 2012:287; Ogunyemi &amp; Ragpot, 2015:3; Theobald <i>et al.</i>, 2015:346; Wadende <i>et al.</i>, 2016:1).</p>	<p>The findings are compared with the literature listed in column one.</p> <p>Children play and by doing so direct the play and learning (S1P6;3;16; S1P6;8;122; S1P7;7;118).</p>	<p>The literature and study confirm that play-based learning is dependent on the interplay and balance between child-directed or initiated play versus adult-directed or guided play in an environment such as a toy library which is designed for children.</p>

Themes and subthemes	Existing knowledge (literature)	Findings	Interpretive discussion
	<p><b>Adult-directed – guided play</b>            Adult-guided play enhances development more than free play and direct instruction (Han <i>et al.</i>, 2010:82; Fisher <i>et al.</i>, 2013:1872; Wallace <i>et al.</i>, 2010:398; Bonawitz <i>et al.</i>, 2011:329; Weisberg <i>et al.</i>, 2016:177; Verdine <i>et al.</i>, 2014:11).</p> <p>Interactions that are positive (Jalongo &amp; Isenberg, 2012:58), caring and responsive between adult and the child (Nwokah <i>et al.</i>, 2013:212).</p> <p>Toy librarians guide play using a variety of strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• having conversations (Excell &amp; Linington, 2015: 198), referred to as sustained shared thinking (Siraj-Blatchford &amp; Sylva, 2004:726);</li> <li>• scaffolding learning (Siraj-Blatchford, 2009:9; Ng'asike, 2014:54);</li> </ul>	<p>The toy librarian's role in guiding play is linked to what the literature highlights as important.</p> <p>Participants described interactions with the toy librarian as being friendly and loving, and having the right kind of personality that is able to listen and respond to what the child needs, which is considered more important than a qualification (S6P4;6;94). Toy librarians are exposed to short courses which improve interaction and relationship with toy library beneficiaries (S4P5;8;145).</p> <p>Toy librarians guide children's play (S1P4;6;102; S2P1;4;41; S1P3;7; 105; S1P3;7;116). Play is guided by the toy librarian using direct instruction by showing or demonstrating a toy or game (S7P1;3;23/S7P3;8;118) and getting children to copy something in order to learn (S1P4;6;102; S7P2;3;20; S7P1;3;23; S7P3;8;118), assist and encourage</p>	<p>Toy librarians need to be skilled in a variety of strategies on how to talk and play with children, support learning using scaffolding and demonstration, as well as selecting culturally appropriate materials.</p>

Themes and subthemes	Existing knowledge (literature)	Findings	Interpretive discussion
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• demonstrating or showing how to play with toys and games (DBE, 2015a:24)</li> <li>• using culturally appropriate stories, songs and games (Ng'asike, 2014:54);</li> <li>• providing a variety of activity choices (Excell <i>et al.</i>, 2015:32); and</li> <li>• being involved by playing with the children (Jordan, 2009:43).</li> </ul> <p><b>Environment</b> The toy library environment encourages play by the way the physical space is set up and what play materials are available, considering the cultural context (Mardell <i>et al.</i>, 2016:2; Newfoundland Labrador Education and Early Childhood Development, 2016:1; Siraj-Blatchford &amp; Sylva, 2004:722; Hirsh-Pasek <i>et al.</i>, 2009:1; Pramling Samuelsson &amp; Carlsson, 2008:631; Miller &amp; Almon, 2009:22; Hirsh-Pasek <i>et al.</i>, 2009:29; Banaji &amp; Spelke, 2010: 606; Excell <i>et al.</i>, 2015:32; Excell &amp; Linington, 2015: 190, 198, 199; Boyette, 2016:761).</p> <p>Environments where children discover, explore, create, experiment, observe and sustain play are most conducive for</p>	<p>children (S7P3;8;116), and scaffolding learning (S7P1;5;65).</p> <p>The toy library environment provides a variety of activities (S4P5;4;32), which are planned or structured (S3P8;4;66; S1P3;7; 105), which allow children to explore (S1P6;8;122) and discover (S1P7;7;118) resulting in play-based learning (S1P6;3;16; S7P1;5;74).</p> <p>A first aid box needs to be available at the play session in case of an emergency (S4P4;6;75).</p>	<p>The toy librarian is responsible for creating an environment that promotes and nurtures play-based learning.</p> <p>Toy librarians need to comply with health and safety requirements as specified by South African regulations. Guidelines with regard to what may be included in a first aid box should be consulted. In addition, toy librarians need to be trained in basic first aid.</p>

Themes and subthemes	Existing knowledge (literature)	Findings	Interpretive discussion
	<p>play-based learning (van Heerden, 2011:42).</p>		
	<p><b>Characteristics of play-based learning</b>  Play-based learning is described as being joyful, actively engaging, meaningful, iterative and socially interactive (The LEGO Foundation, 2017: 15, Stahl &amp; Feigenson, 2015:94; Whitebread &amp; Basilio, 2013:77; Hirsh-Pasek <i>et al.</i>, 2015:7; Golinkoff &amp; Hirsh-Pasek, 2017:2874).</p> <p><b>Indicators of play-based learning</b>  Indicators of play-based learning include choice, wonder and delight (Mardell <i>et al.</i>, 2016:7).</p>	<p>Toy librarians mentioned the joyful characteristics of play-based learning (S1P7;3; 23; S4P2;5;65; S4P2;5;68; S5P2;6;100; S6P6;6;36), including references to children being actively engaged – doing it (S1P3;7; 105; S1P6;3;16) and describing children’s play as being socially interactive (S4P2;5;68).</p> <p><b>Choice</b> intrinsically motivates children and gives them a sense of autonomy and ownership. Children who are given opportunities to choose will negotiate, share ideas and move around between activities. In the toy library children are given an opportunity to make choices (S1P6;8;122; S2P1;4;35).</p> <p><b>Wonder</b> is an indicator of playful learning that makes children feel curious, surprised and fascinated. Children experiencing wonder will be exploring, discovering, improvising, and creating (S1P3;7; 105; S1P7;7;118).</p>	<p>Some of the characteristics and indicators of play-based learning as listed in the literature were confirmed to be present in the play-based early learning sessions provided by toy libraries.</p>

Themes and subthemes	Existing knowledge (literature)	Findings	Interpretive discussion
		<p><b>Delight</b> is an indicator of playful learning which feels like enjoyment, fun and excitement, and can be seen when children are happy, smiling, laughing and achieving success (S6P5;2;7; S5P2;6;100; S4P2;5;65; S4P2;5;68).</p>	

### **6.2.2 Comparison of results with existing knowledge: contradictory evidence**

Table 6.2 provides a summary of how existing literature differs from the research findings. Each of the contradictions or differences is described in an interpretive discussion style against the themes and subthemes which emerged from the analysed data. The existing literature which supports the same findings is listed and relates to the literature reviewed in chapter two, which explored young children's learning, toy libraries and play-based early learning sessions. The findings column refers to the results found from analysing the documents, photographs, focus group discussions and observations. The interpretive discussions were based on my interpretation of the differences between the literature and the analysed data, which is listed as it applies to the relevant themes and subthemes.

Table 6.2: Comparison of results with existing knowledge: contradictory evidence (adapted from Ebersöhn, 2009)

Themes and subthemes	Existing knowledge (literature)	Findings	Interpretive discussion
<p><b>Theme 1:</b> Young children and learning <b>Subtheme 1.1:</b> Academic learning <b>Subtheme 1.2:</b> Skills of the 21<sup>st</sup> century</p>	<p>Children need literacy and numeracy skills with content knowledge in academic subjects such as technology and science (Winthrop &amp; McGivney, 2016:14; OECD, 2011:86; Cheng, 2011:72; Han <i>et al.</i>, 2010:99; Golinkoff &amp; Hirsh-Pasek, 2017:1821).</p>	<p>Despite the literature indicating that technology and science are to be included as content in the curriculum, there was no evidence that this is being done by toy librarians.</p>	<p>Toy librarians need to include content in their play-based early learning sessions linked to mathematics, literacy, science and information and computer technology.</p>
<p><b>Theme 2:</b> Toy library operations <b>Subtheme 2.1:</b> Administration <b>Subtheme 2.2:</b> Play materials <b>Subtheme 2.3:</b> Services <b>Subtheme 2.4:</b> Challenges</p>	<p>Children’s learning is influenced by their culture (Excell &amp; Linington, 2015:22; Jalongo &amp; Isenberg, 2012:123). Play materials need to be age, developmentally, culturally and linguistically appropriate (Trawick-Smith <i>et al.</i>, 2014:250; Ng’asike, 2014:54; Ozanne &amp; Ozanne, 2011:275).</p> <p>Sand and water play develops children’s mathematical concepts relating to space, size, measurement, volume and area (Wallace <i>et al.</i>, 2010:395)</p>	<p>The selection of play materials used did not include culturally appropriate play materials which the children would be playing with at home. The play materials were all commercially produced, with no evidence that toy libraries purposively included play materials reflecting children’s culture.</p> <p>When setting up the play-based early learning sessions, sand and water play were not provided.</p>	<p>The selection of play materials should reflect the culture of the children being served.</p> <p>Play activities should include sand and water play because it enhances mathematics learning.</p>



Themes and subthemes	Existing knowledge (literature)	Findings	Interpretive discussion
<p><b>Theme 3:</b> Play-based early learning sessions</p> <p><b>Subtheme 3.1:</b> Developmentally appropriate practice</p> <p><b>Subtheme 3.2:</b> Play-based learning pedagogy</p> <p><b>Subtheme 3.3:</b> Characteristics and indicators of play-based learning</p>	<p>Children learn through guided play as opposed to direct instruction or free play alone (Bonawitz <i>et al.</i>, 2011:329; Fisher <i>et al.</i>,2013:1872; Miller &amp; Almon, 2009:13).</p>	<p>Toy librarians either designed play-based early learning sessions to consist of free play only, or at the other end of the spectrum reverted to direct instruction (S1P3;6;103).</p> <p>In order to support children’s play, the toy librarian has to observe children’s play in order to extend the play, and then use questioning to further enhance children’s play. The study did not find evidence to support that this is in fact taking place during the play-based early learning sessions (Excell &amp; Linington, 2015: 198).</p> <p>Training in facilitating play-based learning is required (Clasquin-Johnson, 2011:171; Smit, 2015:26; Howard, 2010:100; Berkhout <i>et al.</i>, 2012:1326; Ogunyemi &amp; Ragpot, 2015:5).</p> <p>Toy librarians did not reflect on their practice, which affects how children’s play is guided, resulting in missed opportunities for deepening and strengthening children’s learning (Schön, 1987:26).</p>	<p>Although toy librarians are aware of modelling, demonstrations and scaffolding as strategies to encourage children’s learning, direct instruction was predominantly used during the observed play-based early learning sessions, with no evidence toy librarians used observation of children’s play to extend children’s play using questioning techniques. Although training in play-based early learning sessions is provided, no practical, hands-on support is offered to toy librarians to improve their session practice. No evidence of reflective practice was found, which could be a powerful mechanism to change practice.</p>

### **6.2.3 Comparison of results with existing knowledge: silences (gaps) in literature**

Table 6.3 points out the silences in the literature, referring to aspects which were highlighted in the findings (as a result of the data production and analysis), but were not originally considered in the literature review in chapter two. This section only has three columns. The findings column refers to the results found from analysing the documents, photographs, focus group discussions and observations. The interpretive discussions column addresses the silences in the current literature.

Table 6.3: Comparison of results with existing knowledge: silences in literature (adapted from Ebersöhn, 2009)

Themes and subthemes	Findings	Interpretive discussion
<p><b>Theme 1:</b> Young children and learning <b>Subtheme 1.1:</b> Academic learning <b>Subtheme 1.2:</b> Skills of the 21<sup>st</sup> century</p>	<p>Toy librarians need to be trained in early childhood development and on the NCF and CAPS and how these inform the planning of play-based early learning sessions.</p>	<p>Toy librarians need to be trained in early childhood development and on the NCF and CAPS and how these inform the planning of play-based early learning sessions.</p>
<p><b>Theme 2:</b> Toy library operations <b>Subtheme 2.1:</b> Administration <b>Subtheme 2.2:</b> Play materials <b>Subtheme 2.3:</b> Services <b>Subtheme 2.4:</b> Challenges</p>	<p>The diverse services being offered by toy libraries impact the quality of play sessions being offered, as well as whether the toy library programme is regarded as important to promote play-based learning or not. E.g., toy libraries which included health-related services (S2P1;3;18; S2P4;3;24) focused less on the quality of the play sessions than toy libraries that only provide play sessions.</p> <p>The term “toy library” is limiting in that toy libraries do not only provide toys, they also provide games and books (S3P6;2;26; S1P7;3; 23; S5P2;2;2; S4P5;3;24; S7P3;5;69). The literature does not mention that books are included in toy libraries.</p> <p>Toy libraries with limited space set up activities outside, subject to weather conditions. Mobile toy libraries set up play-based early learning activities under a gazebo, and if it rains the sessions have to be cancelled (S3P8;4;74; S4F;4;38). The impact of weather on delivering mobile toy library services was mentioned in the literature (S3P8;4;74; S4F;4;38).</p>	<p>Toy libraries should focus their services on providing play-based learning sessions and not expect the toy librarian to render additional services. Additional services, such as health programmes, can be provided, but should be executed by a team member other than the toy librarian.</p> <p>Toy libraries are encouraged to provide not only commercially produced toys in the toy library and to use the term "play materials" rather than "toys". This will allow for the inclusion of culturally and age-appropriate play objects, games and books in the toy library. Including books will improve</p>

Themes and subthemes	Findings	Interpretive discussion
<p><b>Theme 2:</b> Toy library operations</p> <p><b>Subtheme 2.1:</b> Administration</p> <p><b>Subtheme 2.2:</b> Play materials</p> <p><b>Subtheme 2.3:</b> Services</p> <p><b>Subtheme 2.4:</b> Challenges</p>	<p>A first aid box is available at the play session in case of an emergency (S4P4;6;75). The literature neglects the health and safety requirements when providing services to young children in a group setting, such as a play session at the toy library.</p> <p>The toy libraries did not make any digital play opportunities available for children to borrow or to use during play sessions.</p>	<p>children’s literacy skills and create a love for reading.</p> <p>Mobile services may be disrupted by weather conditions, which requires toy librarians to find alternative venues on these day to minimise the impact of having to cancel sessions.</p> <p>Toy librarians need to comply with health and safety requirements as specified by South African regulations. Guidelines with regard to what may be included in a first aid box should be consulted.</p> <p>The literature does not comment on including digital play in the toy library. Toy libraries need to consider how to include digital play in the toy library. It may be that toy libraries promote concrete experiences as opposed to 2D experiences, but it may also be that there is uncertainty with regard to dealing with this prominent aspect of play.</p>

Themes and subthemes	Findings	Interpretive discussion
<p><b>Theme 3:</b> Play-based early learning sessions</p> <p><b>Subtheme 3.1:</b> Developmentally appropriate practice</p> <p><b>Subtheme 3.2:</b> Play-based learning pedagogy</p> <p><b>Subtheme 3.3:</b> Characteristics and indicators of play-based learning</p>	<p>Toy libraries are primarily described as a lending service and not positioned in the literature as adding value in terms of creating access to early learning opportunities through play (S3P7;4;87).</p> <p>Toy librarians explain how they set up play-based early learning sessions with different areas or stations and a range of activities as a key feature of the role of toy libraries (S1P4;6;102; S4P5;7;106; S4P5;4;32; S4P4;6;75; S2P4;3;30; S5P1;3;47; S1P7;9;158). The existing literature relating to toy libraries does not refer to effective practice principles with regard to providing play-based early learning sessions; it is mentioned in the early childhood literature, but not in the toy library literature.</p> <p>The training and qualifications required to be a toy librarian are not mentioned in the literature. However, toy library short courses and level 4 ECD qualifications are mentioned as important requirements for toy librarians (S4P5;8;143). The document analysis of the toy library short courses being offered highlights the fact that the focus during the training of toy librarians is on the administration of the toy library, with very little focus on how children develop, how they learn and what they should be learning. How to guide children’s play is not explicitly focused on, while training in the characteristics and indicators of play-based learning is absent.</p>	<p>The literature does not focus on how to plan and implement play-based early learning sessions for young children at a toy library. Consequently, there is a lack of knowledge of and skills in setting up a session, how to manage the session and how to guide children’s play. This is a gap in the literature.</p> <p>Toy librarians need to be skilled in identifying play-based learning by using the indicators and recognising play-based learning situations using the characteristics, so that they are able to effectively plan, set up and implement play-based early learning sessions.</p>

#### **6.2.4 Comparison of results with existing knowledge: new insights (new knowledge)**

Table 6.4 summarises the newly gained insights or knowledge resulting from the findings in this study. The new insights are briefly interpreted and discussed. The first column lists the themes and subthemes which emerged after the data production and data analysis. The description column provides a detailed explanation of the newly gained insight and the last column an interpretive discussion. The interpretive discussion column provides the context of the new insight and its relationship to toy libraries and play-based early learning sessions.

Table 6.4: Comparing results to existing knowledge: new insights (adapted from Ebersöhn, 2009)

Themes and subthemes	Description	Interpretive discussion
<p><b>Theme 1:</b> Young children and learning <b>Subtheme 1.1:</b> Academic learning <b>Subtheme 1.2:</b> Skills of the 21<sup>st</sup> century</p>	<p>Toy librarians are not aware that the NCF and CAPS are to be used as a guideline when planning play-based early learning sessions, resulting in sessions which create access to play opportunities, but not always succeeding in enhancing children’s academic and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills.</p>	<p>Play-based early learning sessions need to be structured within the frameworks of the NCS and CAPS in order to enhance the quality of the play-based early learning sessions.</p>
<p><b>Theme 2:</b> Toy library operations <b>Subtheme 2.1:</b> Administration <b>Subtheme 2.2:</b> Play materials <b>Subtheme 2.3:</b> Services <b>Subtheme 2.4:</b> Challenges</p>	<p>Toy librarians need to understand the impact of indigenous knowledge and the child’s culture on how parents and children view play and what they consider to be play materials. Toy libraries should be set up in consultation with the local community, whose views, beliefs and attitudes about play-based learning must be considered. Understanding what children play when at home and what the children consider to be toys will inform the selection of play materials. The basic principle of learning, proceeding from the known to the unknown, needs to be applied in order to ensure that the play materials are age, developmentally, culturally and linguistically appropriate.</p>	<p>Toy librarians need to include culturally appropriate toys and activities in the play-based early learning play sessions.</p>
<p><b>Theme 3:</b> Play-based early learning sessions <b>Subtheme 3.1:</b> Developmentally appropriate practice <b>Subtheme 3.2:</b> Play-based learning pedagogy <b>Subtheme 3.3:</b> Characteristics and indicators of play-based learning</p>	<p>Toy librarian training courses must be revised to include modules on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How young children develop;</li> <li>• Understanding the curricula: NCF and CAPS;</li> <li>• The importance of health and safety when working with young children;</li> <li>• Reflection as a tool to improve practice;</li> <li>• A framework of quality for toy libraries;</li> <li>• Play-based learning pedagogy (characteristics and indicators).</li> </ul>	<p>Toy librarians need to be equipped with knowledge and skills, and be trained and supported to provide quality play-based early learning play sessions to young children. The DBE should develop qualifications similar to ECE for toy librarians. A framework such as the one developed in this study is necessary to guide toy librarians to enhance quality services.</p>

### 6.3 A short overview of the empirical research findings of this study

In this empirical study the following findings were made:

- Toy librarians are not adequately skilled in how young children learn and how the NCF and CAPS curriculum should inform the planning of play-based early learning sessions.
- The diversity of the services being offered by toy libraries impact the quality of play-based early learning sessions, as well as whether the toy library programme is regarded as being important to promote play-based learning or not. For example, toy libraries which include health-related services focused less on the quality of the play sessions than toy libraries that focused on providing play sessions.
- The term “toy library” is limiting in that toy libraries do not only provide toys, they also provide games and books, as well as opportunities to play with sand and do experiments. The literature does not mention that books are included in toy libraries.
- Toy libraries with limited space set up activities outside which are impacted by weather conditions. Mobile toy libraries set up play-based early learning activities under a gazebo, and if it rains the sessions have to be cancelled. The impact of weather on delivering mobile toy library services was mentioned in the literature.
- A first aid box is available at the play session in case of an emergency. The literature neglects the health and safety requirements when providing services to young children in a group setting, such as a play-based early learning session at the toy library.
- The toy libraries did not make any digital play opportunities available for children to borrow or to use during play sessions.
- Toy libraries are primarily described as a lending service and not positioned in the literature as adding value in terms of creating access to play-based early learning opportunities.
- Toy librarians explained how they set up play-based early learning sessions with different areas or stations and a range of activities as a key feature of the role of toy libraries. The existing literature relating to toy libraries does not refer to effective practice principles with regard to providing play-based early learning sessions; they are mentioned in the early childhood literature, but not in the toy library literature.



The quality framework incorporating effective practice principles will enhance the role of toy libraries in the provision of play-based learning opportunities for young children. This aspect is further elaborated upon in chapter seven.

- The training and qualifications required to be a toy librarian are not mentioned in the literature. There is no qualification in toy librarianship in South Africa. However, toy library short courses and level 4 ECD qualifications are mentioned as important requirements for toy librarians;
- The document analysis of the toy library short courses being offered confirms that toy library training focuses on the administration of the toy library, with very little attention being paid to how children develop, how they learn, what they should be learning and how toy librarians need to guide young children's play. The skills in guiding children's play are neglected.

## **6.4 Conclusions**

In this chapter the research findings were categorised into evidence that is supportive or contradictory when compared to existing literature. In addition, the comparisons allowed identification of the silences in the literature and provided new insights. Firstly, play-based early learning sessions need to consider the curriculum requirements and secondly the activities and play materials need to be culturally appropriate. Thirdly, toy librarians need to obtain a toy librarian qualification which includes content on how to provide quality play-based early learning play sessions. Finally, the framework, such as the one developed in this study, contributes to improving the quality of toy library services. The research findings will be incorporated in the framework of quality standards for toy libraries. Chapter seven will provide a reflection of the chapters, draw conclusions by answering the research questions, describe the limitations and make recommendations. The framework of quality standards for toy libraries will also be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

**CHAPTER SEVEN**  
**REFLECTIONS, CONCLUSIONS,**  
**LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

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*“It is such a relief to know that there are toy libraries where we can go, with all the toys and be able to pick one and pick another, to help solve life-time problems. The toy library is a beautiful thing. I would recommend that there should be more toy libraries because it will help a lot of parents and children (S6P5;7;110)”.*

### **7.1 Introduction**

In chapter six the research findings were compared with the literature in a series of four tables. The interpretive discussion in the first table focused on the similarities between the findings and literature, the second table highlighted the contradictory evidence between the findings and the literature. The third table revealed the silences that exist in the literature but not in the findings. The last table provided new insights linked to the findings and literature. Chapter seven, the final chapter, starts with reflections on the previous six chapters, followed by the conclusions of the study structured around answering the primary and secondary research questions. The conclusion section also presents the framework of quality standards for toy libraries, which is the major contribution to quality services at toy libraries of this study. The conclusions are followed by an exploration of the limitations associated with this study. The final section in the chapter is a series of recommendations arising from the findings of this study.

### **7.2 Reflections on each chapter**

Chapter one provided an introduction and orientation to the study. It stated the orientation and background of the study, outlined the rationale and briefly described the research method and plan of study.

Chapter two provided an in-depth analysis of the literature relating to toy libraries and play-based early learning sessions. There was no explanation of what constitutes

quality toy library services in the literature. In addition, setting up and conducting play-based early learning sessions as critical components of toy libraries were not discussed in the literature; the focus in the reviewed literature was on the administrative components of the toy library.

Chapter three outlined the conceptual framework employed in this study.

The key concepts and how they relate to the study were explained. An overview was provided of the theoretical underpinnings of the conceptual framework. The conceptual framework focused the data analysis process.

In chapter four a detailed description was provided of the case study research design and methodology used in this study. Toy librarians were the primary participants, and seven toy library sites were included in the study. The data was collected from the seven case studies through documentation, photographs, focus group discussions and observations. The key elements that increased the trustworthiness of the study were member checking, the use of a reflective journal and the triangulation of the data. Ethical considerations, including trust, voluntary consent and participation, formed the bedrock upon which this study was conceptualised and conducted and the findings were documented.

Chapter five reflected on the process of data production, the participants and the data analysis process. Three themes (young children and learning, toy library operations, play-based early learning sessions) and eleven subthemes (academic learning, 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, administration, play materials, services, challenges, developmentally appropriate practice, play-based learning pedagogy, characteristics and indicators of play-based learning) emerged. The data was presented linking it to the three themes and eleven subthemes. The observations allowed me to triangulate the data presented in the photographs and generated through the focus group discussions.

Chapter six compared the research findings with the literature. The comparisons were organised in four tables. The interpretive discussion in the first table focused on the similarities between the findings and literature, the second table highlighted the contradictions between the findings and the literature. The third table addressed the

silences that exist in the literature, but not in the findings. The last table offered new insights linked to the findings and literature.

This chapter explores the conclusions, limitations, and recommendations linked to the findings in this study. The next section summarises the conclusions of the study by answering the research questions.

### **7.3 Conclusions**

The conclusions of this research are best described as they relate to the research questions. The secondary research questions are answered first and then the primary research questions. The first secondary research question is answered first.

#### **7.3.1 Secondary research question 1:**

*How do toy libraries create opportunities for young children to access play-based learning activities?*

Toy libraries provide access to play-based learning activities by making play materials and play-based early learning sessions available to young children, their parents, ECD practitioners and playgroup facilitators. Toy libraries give young children access to play-based learning activities through the toy lending service. A variety of play materials are made available, and the mere presence of the toy or play material in the child's home may evoke curiosity, exploration and a world of discovery for the child which is the beginning of learning. Parents reported how the toy librarian explained to them how to use the toy when playing with their children. A fair assumption is that as a result of the parent and child playing together, the child accesses learning which is play-based.

Access to play-based early learning activities is related to the location, proximity and availability of toy library services. Toy libraries can be located in numerous easily accessible spaces such as schools, hospitals, book libraries and in various buildings

located in communities where organisations provide services to young children. The toy library model is flexible and is able to fit into any type of structure.

The proximity, i.e. the distance of toy libraries from the population that is likely to access the service, is a critically important consideration that affects access. A creative innovation in South African toy libraries is to make toy libraries more accessible by introducing mobile toy library services, especially in rural and poverty-stricken areas. Play materials are packed into a vehicle which goes to where groups of children can access the toys. This does not increase access at home, but at least enhances the learning opportunities when children are in group settings such as a play-based early learning session or playgroups and ECD centres.

The factor that influences access most is the actual availability of toy libraries. A relatively small number of toy libraries services in relation to the four million children younger than four years needing the service are currently operational in South Africa. The fact that toy libraries are set up in an ad hoc, unplanned fashion does not improve accessibility. A strategy which purposefully scale up toy libraries, and locates and sets up toy libraries in priority poverty wards is required to maximise access to play-based learning opportunities and their benefits.

Access to early learning opportunities is increased when a combination of toy lending and play sessions is provided. The quantity and variety of culturally, developmentally and age-appropriate play materials available in toy libraries needs to be sufficient to ensure access and successful early learning. Lost, broken and damaged toys impact utility; addressing this problem requires timeous and proper management of the play materials. Toy librarians need to be skilled at repairing and reconfiguring toys when pieces have been lost, so that the cost of replacing toys is minimised. In addition, including play materials from the child's culture is essential.

Children's access to play-based learning opportunities is increased when the adults (parents, ECD practitioners or playgroup facilitators) are trained how to use the toys when playing with the children. The value and potential learning a toy may offer is severely reduced if the adult is unable to play alongside the child and guide the child's play. When play materials are borrowed, the toy librarian is obligated to explain,

demonstrate and discuss the play material with the adult, which is likely to increase children's access to play-based learning opportunities.

In addition, the frequency of changing the play materials affects utility. The more regularly the play materials are exchanged, the more varied the play-based learning opportunities will be. The borrowing period found ranged from two weeks to six months.

### **7.3.2 Secondary research question 2:**

How do South African toy libraries implement play-based learning, if any?

The way South African toy libraries provide play-based learning was found to vary. At the one end of the spectrum, toy libraries lent play materials to parents for use at home, trusting that children would learn as a result of playing with the play materials. At the other end of the spectrum, children attended play-based early learning sessions facilitated by the toy librarian at the toy library. At three of the sites play-based early learning sessions were provided. The sessions varied in terms of duration, physical space and routine, the planning of the sessions and how the toy librarian interacted with the children during the play-based learning sessions.

Play-based early learning sessions lasted between one and a half to three hours. Children need time to play. Longer sessions provide more time to play and learn, provided that the toy librarian is able to guide children's play. Toy librarians need training and support on how to set up and implement quality play-based early learning sessions. To this end a formal toy librarianship qualification needs to be developed in South Africa that will equip toy librarians with all the essential skills and knowledge needed to manage the administrative aspects of the toy library, but also to select culturally appropriate play materials and provide quality play-based early learning sessions.

The physical space and routine affect how play-based early learning sessions are provided. In larger toy library spaces, more children are accommodated in the play-based early learning sessions, but the toy-librarian-to-child ratio is not increased. A

ratio of one toy librarian to fifteen children allows interaction, whereas one toy librarian to a group of forty children results in far less learning-focused interaction.

Children's choices are limited by what the toy librarian makes available. In some instances, children had access to all of the available play materials, resulting in children aimlessly and busily moving on from one toy to another, without learning anything or the toy librarian offering any guidance during play.

The routine during the play-based early learning session varied from being overly structured to being unstructured. Overly structured routines inhibited children's exploration, resulting in children not freely choosing and moving around between the activities, which might impact their learning. However, in the more structured routines the toy librarian seemed to focus her attention on a "main activity" for the session and then aimed to ensure that all the children participated in that activity, where she was able to scaffold, demonstrate and have conversations with children as they played. On the other hand, in the unstructured play-based early learning sessions children explored and played freely. During my observation I noticed that some toy librarians did not successfully guide children's play due to lack of knowledge of and skills in guided play strategies; this did not enhance children's learning.

At one of the three sites the planning of play-based early learning sessions was linked to the NCF. There was no evidence that CAPS was used. At the other two sites offering play-based early learning sessions, activities were planned around the cognitive, social, emotional and physical developmental domains. At two of the sites the planning was not systematic and the learning goals to be achieved at the end of the play session were not clear. The assumption was that children would play and learn by simply because the play opportunity existed.

The toy librarian's interaction with the children is the distinguishing factor which determines whether a play-based early learning sessions results in learning. The sessions need to be playful, exhibiting the indicators associated with choice, wonder and curiosity. The toy librarian's ability to demonstrate, scaffold and participate in sustained shared thinking with children is a critical element which has the potential to link learning and play. Toy librarians become children's playmates. The observed

interactions showed some elements of demonstration and scaffolding, but no evidence of sustained shared thinking. Play-based early learning sessions are being provided, but the toy librarians' skill set to guide children's play and learning requires further strengthening. It is with this purpose in mind that the framework of standards for toy libraries is recommended.

### **7.3.3 Secondary research question 3:**

Why do South African toy libraries need a quality framework?

South African toy libraries need a quality framework to ensure that effective practice principles are embedded in the intervention. Since there is no validated quality instrument for toy libraries, I benchmarked and critically evaluated the FQSTL 2017 against existing literature and ECE quality frameworks. The FQSTL 2017 includes three key quality components: administration, environment and play-based early learning sessions. Including these three components ensures that the administrative processes support the environment, which in turn strengthens the play-based early learning sessions. The play-based learning indicators describe what is observable when play-based learning takes place. The framework articulates what interactions are required and how the programme and activities need to be structured. The role of the toy librarian during play time in terms of guiding children's play is outlined, making it possible for toy librarians to use the framework as a self-evaluation and reflection tool to improve their own practice, or for others to provide professional development support and coaching to toy librarians.

The quality framework further adds value to the role of toy libraries to implement play-based early learning sessions for young children in that it is a tool offering multiple uses. The framework can be used to monitor the implementation of the toy library and highlight areas for improvement. In addition, the framework may be used to scope the toy librarian's role, which is articulated in a job description. Furthermore, the framework guides the training and qualifications needed by a toy librarian. A framework of quality standards significantly contributes to informing toy librarians how to provide play-based early learning sessions.



Table 7.1 presents the FQSTL 2017 guidelines for what is to be considered and incorporated in the operations of a toy library to ensure quality play-based early learning sessions.

Table 7.1 The Framework of Quality Standards for Toy Libraries 2017

<b>Framework of Quality Standards for Toy Libraries</b>
<b>Section 1: Administration</b>
1.1 Recordkeeping
- Filing system to keep all records relating to the toy library
1.2 Human resources
- Qualifications of toy librarians
- Orientation and induction of new toy librarians
- In-service training of toy librarians
- Supervision of toy librarians
- Support of toy librarians
- Performance management of toy librarians
1.3 Financial management
- Toy library budget
- Accounting system to track income and expenditure
- Cash handling system
1.4 Marketing
- Logo, brand and identity
- Toy library association membership (proof, certificate)
- Website
- Social media presence
- Marketing campaigns and collateral (pamphlets, posters)
1.5 Technology
- Computers, printers
- Use of email
- Use technology to manage operations (play material lending, stocktaking)
<b>Section 2: Environment</b>
2.1 Operations
- Selection criteria for play materials to ensure they are culturally, developmentally and age-appropriate (include games and books)
- Categorisation of play materials
- Maintenance process of play materials (repairs and cleaning)
2.2 Space and furnishings
- Playful, inviting, safe, child-centred indoor space
- Playful, inviting, safe, child-centred outdoor space
- Child-sized furniture
- Health and safety compliance (first-aid box, first-aid training, evacuation plans)
2.3 Interactions (supervising children, discipline, staff-child & child-child interactions in terms of resolving conflict)
- Supervision of children
- Dealing with discipline guidelines
- Positive staff-child interaction
- Child-child social interaction

<b>Framework of Quality Standards for Toy Libraries</b>
- Conflict resolution between children
<b>2.4 Programme structure</b>
- Routine of play-based early learning sessions
<b>2.5 Activities</b>
- Physical development activities (gross and fine motor)
- Social development activities (sharing, turn taking)
- Emotional development activities (executive functioning, conflict resolution)
- Cognitive development activities linked to NCF and/or CAPS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Language activities (discussions, story reading, paging through books, phonemic awareness)</li> <li>o Mathematics activities (numbers, counting, measurement, graphs, shapes)</li> <li>o Science activities (exploration, experimentation)</li> </ul>
<b>Section 3: Play-based early learning sessions</b>
<b>3.1 Play time</b>
- Uninterrupted, prolonged, more than 30 minutes of free play
- Stages of play are noticed and nurtured: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Unoccupied play</li> <li>o Solitary play</li> <li>o Onlooker play</li> <li>o Cooperative play</li> </ul>
- Varieties of play: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Physical play (running, jumping, kicking)</li> <li>o Expressive play (drawing, art, singing)</li> <li>o Fantasy play (make believe)</li> <li>o Object play (playing with toys)</li> <li>o Digital play</li> </ul>
- Continuum of play-based learning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Free play opportunities</li> <li>o Inquiry play opportunities</li> <li>o Collaboratively designed play</li> <li>o Playful learning</li> <li>o Learning through games</li> </ul>
<b>3.2 Guided play (observe, join in, direct children’s play through):</b>
- Observation of children’s play to inform role of toy librarian
- Joining in play at appropriate time
- Guiding children’s play using a variety and combinations of strategies, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Questions</li> <li>o Offering suggestions</li> <li>o Sharing content knowledge linked to what children are playing</li> <li>o Scaffolding</li> <li>o Demonstrations</li> </ul>
<b>3.3 Play-based learning indicators</b>
- Evidence of “choice” play-based learning indicators: setting goals, purpose, challenges, negotiating, making and changing rules, having and sharing ideas, being spontaneous, choosing collaborators and roles, choosing how long to work/play, moving around
- Evidence of “wonder” play-based learning indicators: exploring, improvising, learning from mistakes, inventing, creating, imagining, pretending, expressing excitement, trying, taking risks with materials, ideas, languages, processes, perspectives, music, names, symbols, words, stories, movements

<b>Framework of Quality Standards for Toy Libraries</b>
- Evidence of “delight” playful learning indicators: smiling, laughing, competing, joking, being silly, singing, humming, focusing attention, achieving, succeeding, anticipating, celebrating, being altruistic
<b>3.4 Characteristics of play-based learning</b>
- Joyful
- Actively engaging
- Meaningful
- Iterative
- Socially interactive

The first section of FQSTL 2017 focuses on administrative aspects of the toy library and ensures that processes are in place for recordkeeping, which includes filing systems to manage membership and play materials, managing human resources in terms of the qualifications of staff, orientation and induction of new staff, in-service training, supervision, support and managing performance. The toy library’s financial management standard looks at budget planning and the implementation of key accounting practices such as handling of cash and how payments are made. Marketing the toy library includes belonging to a professional toy library association, having a website and a presence on social media platforms such as Facebook and campaigns to market the services being offered by the toy library, which can include word-of-mouth, door-to-door or printed pamphlets. The use of technology to manage the toy library operations is encouraged. Toy libraries need to have access the internet and to use computers for administrative tasks such as managing membership, inventory and the lending process.

Section two outlines the standards relating to the toy library environment. The operations of the toy library include how play materials are selected, categorised and maintained and includes the process of lending. The toy library space and furnishings should be designed for children and should include an indoor and outdoor space which is safe. The interactions between the adult and children focus on how children are supervised, discipline and how the staff member manages interactions between children, especially with regard to resolving conflict. The structure of the toy library programme in terms of the routine of the play session and the health and safety practices needs to be considered. The activities planned for the play-based early learning sessions need to link to the NCF and CAPS and must promote academic and 21<sup>st</sup> skills learning.

Section three of the FQSTL 2017 focuses on how play-based early learning sessions are designed and implemented. Playtime, stages of social play and the types of play need to be planned. The role of the toy librarian during the session is captured in the standard for guided play, where the toy librarian has to observe, join in, direct children's play, offer suggestions, share content, scaffold and demonstrate play activities. During the play-based learning session indicators that link to choice, wonder and delight should be observable; they indicate that play-based learning is likely to take place. Finally, the characteristics of play-based early learning sessions should be incorporated when planning the sessions. The main research question is answered below.

#### **7.3.4 Main research question:**

How do toy libraries provide play-based learning opportunities for young children?

Toy libraries provide play-based learning opportunities either by lending toys or through play-based early learning sessions that are either provided in the toy library space or provided by a mobile toy library. A variety of play materials and activities are included in the play-based learning sessions. Play materials linked to children's cognitive, social, emotional and physical development are included in the sessions, as confirmed by the findings (refer to 7.3.3). At sites three, five, six and seven, where children lend toys but do not have access to play-based early learning sessions, an assumption is made that children have some access to early learning opportunities because they can access the play materials. At sites one, two and four children have more opportunities to explore and discover during the session. The toy librarian's interaction with the children is characterised by demonstrating how to play with a toy or by asking questions when reading a story to the children. Occasionally, in smaller groups, the toy librarian was seen scaffolding children's play.

Toy libraries provide play-based learning opportunities for young children by making play materials and play opportunities available in play-based early learning sessions. Although this study contributes to the understanding of toy library programmes, a number of limitations of the study are highlighted in the subsequent section.

## **7.4 Limitations**

The case study design has inherent limitations. Findings cannot be generalised to the whole toy library population (although its intention is not to generalise, but rather to understand a complex phenomenon). In addition, the findings are not easily replicable by another researcher, even though the methodology is described in detail. Lastly, the researcher's bias in the selection of cases and in the recording and analysis of the data are additional limitations which I acknowledge and have attempted to manage (Mukherji & Albon, 2010:87).

A total of seven sites were selected for data production. However, after completing the first round of data production, I realised that I had collected data focused on the toy library operations, with some information relating to children's learning, and insufficient data relating to play-based early learning sessions. Sites three, five, six and seven only provide a lending service, resulting in their exclusion from the data production phase where the play-based early learning sessions were observed.

Another limitation was the variety of languages used by participants, and my only being proficient in English and Afrikaans. All the data had to be translated into English, adding an additional step to a process which was already burdened with severe financial and time constraints.

Although the observations guidelines helped me focus my observations of the play-based early learning sessions, I do wish I could have paused the actual events, record everything I was observing and then press play. Fortunately, the video recordings enabled me to do that; but as a researcher you have to constantly redirect your focus to that which requires to be observed and avoid the trap of becoming distracted while observing. Personally, I found the process of observation particularly rewarding and experienced immense personal growth, but it was quite challenging as well.

## **7.5 Recommendations**

With reference to the findings of my research, the following recommendations are made for toy librarians, policies and further research:

### **7.5.1 Recommendations for toy librarians**

This study recommends that toy librarians should be trained in the administration of a toy library and the implementation of quality play-based early learning sessions. Toy librarians' qualification and training should be based on the framework of quality standards for toy libraries. Their training should include modules on developmentally appropriate practice linked to early childhood education, focusing on the pedagogy of play-based learning.

### **7.5.2 Recommendations for policy makers**

The national norms and standards for non-centre-based programmes are contained in section 94(2) of the Children's Act, 2005 (No. 38 of 2005), referred to as the Act in this study, and elaborated upon in Part II: National Norms and Standards for Early Childhood Development Programmes. However, the norms and standards do not adequately set out standards for toy libraries and need to be reformulated to align them with the operational and play-based early learning characteristics of a toy library, which are different from those of an ECD centre in terms of programmes. In addition, the framework of quality standards for toy libraries (Table 7.1) should be incorporated in the policy, as it will contribute to improving the quality of toy libraries. Policy makers need to include recognised effective practice principles of early childhood education in the policy to ensure that toy library programming is based on evidence.

In addition, toy libraries should be taken to scale so that more children can access to quality toy library programmes is gained by the children needing it the most. Furthermore, toy libraries should adopt a theory of change by incorporating the framework of quality standards into their practice.

### **7.5.3 Recommendations for early childhood practitioners**

Toy librarianship needs to be acknowledged and promoted to young people as a career option within the early childhood development sector in South Africa, since not all early childhood practitioners work in early childhood centres. An accredited toy

librarian qualification should be offered by training institutions and organisations, and toy librarianship must become a profession recognised by the qualification authorities.

#### **7.5.4 Recommendations for further research**

This study hopes to stimulate further research in the toy library sector. Specific research is required to understand which indigenous play materials will enhance young children's learning and should be included in the toy library. Also, the FQSTL 2017 (Table 7.1) needs to be further refined through research to determine what the impact of the FQSTL 2017 is on the toy library operations and play-based early learning sessions. Research to determine the skills and knowledge required by toy librarians to implement play-based early learning sessions, as they relate to the curriculum and to guided play for young children in a variety of contexts, should be a primary research focus. Finally, the role of digital play opportunities within the toy library requires further research.

#### **7.6 Concluding remarks**

The role of toy libraries in the provision of play-based early learning opportunities for young children was explored in this study. How toy libraries provide play-based learning opportunities for young children is directly related to how the toy library is operated, the toy librarian's skill and the support available to him/her. In Table 7.2 I attempted to link the themes, research questions and both the quality framework and the conceptual framework of this study. The themes are linked to the questions about how toy libraries provide play-based learning opportunities for young children. Theme one provides the background with regard to how young children learn both academic and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. Theories linked to child development and learning provided the theoretical underpinning for the conceptual framework.

Theme two focused on the toy library operations. The question how toy libraries create opportunities for young children to access play-based learning activities is linked to this theme. The toy library administration, play materials, services and challenges being experienced emerged as subthemes. The conceptual framework identified toy

library operations as one of the concepts. FQSTL 2017 Section 1 focuses on administration, which includes not only recordkeeping but also looks at the human resources, financial management, marketing of the toy library and the use of technology for administrative purposes.

The question how South African toy libraries implement play-based learning, if any, was investigated and resulted in theme three, which focused on the nature of play-based early learning sessions, which was also a concept identified in the conceptual framework. In FQSTL 2017, the section on the environment (section 2 of the framework) summarises what is required in order for play-based early learning sessions to take place. The toy library operations, space and furnishings, interaction, programme structure and activity standards are included in the framework. Section three focuses on the play-based early learning sessions in terms of play time, guided play, playfulness indicators and the characteristics of play-based learning.

Table 7.2: Linking the themes, research questions and frameworks

<b>Themes and subthemes</b>  <i>(How do toy libraries provide play-based learning opportunities for young children?)</i>	<b>Framework of quality standards for toy libraries (FQSTL 2017)</b>  <i>(Why do South African toy libraries need a quality framework?)</i>	<b>Conceptual Framework (Figure 3.1)</b>
Theme 1: Young children and learning <i>(Theories relating to development and learning)</i> 1.1 Academic learning 1.2 Skills of the 21 <sup>st</sup> century	Link to NCF.	Theories: operational systems theories and child development and learning theories Young children and learning
Theme 2: Toy library operations <i>(How do toy libraries create opportunities for young children to access play-based learning activities?)</i> 2.1 Administration 2.2 Play materials 2.3 Services 2.4 Challenges	Section 1: Administration 1.1 Recordkeeping 1.2 Human resources 1.3 Financial management 1.4 Marketing 1.5 Technology	Toy library operations



<b>Themes and subthemes</b> <i>(How do toy libraries provide play-based learning opportunities for young children?)</i>	<b>Framework of quality standards for toy libraries (FQSTL 2017)</b> <i>(Why do South African toy libraries need a quality framework?)</i>	<b>Conceptual Framework (Figure 3.1)</b>
Theme 3: Play-based early learning sessions <i>(How do South African toy libraries implement play-based learning, if any?)</i> 3.1 Developmentally appropriate practice 3.2 Play-based learning pedagogy 3.3 Characteristics and indicators of play-based learning	Section 2: Environment 2.1 Operations 2.2 Space and furnishings 2.3 Interaction 2.4 Programme structure 2.5 Activities  Section 3: Play-based early learning sessions 3.1 Play time 3.2 Guided play 3.3 Playfulness indicators 3.4 Characteristics of play-based learning	Play-based early learning sessions

The framework of quality standards for toy libraries incorporates three critical toy library quality elements: administration, environment and play-based early learning sessions. The FQSTL 2017 was informed by my practical experience relating to toy libraries and validated by the conceptual framework, which was underpinned by both the operational systems theory and theories about how young children learn and develop. Through a lengthy process of creative innovation, critical thinking, analysis and reflection, the research findings were integrated into the FQSTL 2017. I diligently ensured that the silences and new insights were interwoven into the quality standards. The ultimate contribution of this study is a useful and comprehensive framework of quality standards for toy libraries. This framework will inform and influence the role of South African toy libraries in providing play-based early learning opportunities for young children.

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**Appendix A**  
**Toy Librarian**  
**Letter of Consent**

Name and address of organisation

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ (toy librarian's name)

My name is Monica Stach. I am currently busy with my doctoral degree in the Department of Early Childhood Education at the University of Pretoria. I am doing a study titled: *The role of toy libraries in the provision of play-based learning to young children*.

The toy library board has given permission for you, as the toy librarian working in the toy library, to participate in this research study. As the toy librarian, your participation is critical in order for me to conduct the research. I regard you as the most important source of information about the toy library. Your honest and truthful contribution will help to lay a foundation for toy library programmes in South Africa. You are invited to help me collect information (data) about the toy library by taking photographs of the work you do in the toy library with children younger than six. This method of collecting information or data is called "photovoice". In addition, I will be observing a play session at your toy library.

I hope this letter gives you enough information about what to expect as we embark on this journey. Should you need clarity about anything, please do not hesitate to contact me. I am more than willing to assist you with any queries.

Your participation in this research means that:

1. You need to be available for a total of 13 days between April 2016 and September 2016 to participate in this study.
2. The 13 days are allocated as follows: one day for a project meeting and photovoice training session, ten days to take photographs, one day to participate in a focus group session and play session observation, and another day to review transcripts and/or to clarify questions I might have. The project meeting of approximately three hours will include your manager and the stakeholders you wish to include. During this meeting you will be introduced to the focus group facilitator and the data capturer who will be assisting me. We will confirm convenient time frames and clarify the steps involved to conduct the research successfully.
3. The project meeting will be followed by a three-hour photovoice training session. This will help you understand the ethical considerations, the process of obtaining written consent from people and the parents/caregivers whose children will be photographed, the camera to be used (either the camera on your cellular phone or a camera supplied by me), the settings required to take quality photographs, what

kinds of photographs to take so that it gives us the information we need, to photograph children aged between birth to six years without showing their faces, downloading the photographs, selecting photographs and preparing yourself for the discussion of the photographs, which will take the form of a focus group session.

4. The photograph discussion will take place in a three-hour focus group session, on the date agreed upon at the project meeting. The session will focus on discussing your photographs, allowing for contributions from your manager and the critical stakeholders that are involved in your toy library. I will be co-facilitating the session with the focus group facilitator, who speaks your language fluently. We will be asking open-ended questions in order for us to get as much information as possible. The proceedings at the focus group session will be video and audio recorded and will be used exclusively to assist with the analyses of the data. The audio recordings will be transcribed by a data capturer after the focus group session.
5. The play session observation will be audio and video recorded.
6. The transcripts will be shared with you and the other participants to check for accuracy and to verify that they are correct before they are analysed.
7. The photographs are expected to become a powerful tool to educate others about toy libraries. Your consent is required in order for me to use the photographs to advance the cause of toy libraries, as well as to influence South African policies that relate to toy libraries. I will acknowledge the source of all photographs being used, and I will seek additional consent if it involves photographs of children.
8. You and/or your organisation may only use the photographs to promote your programme if you have obtained written consent from the parents/guardians.
9. It will not cost you anything to participate in this study, except your time.
10. In the unlikely event of physical injury whilst participating in research-related activities, you cannot claim compensation from the researcher or the institution supervising this research.

You are free to decide not to participate or to withdraw from the research study at any time without explanation or prejudice and to withdraw any processed or unprocessed data previously supplied.

The data will be kept confidential and safeguarded. The name of the organisation, toy library managers, toy librarians and critical stakeholders will only be known to me and my supervisors. I will use pseudonyms or code names in any publications arising from the research. After completion of the study you are welcome to obtain a copy of the research report from your manager.

If you agree to take part in this research, please fill in and sign the attached consent form. A copy of this consent form will be given to you to keep.

You are welcome to ask me any questions at any point during the data production process. If you have any questions relating to this study, please do not hesitate to contact my supervisor or me.

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Name of student: M. Stach

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Name of supervisor: Dr J.C. van Heerden

## Consent form: Toy Librarian

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (your name), from \_\_\_\_\_ (name of organisation) agree/do not agree (delete what is not applicable) to take part in the research project titled: *The role of toy libraries in the provision of play-based learning opportunities for young children*.

I understand that I will be participating in research on toy libraries. I am expected to take photographs of my work as a toy librarian and need to conduct a play session which will be observed. The photographs will be used to understand how play-based learning opportunities are provided to young children during play sessions.

I agree:

1. to be available for 13 days between April 2016 and September 2016 to participate in a project meeting, take photographs, participate in a focus group session and to review the written transcripts;
2. to attend a three-hour project meeting to meet the research team, determine time frames and to clarify steps involved in the research;
3. to attend a three-hour photovoice training session;
4. to use the camera on my cellular phone or a camera supplied by Monica Stach, to take the photographs using the camera settings as discussed and agreed upon during the photovoice training session;
5. to attend a three-hour focus group session, where I will discuss the photographs I have taken;
6. to the researcher doing an observation of a play session in action using video and audio recordings;
7. to check the written transcripts from the focus group session for accuracy;
8. that the photographs may be used by Monica Stach when doing presentations to educate or advocate about toy libraries;
9. that it will not cost me anything to participate in this study, except my time;
10. that I cannot claim compensation from the researcher or institution in the unlikely event of physical injury;
11. that I may withdraw from this research at any time without any explanation or prejudice and that I can withdraw any processed and unprocessed data that was provided;
12. I will not be put at risk of any kind or harmed as a result of participating in this study;
13. my anonymity as a participant will be protected at all times, and that the information I provide will be kept confidential;
14. that after the completion of the study, I can request a copy of the research report from my manager;
15. that I will not be party to any act of deception or betrayal in the research process or its published outcomes.

I declare that as a participant I am fully informed about the research process and purpose and therefore give my informed consent to participate in this research.

Signature of toy librarian: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of toy librarian: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact number of toy librarian: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address of toy librarian: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



**Appendix B**  
**Adult Being Photographed**  
**Letter of Consent**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ (person's being photographed name)

My name is Monica Stach. I am currently busy with my Doctoral degree at the Department of Early Childhood Education at the University of Pretoria. My study is titled: *The role of toy libraries in the provision of play-based learning opportunities for young children*. The following information is provided in order for you to have clarity with regards to how you will be involved in this study.

The research aims to understand how your young child is given opportunity for playful learning at the toy library. This letter provides you with the required information so that you are able to provide the toy librarian, who will be the photographer, with written consent to take photographs of you and/or your child, while you are involved in activities at the toy library.

The toy librarian, as the photographer, will not:

- take photographs of where you are clearly identifiable, where your whole face is showing, making it possible to identify you
- make the photographs available to any person other than me, the researcher. My supervisors will also have access to the photographs.

Monica Stach, the researcher will:

- not reveal your identity
- not use photographs where your face is visible in the research report or in subsequent sessions where the results of the research is shared either via conference presentations or written articles
- not provide you with any financial reward for the photographs
- not expect from you to have any costs associated with the taking of your photographs

You will not be able in the unlikely event of physical injury whilst the photographs are being taken, claim compensation from the researcher or the institution supervising this research.

As a participant you are free to decide that you will no longer participate and to withdraw from the research study at any time without explanation or prejudice and to withdraw any processed and unprocessed photographs of yourself, previously supplied.

Your photographs will be kept confidential and will be safeguarded. Your name, the organisation, toy library managers, toy librarians and critical stakeholders will only be known to me. I will use pseudonyms or code names in any publications arising from the research. The research results will be shared with the toy librarian and you may ask for a copy of the report.

In order for your photographs to be included in the research, you need to complete, sign and return the attached consent form to the toy librarian (the photographer), who will hand it to me. A copy of the signed form will be given to you for your records.

You are welcome to ask me any questions at any point during the data production process. If you have any questions relating to this study, please do not hesitate to contact my supervisor or me.

---

Name of student: M. Stach

---

Name of supervisor: Dr J.C. van Heerden

## Consent form: Adult being photographed

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (your name), agree/do not agree (delete what is not applicable) that photographs may be taken of me and that it may be used in the research project titled: *The role of toy libraries in the provision of play-based learning opportunities for young children*.

I understand that as a participant I agree:

1. that photographs of me participating in activities at the toy library may be taken
2. that the photographs will not make it possible to identify me
3. that the photographs may only be made available to the researcher and her supervisors for the sole purpose of this research project
4. that my identity may not be revealed and that a pseudonym will be used in reports
5. that photographs where my face is visible will not be included in the research report, in conference presentations or written articles
6. that I will not receive any financial reward for the photographs
7. that I will have no costs when photographs are taken of me
8. that I cannot claim compensation from the researcher or institution in the unlikely event of physical injury
9. that I am free to decide to no longer participate or to withdraw from the research study at any time without explanation or prejudice and to withdraw any unprocessed photographs of myself which was previously supplied
10. that my photographs will be kept confidential and will be safeguarded
11. that my name will not be identified
12. that after the completion of the research I can get the research report from the toy librarian
13. that I will not be placed at risk of any kind or harmed as a result of participating in this study.

I declare that as a participant I am fully informed about the research process and purpose and therefore give my informed consent to participate in this research.

Signature of participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact number of participant: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address of participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C

### Parent/Guardian of Young Child Being Photographed

#### Letter of Consent

Name and address of organisation

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ (parent/guardian's name), parent/guardian of \_\_\_\_\_ (name of child who is younger than six years who is allowed to be photographed).

My name is Monica Stach. I am currently busy with my Doctoral degree at the Department of Early Childhood Education at the University of Pretoria. I am doing a study titled: *The role of toy libraries in the provision of play-based learning opportunities for young children*. The following information is provided in order for you to have clarity with regards to how the photographs, taken of your child at the toy library, will be used in this research study.

The toy library provides a service to you and your child/children. For the purpose of this study, the focus is on children younger than six years. The research aims to understand how your young child is given an opportunity for playful learning at the toy library. This letter provides you with the required information so that you are able to provide the toy librarian, who will be the photographer, with written consent to take photographs of your child, who is six years and younger.

The toy librarian, as the photographer, will not:

- take photographs of your child where they are clearly identifiable, showing the whole face, making it possible to identify your child, or
- make the photographs available to any person, except to me and my supervisors.

Monica Stach, the researcher, will:

- not reveal the identity of your child;
- not use photographs where your child's face is visible in the research report or in subsequent sessions where the results of the research are shared either via conference presentations or written articles;
- not provide you with any financial reward for the photographs;
- not expect you to incur any costs associated with your photograph being taken.

You will not be able, in the unlikely event of physical injury whilst the photographs are being taken, to claim compensation from the researcher or the institution supervising this research.

As the parent/guardian of the young child whose photographs will be used, and who is considered to be a participant, you are free to withdraw your child from the research

study at any time without explanation or prejudice and to withdraw any processed and unprocessed photographs of your child.

The photographs of your child will be kept confidential and will be safeguarded. The name of your child, the organisation, toy library managers, toy librarians and critical stakeholders will only be known to me and my supervisors. I will use pseudonyms or code names in any publications arising from the research. The research results will be shared with the toy librarian and you may ask her for a copy of the research report after the completion of the research.

In order for photographs of your young child to be included in this research, you need to complete, sign and return the attached consent form to the toy librarian (the photographer), who will hand it to me. A copy of the signed form will be given to you for your records.

You are welcome to ask me any questions at any point during the data production process. If you have any questions relating to this study, please do not hesitate to contact my supervisor or me.

---

Name of student: M. Stach

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Name of supervisor: Dr J.C. van Heerden

## Consent form: Parent/Guardian of Young Child Being Photographed

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (your name), from \_\_\_\_\_ (name of organisation) agree/do not agree (delete what is not applicable) that photographs may be taken of my child \_\_\_\_\_ and that it may be used in the research project titled: *The role of toy libraries in the provision of play-based learning opportunities for young children*. I understand that my child is a participant, and I agree:

1. that photographs of my child, who is younger than six years, may be taken whilst my child is participating in activities at the toy library
2. that photographs of my child may only be made available to the researcher and her supervisors for the sole purpose of this research project
3. that the identity of my child may not be revealed and that a pseudonym will be used in reports
4. that photographs where my child's face is visible will not be included in the research report, in conference presentations or written articles
5. that I will not receive any financial reward for the photographs
6. that I will have no costs associated with the taking of the photographs
7. that I cannot claim compensation from the researcher or institution in the unlikely event of physical injury
8. that I am free to decide that my child will no longer participate and to withdraw my child from the research study at any time without explanation or prejudice and to withdraw any processed and unprocessed photographs containing my child
9. that the photographs of my child will be kept confidential and will be safeguarded
10. that after the completion of the research I can get the research report from the toy librarian
11. that my child will not be placed at risk or harm of any kind as a result of participating in this study.

I declare that as the parent/guardian of my child, who is a participant, I am fully informed about the research process and purpose and therefore give my informed consent for my child to participate in this research.

Signature of parent/guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of parent/guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of child: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact number of parent/guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address of parent/guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix D**  
**Manager**  
**Letter of Consent**

Name and Address of organisation

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ (name of person managing the toy librarian)

My name is Monica Stach. I am currently busy with my Doctoral degree at the Department of Early Childhood Education at the University of Pretoria. My study is titled: *The role of toy libraries in the provision of play-based learning opportunities for young children*. The following information is provided to clarify the process of the research study.

The toy library board has approved the participation of the toy library in the abovementioned research and has availed your toy library as a research site. This research is critical in terms of promoting the importance of toy libraries in early childhood education and care programmes. I regard you as a very important participant in this research. The information in this letter aims to provide you with adequate information so as to ensure that you are able to sign the consent form having been adequately informed. This letter outlines what is required from you as the manager, and participants in this research project.

Your participation in this research means:

1. As the manager, you and the toy librarian need to be available for a total of 13 days between April 2016 and September 2016, to participate in this study. The 13 days are allocated as follows: one day for a project meeting and photovoice training session, ten days which allows for you to provide me with the organisational documents that relates to the operations of the toy library and includes the time I might require to seek clarification, it does not imply that I will be on site for ten days, one day to participate in the focus group session and one day to review transcripts and/or to clarify questions I or you might have.
2. You need to make available all toy library related documentation that explains the functioning/operations of the toy library. Kindly save a copy of the documents onto the flash drive which I will provide. This includes written documents such as policies, websites, minutes of meetings, annual reports, training manuals, job descriptions, code of conduct, pamphlets, operations manuals, as well as any other documentation which might be requested during the research. You are also requested to share any audio materials such as videos, radio interviews etc.

3. The project meeting of approximately three hours will include yourself, as the manager, the toy librarian and the critical stakeholders you have identified and wish to include. During this meeting your team will be introduced to the focus group facilitator and the transcriber. We will confirm convenient time frames and clarify the steps involved to successfully conduct the research.
4. Following on from the project meeting is a three hour photovoice training session aimed to equip the toy librarian with the information required to take the photographs. It will be appreciated and is advisable for you, as the manager to attend the session in order to support the process at your toy library. The training session will equip the team with an understanding of the ethical considerations, the process of obtaining written consent from people being photographed, the camera to be used, the settings required to take quality photographs, what photographs should be taken to give us the information we need, downloading the photographs, selecting photographs and preparing for the photograph discussion.
5. The photograph discussion will be done in a three-hour focus group session, on the date agreed upon at the project meeting. The session will focus on discussing the photographs taken by the toy librarian. You and the critical stakeholders will be able to provide additional information, as well as add on to what the toy librarian provides in relation to the photographs. I will be co-facilitating the session with the focus group facilitator, who is fluent in your language, using open-ended questions. The proceedings at the focus group session will be video and audio recorded and will exclusively be used to assist with the analyses of the data. The audio recordings will be transcribed by a transcriber after the focus group session.
6. The transcripts will be shared with you, the toy librarian and the critical stakeholders to check for accuracy and to verify that it is correct before it is analysed.
7. The photographs become a powerful tool to educate others about toy libraries, as well as to advocate on behalf of toy librarians on issues relating to their programme. Your consent is required in order for me to use the photographs to advance the cause of toy libraries, as well as to influence South African policies that relate to toy libraries. I will acknowledge the source of all photographs being used, and I will seek additional consent if it involves photographs of children.
8. The toy library will have no financial cost to participate in this study.
9. In the unlikely event of physical injury whilst participating in research related activities, you cannot claim compensation from the researcher or the institution supervising this research.

As a participant, you are free to decide not to participate or to withdraw from the research study at any time without explanation or prejudice and to withdraw any processed and unprocessed data previously supplied.

The data will be kept confidential and safeguarded. Your name and the name the toy library, toy librarians and critical stakeholders will only be known to me and my supervisors. I will use pseudonyms or code names in any publications arising from the



research. The research report can be requested from me after the completion of the research study.

In order for the toy library to be involved in the research, you need to complete, sign and return the attached consent form to me via e-mail (monicastach@gmail.com). A copy of the signed form will be given to the board for your records.

You are welcome to ask me any questions at any point during the data production process. Should you have any questions relating to this study, please do not hesitate to contact my supervisor or me.

---

Name of student: M. Stach

---

Name of supervisor: Dr J.C. van Heerden

**Consent form: Manager**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (your name), agree/do not agree (delete what is not applicable) to take part in the research project titled: *The role of toy libraries in the provision of play-based learning opportunities for young children.*

I understand that as a participant I agree:

1. to be available for 13 days between April 2016 and September 2016 to participate in a project meeting, take photographs, participate in a focus group discussion and to review the written transcripts
2. to attend a three-hour project meeting to meet the research team, determine timeframes and to clarify steps involved in the research
3. to attend a three hour photovoice training session
4. to make available all toy library related documentation, in soft copy, that explains the functioning of the toy library. This includes written documents, as well as any audio materials such as videos, radio interviews etc., in soft copy, on a flash drive provided by the researcher. The documentation required includes policies, websites, minutes of meetings, annual reports, training manuals, job descriptions, code of conduct, as well as any other documentation requested during the research
5. to avail myself for the taking of photographs if requested by the toy librarian
6. to attend a three-hour focus group session to contribute to the photograph discussion
7. to check the written transcripts for accuracy, from the focus group sessions for accuracy
8. that the photographs may be used by Monica Stach when doing presentations to educate or advocate for toy libraries
9. that I will incur no costs
10. that I cannot claim compensation from the researcher or institution in the unlikely event of physical injury
11. I understand that I may withdraw from this research at any time without any explanation or prejudice and that I can withdraw any processed and unprocessed data that was provided
12. I will not be placed at risk or harm of any kind as a result of participating in this study
13. my anonymity as a participant will be protected at all times, and that the information I provide will be kept confidential.
14. I will not be respondent to any acts of deception or betrayal in the research process or its published outcomes.

I declare that as a participant I am fully informed about the research process and purpose and therefore give my informed consent to participate in this research.

Signature of participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact number of participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix E**  
**Critical Stakeholder**  
**Letter of Consent**

Name and address of organisation

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ (stakeholder name)

My name is Monica Stach. I am currently busy with my Doctoral degree at the Department of Early Childhood Education at the University of Pretoria. I am doing a study titled: *The role of toy libraries in the provision of play-based learning opportunities for young children*. The following information is provided to clarify the process of the research study.

You are critical in the success of this research and I regard you as a very important participant in this research. You have been identified by the management and toy librarian as being a critical stakeholder with regards to the toy library programme. The information in this letter is to give you enough information so that you are informed of what to expect as we embark on this journey.

Your participation in this research means:

1. You need to avail yourself for a total of four days between April 2016 and September 2016, to participate in this study. The four days are allocated as follows: one day for a project meeting, one day for taking of photographs by the toy librarian, one day to participate in focus group session and one day to review transcripts and/or to clarify questions I might have.
2. The project meeting of approximately three hours will include yourself, the manager and the toy librarian. During this meeting your team will be introduced to the focus group facilitator and the transcriber.
3. We will confirm convenient time frames and clarify the steps involved to successfully conduct the research.
4. That you avail yourself for one day/8 hours to enable the toy librarian to take photographs of the activities you are generally involved in at the toy library.
5. Once the toy librarian has concluded with taking the photographs, the photograph discussion will be done in a three-hour focus group session, on the date agreed upon at the project meeting. The session will focus on discussing the photographs taken by the toy librarian. You and the manager will be able to provide additional information, as well as add on to the information shared by the toy librarian. I will be co-facilitating the session with the focus group facilitator, who is fluent in your language, and who will be using open-ended questions to guide the conversation. The proceedings at the focus group session will be video and audio recorded and will exclusively be used to assist with the analyses of the data. The audio recordings will be transcribed by a transcriber after the focus group session.

6. The transcripts will be shared with you, the toy librarian and the manager to check for accuracy and to verify that it is correct before it is analysed.
7. The photographs become a powerful tool to educate others about toy libraries, as well as to advocate on behalf of toy librarians on issues relating to their programme. Your consent is required in order for me to use the photographs to advance the cause of toy libraries, as well as to influence South African policies that relate to toy libraries. I will acknowledge the source of all photographs being used, and I will seek additional consent if it involves photographs of children.
8. You will have no cost to participate in this study.
9. In the unlikely event of physical injury whilst participating in research related activities, you cannot claim compensation from the researcher or the institution supervising this research.

As a participant, you are free to decide not to participate or to withdraw from the research study at any time without explanation or prejudice and to withdraw any processed and unprocessed data previously supplied.

The data will be kept confidential and safeguarded. The name of the organisation, toy library managers, toy librarians and critical stakeholders will only be known to me and my supervisors. I will use pseudonyms or code names in any publications arising from the research. You can request the research report from management after the completion of the research.

In order for you to be involved in the research, you need to complete, sign and return the attached consent form to me. A copy of the signed form will be given to you for your records.

You are welcome to ask me any questions at any point during the data production process. If you have any questions relating to this study, please do not hesitate to contact my supervisor or me.

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Name of student: M. Stach

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Name of supervisor: Dr J.C. van Heerden

## Consent form: Critical Stakeholder

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (your name), from \_\_\_\_\_ (name of organisation) agree/do not agree (delete what is not applicable) to take part in the research project titled: *The role of toy libraries in the provision of play-based learning opportunities for young children*. I understand that as a participant I agree:

1. to be available for four days between April 2016 and September 2016 to participate in a project meeting, have photographs taken, participate in a focus group session and to review the written transcripts
2. to attend a three-hour project meeting to meet the research team, determine time frames and to clarify steps involved in the research
3. to attend a three-hour focus group session to discuss the photographs
4. to check the written transcripts from the focus group session for accuracy
5. that the photographs may be used by Monica Stach when doing presentations to educate or advocate for toy libraries
6. that I will have no costs
7. that I cannot claim compensation from the researcher or institution in the unlikely event of physical injury
8. that I may withdraw from this research at any time without any explanation or prejudice and that I can withdraw any processed and unprocessed data that was provided
9. I will not be placed at risk of any kind or harmed as a result of participating in this study
10. my anonymity as a participant will be protected at all times, and that the information I provide will be kept confidential, and
11. I will not be party to any act of deception or betrayal in the research process or its published outcomes.

I declare that as a participant I am fully informed about the research process and purpose and therefore give my informed consent to participate in this research.

Signature of participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact number of participant: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address of participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix F

### Management Board

#### Invitation and Expression of Interest Letter

Dear Chairperson

My name is Monica Stach. I wish to extend an invitation to your organisation to become involved in research on toy libraries. I am undertaking a research study as a Doctoral student at the Department of Early Childhood Education at the University of Pretoria. The study aims to investigate *the role of toy libraries in the provision of play-based learning opportunities for young children*. The criteria for your organisation to participate in this study is:

- a. The toy library has to serve children younger than six years through come-and-play or mobile toy library play sessions.
- b. The toy library's location, in terms of the province where it is located, as well as whether it is delivering services in a rural, urban or peri-urban setting.
- c. The toy library has to provide playful learning opportunities using educational toys.

The table below indicates who is required to be involved in which activities during the course of the research. The purpose is to enable the management board to determine who should be involved in the research, as well as how much time is required. The management board is required to identify the critical stakeholders that is to be invited to the focus group session.

Organisation's Required Involvement in the Toy Library Research						
Participant	No. of days	Activity				
		Project Meeting (3 hours)	Photovoice training (3 hours)	Documentation (10 days)	Focus group session (1 day)	Verifying transcript (1 day)
Manager	13	x	x	x	x	x
Toy Librarian	13	x	x	x	x	x
Critical Stakeholders	4	x		x	x	x

The purpose of the project meeting is to plan the project and to schedule suitable time frames, as well as to explain the activities that the organisation will be participating in. It is envisaged that the data production process will take place between April 2016 and September 2016.

Your organisation will be free to decide not to participate or to withdraw from the research study at any time without explanation or prejudice and to withdraw any processed and unprocessed data previously supplied. The information in the data will be kept confidential and safeguarded. The name of the organisation, the toy library, toy library managers, toy librarians and critical stakeholders will only be known to me and my supervisors. I will use pseudonyms or code names in any publications arising from the research.

If your organisation is willing to take part in this research, please express your interest by filling in and signing the attached expression of interest form and returning it to me by e-mail ([monicastach@gmail.com](mailto:monicastach@gmail.com)). If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact my supervisor or me.

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Name of student: M. Stach

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Name of supervisor: Dr J.C. van Heerden

### Expression of Interest: Management Board

Our organisation \_\_\_\_\_ (name of organisation), is interested/not interested (delete what is not applicable) in working alongside Monica Stach, availing/not availing our toy library in order for her to conduct her research titled: *The role of toy libraries in the provision of play-based learning opportunities for young children*. Our organisation complies with the following selection criteria (please tick relevant block):

	The toy library serves children younger than six years through come-and-play or mobile toy library play sessions.
	The toy library provides playful learning opportunities.

Kindly provide the following information (circle the option you select):

- The toy library is located in Gauteng, Kwa-Zulu Natal, Mpumalanga, Western Cape, Northern Cape, Eastern Cape, Free State, Limpopo and North West.
- The toy library is in a rural/urban setting.
- The management board has provided/has not provided written permission to the management team to participate in this study.

Kindly attach the minutes/resolution confirming that approval has been granted by the board to participate in the research study. The organisation gives the researcher, Monica Stach, permission to contact the director to set up a project meeting to plan the research project.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chairperson's name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chairperson's signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



**Appendix G**  
**Focus Group**  
**Schedule of Questions**

The following questions will be used to start the photo discussion in the focus group. The photo discussions will be done in a focus group session. The focus group is intended to be open-ended, allowing probing and seeking clarification during the discussions. The questions are intended to start the discussion, or can be used if the discussion requires to be sustained, strengthened or extended:

1. Tell me about the photographs you have selected.
2. Why did you select these photographs?
3. Which photographs did you not select, and why?
4. What happened before you took this photo, what happened after you took this photo?
5. Which photo is your favourite photo, and why?
6. Categorise your photographs into that which showcase the operations in the toy library, that which showcase playful learning and that which show critical stakeholder engagement. Ask the opinion of the other participants
7. What are you proud of in terms of the toy library operations?
8. What do you think can be improved in the operations of the toy library?
9. What are you proud of in terms of how you create playful learning opportunities?
10. What do you think can be improved when providing playful learning opportunities?
11. Explain what children learned using one of your photographs.
12. What guides the planning you do for the playful learning sessions?

## Appendix H

### Focus Group Facilitator

#### Letter of Appointment and Acceptance

Name and Surname

Address

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ (name of focus group facilitator)

I am delighted to inform you that your application for the position of focus group facilitator has been successful. Your ability to speak a number of languages will enable me to understand the focus group discussions. Your appointment is for the period April 2016 to November 2016. You will be remunerated the sum of R125 per working day of eight hours, some of which days may be on weekends. You will be assisting me with research to find out about *the role of toy libraries in the provision of play-based learning opportunities for young children*.

In the research team your role is to:

- understand the research question and assist me to obtain information from participants that will help me answer the research question;
- facilitate focus group sessions at the research sites on the dates agreed upon by the organisation and the research team;
- ensure that all the focus group sessions are conducted in the same manner;
- use the proposed questions to initiate the photograph discussions, as well as generating open-ended questions during the focus group sessions that will elicit the required information;
- attend three days of training, provided by me, which will be scheduled three weeks before the research starting date, and demonstrate that you have understood the content of the training in the context of the research;
- attend the project meeting and photovoice training sessions at the research sites;
- act as a translator during meetings with organisations;
- translate information being provided by the participants in the focus group sessions into English so that the transcriber is able to record all the information in English;
- assist the transcriber to capture all the information in English by providing verbal translations of the video and audio data into English;
- uphold the ethical requirements of the University of Pretoria as outlined during the training, and

- subscribe to the principles of:
  - *voluntary participation* in research, implying that the participants may withdraw from the research at any time;
  - *informed consent*, meaning that research participants must at all times be fully informed about the research process and purposes and must give consent to their participation in the research;
  - *safety in participation*, which means that the participants should not be placed at risk of any kind or harmed during the research;
  - *privacy*, meaning that the *confidentiality* and *anonymity* of participants should be protected at all times, and
  - *trust*, which implies that participants will not be subjected to any act of deception or betrayal in the research process or its published outcomes.

You are an integral part of this research project and your assistance during this research is invaluable. You are required to sign the acceptance letter and to return it to me. I will provide you with a copy of this letter for your records. If you have any questions relating to this study, please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor.

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Name of student: M. Stach

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Name of supervisor: Dr J.C. van Heerden

## Acceptance Letter from Focus Group Facilitator

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (your name), agree/do not agree (delete what is not applicable) to take part in the research project titled: *The role of toy libraries in the provision of play-based learning opportunities for young children.*

I accept and agree that my role in the research team is:

- that of the focus group facilitator for the period April 2016 to November 2016
- to understand the research question and to obtain information from participants that will help answer the research question
- to facilitate focus group sessions at the research sites on the dates agreed upon by the organisation and the research team
- to ensure that all the focus group sessions are conducted in the same manner
- to utilise the proposed questions for the photograph discussion, as well as generating open-ended questions during the focus group sessions that will elicit the required information
- to attend three days training, provided by Monica Stach which will be scheduled three weeks before the research start date, which will equip me to be able to demonstrate that I have understood the content of the training
- to attend the project meeting and photovoice training sessions at the research sites
- to act as a translator during meetings with organisations if it is required
- to translate information being provided by the participants in the focus group sessions into English so that the transcriber is able to record all the information in English
- to assist the transcriber to capture all the information in English, by providing verbal translations of the video and audio data into English
- to uphold the ethical requirements of the University of Pretoria as outlined during the training
- to subscribe to the principles of voluntary participation, informed consent, safety in participation, privacy/confidentiality/anonymity, and trust.

I understand that I will be trained and that I am to strictly adhere to the requirements as stipulated in the training. I accept the offer to be the focus group facilitator in this research project.

Signature of focus group facilitator: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of focus group facilitator: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact number of focus group facilitator: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix I

### Transcriber

#### Letter of Appointment and Acceptance

Name and Surname

Address

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ (name of transcriber)

I am delighted to inform you that your application for the position of transcriber has been successful. You have been appointed as a transcriber for the period April 2016 to November 2016. You are required to use your own computer and you are welcome to access internet in my office. You will be assisting me to do research to find out about *the role of toy libraries in the provision of play-based learning opportunities for young children*. In the research team your role is to:

- attend the focus group sessions at the research sites on the dates agreed upon by the organisation and the research team;
- set up the audio and video recording instruments (provided by the researcher) at the focus group sessions and ensure that the sound and visuals are audible and clear;
- have a backup plan should the audio/video recording instruments malfunction;
- ensure that you clearly label each audio recording in accordance with the labelling system provided to you by me;
- collect the photographs that were used during the focus group discussion, clearly labelling the photographs using the labelling system provided to you by me;
- scan the photographs and label the photographs as per the labelling system provided to you by me, saving it on Google drive in the photograph folder;
- start transcribing into English, on the day following the focus group sessions, the audio recordings of the focus group sessions by typing up what has been said word for word. Nothing may be added or omitted. The transcripts are to be typed into the template that will be provided to you by me. The photograph is to be inserted into the space provided in the template. The transcripts are to be labelled using the labelling system provided to you by the researcher;
- use the video recordings to fill in additional notes with regard to body language etc. in the transcripts;
- return the photographs, as well as the audio and video clips to me when I collect it from you which will be 8 days after the focus group discussion;
- upload a password-protected soft copy of the transcripts to the Google drive folder and to keep a backup copy;
- e-mail a password protected soft copy of the transcripts to me within 8 days of the focus group session;

- request assistance from the focus group facilitator to translate focus group discussions into English;
- attend three days of training, provided by Monica Stach, which will be scheduled three weeks before the research start date, and to demonstrate that you have understood the content of the training;
- attend the project meeting and transcription verification day at the research site;
- amend the transcripts if required;
- uphold the ethical requirements of the University of Pretoria as outlined during the training;
- subscribe to the principles of:
  - *voluntary participation* in research, implying that the participants may withdraw from the research at any time;
  - *informed consent*, meaning that research participants must at all times be fully informed about the research process and purposes and must consent to participate in the research;
  - *safety in participation*, meaning that the participants should not be placed at risk of any kind or harmed during the research;
  - *privacy*, meaning that the *confidentiality* and *anonymity* of participants should be protected at all times;
  - *trust*, which implies that participants will not be subjected to any act of deception or betrayal in the research process or its published outcomes.

You are an integral part of this research project and your assistance during this research is invaluable. You are required to sign the acceptance letter and to return it to me. I will provide you with a copy of this letter for your records.

You are welcome to ask me any questions at any point during the data production process.

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Name of student: M. Stach

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Name of supervisor: Dr J.C. van Heerden

## Acceptance Letter from Transcriber

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (your name), agree/do not agree (delete what is not applicable) to take part in the research project titled: *The role of toy libraries in the provision of play-based learning opportunities for young children.*

I accept and agree that my role in the research team is to:

- attend the focus group sessions at the research sites on the dates agreed upon by the organisation and the research team
- set up the audio and video recording instruments (provided by the researcher) at the focus group sessions and ensure that the sound and visuals are audible and clear
- have a backup plan should the audio/video recording instruments malfunction
- ensure that you clearly label each audio and video recording as per the labelling system provided to you by me
- collect the photographs that were used during the focus group discussion, clearly labelling the photographs using the labelling system provided to you by me
- scan the photographs and label it in accordance with the labelling system provided to you by me, saving it on Google drive in the photograph folder
- the day following the focus group sessions, start transcribing, in English, the audio recordings of the focus group sessions by typing up what has been said word-for-word. Nothing may be added or omitted. The transcripts are to be typed into the template that will be provided to you by the researcher. The photograph is to be inserted into the space provided in the template
- label the written transcripts in line with the labelling system provided to you by me
- to use the video recordings to fill in additional notes with regards to body language etc. in the transcripts
- to return the photographs, as well as the audio and video clips within 8 days of the focus group discussion. I will fetch the documentation from you.
- upload a password protected soft copy of the transcripts into the Google drive folder and to keep a backup copy
- e-mail a password protected soft copy of the transcripts to me within 8 days of the focus group discussion
- to request assistance from the focus group facilitator to translate the focus group discussions into English
- attend three days of training, provided by Monica Stach, which will be scheduled three weeks before the research start date, and to demonstrate that I have understood the content of the training
- attend the project meeting and transcription verification day at the research site
- amend the transcripts if required
- uphold the ethical requirements of the University of Pretoria as outlined during the training, and

- to subscribe to the principles of voluntary participation, informed consent, safety in participation, privacy/confidentiality/anonymity, and trust.

I understand that I will be trained and that I am to strictly adhere to the requirements as stipulated in the training. I accept the offer to be the transcriber in this research project.

Signature of transcriber: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of transcriber: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact number of transcriber: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



**Children's Assent Letter**

Dear Parent/Guardian and toy librarian,

Your child is a rights bearer and has a voice, regardless of his/her age. As a researcher, I respect your child's right to decide whether he/she wants photographs taken of him- or herself, whilst playing at the toy library.

In order to get your child's permission (assent) please do the following steps:

1. Give your child the attached "Assent from the Child" page and something to colour with such as a colouring pencil or wax crayon.
2. Ask your child to write their name in the rectangle. Your child may only be able to draw their name using squiggles and circles, or your child might be able to write their name, which might be spelt incorrectly or have letters missing. IT DOES NOT MATTER. Whatever your child writes or draws in the space is okay.
3. Ask your child if the toy librarian may take photographs of them whilst they are playing. If your child says yes, ask him/her to colour in the happy face. If your child says no, ask your child to colour in the sad face.
4. You need to write the child's name on the line provided. Your child's identity will not be revealed. It is simply a control measure which will help the toy librarian to remember which children may or may not be photographed.

You and your child is an integral part of this study and I thank you for participating in this step of obtaining assent from your child. Please complete the details as requested on the assent form and return it to me. I will provide you with a copy of this letter for your records. If you have any questions relating to this study, please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisors.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of student: M. Stach

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of supervisor: Dr J.C. van Heerden

**Assent from a child younger than  
six years**

Child writes name



Name of child: \_\_\_\_\_ Name of organisation: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of parent/guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of parent/guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact number of parent/guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix K**  
**Case study protocol**

1. Purpose and rationale for case study is clearly outlined
2. Design based on the unit of analysis and research purpose and questions.
3. Data production and management techniques which include field methods, transcribed notes and interviews, as well as member checking process
4. Focus the analysis on themes linked to the conceptual framework
5. Analyse findings based on purpose, rationale, research questions, as well as on cross-case comparison
6. Establishing rigor by describing the trustworthiness aspect of the study

## Department of Education Consent to do Research

For administrative use only:  
Reference no: D2017 / 138  
enquiries: Diane Bunting 011 843 6503



GAUTENG PROVINCE  
EDUCATION  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

## GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	24 June 2016
Validity of Research Approval:	24 June 2016 to 30 September 2016
Name of Researcher:	Stach M.
Address of Researcher:	7 Sapele Street; Elspark; 1428
Telephone / Fax Number/s:	0713557862
Email address:	monicas@cotlands.org
Research Topic:	The role of toy libraries in the provision of play-based learning opportunities to young children
Number and type of schools:	ONE LSEN School
District/s/HO	Ekurhuleni North

**Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research**

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

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

**CONDITIONS FOR CONDUCTING RESEARCH IN GDE**

1. The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s concerned, the Principal/s and the chairperson/s of the School Governing Body (SGB,) must be presented with a copy of this letter.
2. The Researcher will make every effort to obtain the goodwill and co-operation of the GDE District officials, principals, SGBs, teachers, parents and learners involved. Participation is voluntary and additional remuneration will not be paid;
3. Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school programme is not interrupted. The Principal and/or Director must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher/s may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.

*Handwritten signature and date:*  
2016/06/27

1

Making education a societal priority

4. Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded by the end of the THIRD quarter of the academic year. If incomplete, an amended Research Approval letter may be requested to conduct research in the following year.
5. Items 6 and 7 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education.
6. It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written consent from the SGB/s; principal/s, educator/s, parents and learners, as applicable, before commencing with research.
7. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilizing his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institution/s, staff and/or the office/s visited for supplying such resources.
8. The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research title, report or summary.
9. On completion of the study the researcher must supply the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management, with electronic copies of the Research Report, Thesis, Dissertation as well as a Research Summary (on the GDE Summary template). Failure to submit your Research Report, Thesis, Dissertation and Research Summary on completion of your studies / project – a month after graduation or project completion - may result in permission being withheld from you and your Supervisor in future.
10. The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of his/her research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned.
11. Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Director/s and school/s concerned must also be supplied with a brief summary of the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research study.

The Gauteng Department of Education wishes you well in this important undertaking and looks forward to examining the findings of your research study.

Kind regards

*Makhado*  
.....

Dr David Makhado

Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management

DATE: *2016/06/27*  
.....

**Appendix M****List of countries hosting international Toy Library conferences**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Host Country</b>	<b>Continent</b>	<b>Number of conference</b>
<b>1978</b>	United Kingdom	Europe	1st International Toy Library Conference
<b>1981</b>	Sweden	Europe	2nd International Toy Library Conference
<b>1984</b>	Belgium	Europe	3rd International Toy Library Conference
<b>1987</b>	Canada	North America	4th International Toy Library Conference
<b>1990</b>	Italy	Europe	5th International Toy Library Conference
<b>1993</b>	Australia	Oceania	6th International Toy Library Conference
<b>1996</b>	Switzerland	Europe	7th International Toy Library Conference
<b>1999</b>	Japan	Asia	8th International Toy Library Conference
<b>2002</b>	Portugal	Europe	9th International Toy Library Conference
<b>2005</b>	South Africa	Africa	10th International Toy Library Conference
<b>2008</b>	France	Europe	11th International Toy Library Conference
<b>2011</b>	Brazil	South America	12th International Toy Library Conference
<b>2014</b>	South Korea	Asia	13th International Toy Library Conference
<b>2017</b>	Netherlands	Europe	14th International Toy Library Conference

**National Norms and Standards for Early Childhood Development Programmes**

118 No. 33076

GOVERNMENT GAZETTE, 1 APRIL 2010

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**PART II****NATIONAL NORMS AND STANDARD FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD  
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES**

For the purpose of section 94(2) of the Act, the following are national norms and standards for early childhood development programmes:

**1. The provision of appropriate developmental opportunities**

Programmes must –

- (a) be delivered by members of staff who have the knowledge and training to deliver developmental programmes;
- (b) be appropriate to the developmental stages of children;
- (c) respect and nurture the culture, spirit, dignity, individuality, language and development of each child;
- (d) provide opportunities for children to explore their world; and
- (e) be organised in a way that each day offers variety and creative activities.

**2. Programmes aimed at helping children to realise their full potential**

- (a) Children must receive care, support and security.
- (b) Programmes must promote children's rights to rest, leisure and play through the provision of a stimulating environment.
- (c) Programmes must promote self-discovery.
- (d) Programmes must be evaluated and monitored.
- (e) Programmes must promote and support the development of motor, communication and sensory abilities in children.

- (f) Programmes must promote self-control, independence and developmentally appropriate responsibility.
- (g) Activities must promote free communication and interaction amongst children.
- (h) Programmes must respect and nurture the culture, spirit, dignity, individuality, language and development of each child.

**3. Caring for children in a constructive manner and providing support and security**

- (a) Creative play and exploratory learning opportunities must be provided to children.
- (b) Programmes must adhere to the following conditions:
  - (i) toilet facilities must be safe and clean for children;
  - (ii) where there are no sewerage facilities, sufficiently covered potties must be available;
  - (iii) every child under the age of three years must have his or her own potty;
  - (iv) for ages three to six years, one toilet and one hand washing basin must be provided for every twenty children;
  - (v) there must be a place for the bathing of children;
  - (vi) discipline must be effected in a humane way and promote integrity with due regard to the child's developmental stage and evolving capacities. Children may not be punished physically by hitting, smacking, slapping, kicking or pinching;
  - (vii) programmes must adhere to policies, procedures and guidelines related to health, safety and nutrition practices. These must relate to –
    - (aa) practices aimed at preventing the spread of contagious diseases;
    - (bb) at least one meal per day must be provided;
    - (cc) all meals and snacks should meet the nutritional requirements of children; and
    - (dd) where children are bottle-fed, a suitable facility must exist for cleaning the bottles; and
    - (ee) children must be supervised by an adult at all times.
- (c) Programmes must meet the following requirements in relation to staff:
  - (i) staff must be trained in implementing early childhood development programmes;



- (ii) staff must be equipped with basic information, knowledge and skills to recognise children's serious illnesses and how to deal with those;
- (iii) staff must be trained in first aid;
- (iv) the staff-to-child ratio must –
  - (aa) for children between the ages one month and 18 months be 1:6;
  - (bb) for children between the ages 18 months and three years be 1:12;
  - (cc) for children between the ages three and four years be 1:20; and
  - (dd) for children between the ages five and six years, 1:30; and
- (v) for every staff member stipulated above, there must be an assistant.

#### **4. Ensuring development of positive social behaviour**

- (a) Programmes must promote understanding of and respect for diversity in gender, language, religion and culture.
- (b) Activities must include parents and care-givers in the development of positive social behaviour in children.
- (c) Programmes must promote the development of positive social values.
- (d) Programmes must be conducted in a non-discriminatory manner.
- (e) Staff must demonstrate behaviour that promotes positive behaviour by modelling attitudes and interactions with children.

#### **5. Respect for and nurturing of the culture, spirit, dignity, individuality, language and development of each child**

- (a) Programmes must promote appreciation and understanding for children's culture and language.
- (b) Educators must utilize one medium of instruction in class.
- (c) Children must be allowed to communicate in the language of their choice and preference outside class.
- (d) Cultural diversity must be encouraged and respected by educators and children alike.
- (e) Programmes may, where appropriate, facilitate late birth registration.
- (f) Programmes must contribute to the development of a sense of identity in children.

- 
- 6. Meeting the emotional, cognitive, sensory, spiritual, moral, physical, social and communication development needs of children**
- (a) Programmes must be appropriate to the developmental stages and evolving capacity of children.
  - (b) Programmes must ensure that parents and care-givers are involved in the development of children.
  - (c) Programmes must provide education and support to parents, caregiver and families to fulfil their responsibilities towards child-rearing and the holistic development of their children.
  - (d) Programmes must be accessible to especially vulnerable children in their homes.
  - (e) For children up to three years of age, programmes should, as much as possible, include household visits for increased accessibility to children.
  - (f) Programmes must promote cognitive development in children.
  - (g) Programmes must promote the development of fine sensory and motor skills in children.
  - (h) Activities must promote a positive relationship between the centre, families and the community.
  - (i) Programmes must teach age appropriate self-control and independent behaviour.
  - (j) Existing community resources and strengths must be utilised in promoting the development of children.
  - (k) The emotional needs of children must be addressed and children must be encouraged to express their emotions in a safe, supportive and protective environment.
  - (l) Parents, care-givers and families of vulnerable children, children with disabilities and child-headed households must be provided with information, knowledge and skills to promote the development of their children.
  - (m) Children must be enabled to develop a positive sense of identity and self-worth.
  - (n) Programmes must be based on an integrated approach.
  - (o) Children should feel valued and respected when participating in activities.

Data Analysis Appendices  
 Observation checklist template  
 Appendix 1

Indicators	Site 1	Site 2	Site 4	Comments
Did the children have enough time for uninterrupted and prolonged play?				
Is the toy library physically safe?				
Is the toy library emotionally safe?				
Did the toy librarian observe play activities to determine children's need and preference?				
Did children play with a variety of culturally appropriate play materials?				
Did the toy librarian join in the children's play?				
Did the children play indoors and outdoors?				
Do the toy librarian ask questions, offer suggestions or share content knowledge linked to children play?				
Does the toy librarian sometimes direct children's play?				
Did you observe any of the "choice" playfulness indicators?				
Did you observe any of the "wonder" playfulness indicators?				
Did you observe any of the "delight" playfulness indicators?				
Which of the stages of social play were observed?				
Which types of play were observed?				
Which 21 <sup>st</sup> century skills were observed?				

Appendix 2

Analysis of observation checklist





② Play session observations notes **Site 1**  
 [redacted] <sup>high</sup> engagement by teachers.

- Structured - stations
- planning sheet
- 100-120 - multiage groups
- girl - blue board - pink dress - object play
- eating, stringing

③ Same children rotated.

- free play approx. 45 min - small group managed to help.
- children help to pack up.
- dog table - named - girl with paper table leopard print.

- each station is demonstrated

Observed - solitary play  
 - parallel play  
 - 1st children who had hands  
 - re mother's day

④ - very adult-led  
 - children less explorative - quieter  
 - waits for instructions

**Site 2**  
 21/5/17  
 [redacted] DK - level 4 qualitative

Context  
 23 directos - 15th week - play & learn session - average between 150-210 children per month - 40 child per session - mixed ages called for health evaluation  
 TL visit record - completed by teacher.  
 Register - name / sex / gender  
 Room set up: blocks, wheel toys - rakes, spades, ball pit, tunnel, skateboards, logo blocks, kitchen, train board, dolls  
 an hour of free play - object with toy up - adults lead - takes less than 10 min  
 - music - London Bridge - clap rhythm - spreadsheets - head, knees, shoulders - join in.  
 - transition - line up in train  
 - no larger level toys - only play & learn.

Observation Notes **Site 3**  
 [redacted]  
 Time: 09:45 - 11:45  
 Date: 18 April 2017  
 Attendees: 10 parents 28 children

Background  
 A sunny, breezy, crisp Autumn morning.  
 TL → started as cook @ ~~age~~ ECD Centre - Level 4 ECD Prac. training - 2014 - Mobile Toy Librarian - 17 sites - ranging from 1/2 hours drive - for home visitors → play groups → bring children to play - Set up play session in ~~community members~~ garden.

# Selected topics according to SPICE - emotional.  
 do some programme with 17 sites - children @ school are advanced in <sup>social</sup> <sup>physical</sup> <sup>intellectual</sup> <sup>creative</sup> <sup>research done in this regard</sup>

- No meals
- Rain impacts attendance
- School holidays more children
- On arrival - children greeted warmly -
- Assistant

Date	Entry
23/05/16	Super excited today. Doing training with Prayers and Beauty so they know what to do with regards to their role during the focus group discussion. Prayers has arranged all the project meetings and is collecting the signed forms from the managers. She is also copying the attendance registers. Such a great help! Beauty suggested changes to the questions.
25/05/16	First project meeting. Used printed PowerPoint slides to guide conversation and to explain the project. Was helpful to start at site we know, because we then realised where the gaps were. Note to self: also do first focus group at toy library I know. So mistakes can be fixed before the next ones. Documentation available – whole policy file, outlining every aspect of the operations.
31/05/16	Project meeting at site 2. I hoped to get copies of documentation but we had to take photos of all the documentation. Large, spacious toy library. Use to focus on HIV but moving into home visiting and ECD. Met the toy librarian who has attended TLASA training.
06/06/16	Travelled to Free State in the very early hours. Were late for meeting because we got lost, but started as soon as we arrived. Explained the project. Participants asked for cell phones to take photographs. Documentation was not available. Will be emailed next week. Toy librarian take toys to local clinic where play sessions are done. ECD centres don't borrow toys, but come and play at site.
Date	Entry
03/05/17	Site 2: Observation of play session I arrive and all is set up and ready. The children are fetched by taxi to attend the toy library. As children arrive they immediately start playing. In between the practitioner that accompanied the children calls the children for health assessments conducted by a nurse and community caregiver. Gosh, the children play, and so does the toy librarian. How will this room ever get tidied up. I was so impressed with how the toy librarian announces that they are about to pack up, a few moments later she packs up and the children start sorting the toys, knowing where it should be going. I wondered whether this will get anywhere, but have to admit, in less than 10 min. all the toys were back where on shelves, in boxes and all of the balls from the ball pit back in the pit. What wonderful life skill learning through the packing up? The children are so blessed to have this play opportunity.

## Appendix 5

### Example of transcribed focus group discussion

4: [PHOTO 9] So in this photo it shows that the job of the toy library or even the mobile vehicle that every toy that has been used needs to be cleaned to remove germs because it happens where children play with toys and put the toys in their mouths, so that is why it is important to wash the toys.

5: [PHOTO 4] I just chose this picture because it shows the context which we work in, which is very remote and rural. As you can see it's in the field, the mobile has been pulled up, the mats have been set up and we've got 15 children all involved in play and the picture has captured their joy, and you can see that they are so engrossed in playing that they not even turning around to look at the person taking the photograph.



And in the photo, there is variety of play going on, so I can see block play, fantasy play and I can see playing with construction toy.

BM: So do they rotate?

5: Yes, the children move from mat to mat and also half way through the morning, toys that are on the mat are changed. The toy librarian could probably tell us more but the toys are changed; so say now they've just had fantasy play and construction then she would put books and games. So by the end of the morning, they played with all the areas that they would want to cover.

BM: So now that we have mentioned rotation. I would like to ask you; do you have a lesson plan that you use?

4: Yes, I do have a lesson plan that I use so that when the children come they learn the things that they should be learning. I also find that they love fantasy play but it is also important to change the toys so that they don't stay in one place, so my responsibility is to come and change the toys and make sure that they rotate. I see that they always want to play with the same toys sometimes it's difficult to make sure that they change the type of toys that they are playing, because you will see they not really engrossed in puzzles. But rather blocks and fantasy play so I have to make sure that I take them away and try to attract them to toys such as puzzles.

## Appendix 6

### Example of how transcriptions of site 4 was numbered

S4P4;3;21	4: [PHOTO 9] So in this photo it shows that the job of the Toy Library or even the Mobile Vehicle that every toy that has been used needs to be cleaned and remove germs because it happens where children play with toys and put the toys in their mouths, so that is why it is important to wash they toys.
S4P5;3;22	5: [PHOTO 4] I just chose this picture because it shows the context which we work in, which is very remote and rural. As you can see it's in the field, the mobile has been pulled up, the mats have been set up and we've got 15 children all involved in play and the picture has captured their joy, and you can see that they are so engrossed in playing that they not even turning around to look at the person taking the photograph. And in the photo, there is variety of play going on, so I can see block play, fantasy play and I can see playing with construction toy.

S4F;3;23	BM: So do they rotate?
S4P5;3;24	5: No, the children move from mat to mat and also half way through the morning, toys that are on the mat are changed. The toy librarian could probably tell us more but the toys are changed; so say now they've just had fantasy play and construction then she would put books and games. So by the end of the morning, they played with all the areas that they would want to cover.
S4F;3;25	BM: So now that we have mentioned rotation, I would like to ask you, do you have a lesson plan that you use?
S4P4;3;26	4: Yes, I do have a lesson plan that I use so that when the children come they learn the things that they should have learned or should be learning. I also find that they love fantasy play but it is also important to change the toys so that they don't stay in one place, so my responsibility is to come and change the toys and make sure that they rotate. I see that they always want to play with the same toys sometimes it's difficult to make sure that they change the type of toys that they are playing, because you will see they not really engrossed in puzzles. But rather blocks and fantasy play so I have to make sure that I take them away and try to attract them to toys such as puzzles.






## Example of colour coding responses into categories

## Colour Coding Category Keys:

Toys/games/play materials; ignore; activity; learning; stakeholders; new/unique; operations; access; challenge; play based learning; planning; NB – theory link; qualifications

S4P3;3;16	3: [PHOTO 13] I Have photo thirteen and here they are painting and the learn to copy and this helps the child to concentrate and not be distracted and pay attention to detail as what they need to paint is in front of them. It also helps them to know how to hold a brush, and that is a skill so that when the child arrives at school that skill he will have during school.
S4F;3;17	BM: So who did the template which the children have to copy off from?
S4P3;3;18	3: The assistant.
S4F;3;19	BM: So I assume the child does it on their own paper, and do they take it home once the paint has dried up?
S4P3;3;20	3: Yes they take it home and the assistants or even the caregiver of that child does a file so that these painting can be stored there. And when the year ends, the parent will see the child's work and how the child has progressed in some way or another.
S4P4;3;21	4: [PHOTO 9] So in this photo it shows that the job of the Toy Library or even the Mobile Vehicle that every toy that has been used needs to be cleaned and remove germs because it happens where children play with toys and put the toys in their mouths, so that is why it is important to wash they toys.
S4P5;3;22	5: [PHOTO 4] I just chose this picture because it shows the context which we work in, which is very remote and rural. As you can see it's in the field, the mobile has been pulled up, the mats have been set up and we've got 15 children all involved in play and the picture has captured their joy, and you can see that they are so engrossed in playing that they not even turning around to look at the person taking the photograph. And in the photo, there is variety of play going on, so I can see block play, fantasy play and I can see playing with construction toy.
S4F;3;23	BM: So do they rotate?
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S4F;3;25	BM: So now that we have mentioned rotation, I would like to ask you, do you have a lesson plan that you use
S4P4;3;26	4: Yes, I do have a lesson plan that I use so that when the children come they learn the things that they should have learned or should be learning. I also find that they love fantasy play but it is also important to change the toys so that they don't stay in one place, so my responsibility is to come and change the toys and make sure that they rotate. I see that they always want to play with the same toys sometimes it's difficult to make sure that they change the type of toys that they are playing, because you will see they not really engrossed in puzzles. But rather blocks and fantasy play so I have to make sure that I take them away and try to attract them to toys such as puzzles.

Appendix 8  
Sorting responses into categories

Category 1 Toys/games/play materials	Category 2 Learning	Category 3 Stakeholders	Category 4 New/unique concept	Category 5 Operations	Category 6 Access
					<b>A</b>
S7P1;2;2 [PHOTO 13] There's a little girl in this photo and she's playing with stacking rings	take care of it better than your own stuff (S6P3;2;10)	S7P3;3;22the parents and caregivers always come back and give me feedback on how the children are doing on that specific toy	S7P2;7;101 Brazil; S7P3;7;102 for the Toy Library Conference	S7P3;3;22 borrowing these toys by taking them home	S7P1;3;23 a four-year-old might be playing with a rattle and that is not developmentally appropriate for them. And we show parents all these games and they will say Oh no I didn't know that my child had to play with this kind of toy, I think they get so much joy in learning what they toy can actually do and what the children can learn from these kind of different toys.

Category 1 Toys/games/play materials	Category 2 Learning	Category 3 Stakeholders	Category 4 New/unique concept	Category 5 Operations	Category 6 Access
S7P1;2;2[PHOTO 12]: The boy is playing with a form puzzle or board and it looks like it's a form puzzle with different shapes, with shapes of different colours and sizes.	balance (S1P7;11;193)	S7P2;4;31 caregivers from the crèche	S7P3;3;26 patients that come for therapy	S7P1;3;23 refer the patients to the toy library; show parents all these games; the parents don't know what to do either so we have to educate them, this is how old your child is, this is what they supposing to be doing and these are the toys that can help them to get to those places.	S7P2;4;31 we have participated in the community radio station where we had to speak about development and informing parents about developmental issues

Category 1 Toys/games/play materials	Category 2 Learning	Category 3 Stakeholders	Category 4 New/unique concept	Category 5 Operations	Category 6 Access
S7P1;2;7 [PHOTO 15] she will use a telephone when you talk to her and say hello and try to press the numbers to get some sort of stimulation going to help her.	discipline (S2P5;2;7)	S7P1;6;79 few fathers		S7P1;3;27 We do run a Down syndrome support group, so there are moms that do attend the toy library and there is a guy who does come here who's from the Down Syndrome Association and gives a support group for the moms. So it's not specifically in terms of the toys but it's more of a support group, which has the children coming to the support group are still coming to the toy library.	S7P3;5;60 normally get a lot of children that is still struggling and you will only see after a few months because a lot of these kids are different, in terms of their diagnoses and it depends on the level they at. So it does take a lot of time for them to engage and to get them stimulated

Category 7 Challenges	Category 8 Play Based Learning	Category 9 Planning	Category 10 theory link	Category 11 Qualifications
<b>!</b>	<b>PBL</b>	✓	NB	<b>Q</b>
S7P2;3;20 parents don't have money to buy the toys and to find that some of the kids have never used any of these things	S7P2;3;20 I think it's important to show the child this is what you do so that they can copy you as well.		S7P3;2;18 It is to look and see what the child is able to do and what is expected of the child at that age, because you will find that they aren't able to do what they expected to do at their age, so we also look at how we develop their skills as well. THEORY LINK	



<b>Category 7 Challenges</b>	<b>Category 8 Play Based Learning</b>	<b>Category 9 Planning</b>	<b>Category 10 theory link</b>	<b>Category 11 Qualifications</b>
<p>S7P2;3;24 kids to look after the toys and these toys can come back scratched, filthy or whatever.</p>	<p>S7P1;5;65 Sometimes if a child isn't coping with a specific game and they take it home, number 1 would (correct me if I'm wrong) but she would see what the child can do and if the child can't, she will downgrade it, making it easier for the child so at least they can get success out of it. So instead of giving them a ten-piece puzzle, she might give them a four or five, to see that they are still getting success and it's not completely overwhelming for the child.</p>		<p>S7P1;3;19 (Theory Link: concept of scaffolding) So obviously what number 3 was saying is that you want to see what they can do and also if they aren't able to do it then you need to see if they can either understand that concept and if it's too hard for them you can maybe choose simpler activities. So that they can gain some sense as you don't want it to be overly challenging for them. So the ultimate goal is to get them to learn and help them with school or that kind of thing.</p>	

Category 7 Challenges	Category 8 Play Based Learning	Category 9 Planning	Category 10 theory link	Category 11 Qualifications
S7P3;5;71 get more toys	S7P1;5;74 I often felt that children who are very unstimulated they tend to not have a good understanding on how to interact with the environment, they tend to be quite clumsy and disorganised. We often tell moms that their children need a sensory, rich environment. So they don't need toys at the beginning stages but things like playing with mud, sand and water play and having cream and form and messy play and lots of rough and tumble play, swing, taking them to parks. Because what happens is that they come in and they scared of everything and they don't know how to interact with the environment, they don't know how to play with anything as they've never been exposed so the mom who doesn't have a lot of resources at home, there are things that she can do with the children to make them developmentally appropriate and knowing how to interact with the environment.		S7P1;5;65 (scaffolding) So instead of giving them a ten-piece puzzle, she might give them a four or five, to see that they are still getting success and it's not completely overwhelming for the child.	