

**Factors in the workplace environment that influence the transfer of learning in Early
Childhood Development Learnership Programmes in the Western Cape**

WILMA DE VILLIERS

Student Number:

3179954

Supervisor: Ms Rahmat Omar

**A research paper in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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A. KEY WORDS:

Transfer of Learning

Guided Participation

Qualitative Research

Socio-cultural Approach

Early Childhood Development

Early Childhood Development Practitioner

Early Childhood Development Site

Learnership

Principal

Workplace Environment



B. ABSTRACT:

The literature identifies the importance of teaching for transfer as one of the most important goals in education. According to Broad and Newstrom (1992) transfer is the “effective and continuing application of the knowledge and skills gained in training. The end goal of training is not achieved unless transfer occurs” (p.15).

The literature identified various factors that have an influence on the transfer of learning, but this study focused on factors in the workplace environment. The roles of principals (managers) and peers in reinforcing and supporting what practitioners have learned in the college classroom is seen as one of the main factors influencing transfer of learning (J. Kirkpatrick and W. Kirkpatrick, 2010, p.7).

The study explored HRD perspectives in the literature which provided useful information on factors in the workplace environment which support the application of learning. The literature on adult learning and training in the workplace provided insights on learning as a social process – concepts such as guided participation and communities of practice linked directly to my research question on the role of principals and peers in supporting learning transfer in the ECD workplace.

The study adopted a mixed methods approach. Interviews, observation and the analysis of documents and assessors’ reports were used to gather data. Numerical data was used to analyse the data. The research findings revealed that transfer is a complex concept and principal and peer support was found to be an important factor in the transfer of learning. Social interaction through practice was evident at all the sites, mainly between peers but also between practitioners and principals. At one site it was found that the leadership role of the principal had a more

positive effect on transfer of learning at this site. The research provides important information for future researchers to focus specifically from the perspective of a training provider on the transfer of learning to the ECD workplace.



. C. GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS AND DESCRIPTIONS

Early Childhood Development (ECD)	A term that is applied to the processes by which “children from birth to at least 9 years grow and thrive, physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, morally and socially” (ECD Draft Policy, 2013, p.4).
ECD Practitioner	“All ECD education and training development practitioners (qualified, partially qualified or unqualified) who are involved in provision in educational service in ECD” (ECD Draft Policy, 2013, p.4).
ECD Site	A site “where a service is offered to promote ECD development and is provided by a person, other than a child’s parent on a regular basis to children up to school going age” (ECD Draft Policy, 2013, p. 5).
ETDP SETA	Education, Training and Development Practices Sector Education and Training Authority
Further Education & Training (FET)	Further Education and Training courses are vocational or occupational by nature meaning that the student receives education and training with a view towards a specific range of jobs or employment possibilities (www.fetcolleges.co.za)
Qualified Practitioner	A practitioner who has successfully completed an ECD qualification.
South African Qualification’s Authority (SAQA)	An official body appointed by the Minister of Education and the Minister of Labour to oversee the development of the National Qualification Framework (NQF) in South Africa. (http://www.saqa.org.za/show.asp?id=2697).
Student-Practitioner	A term used in this study to refer to a practitioner who is currently participating as a student in an ECD learnership-programme.

D. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Above all my thanks go to God who made all of this possible and provided me with the necessary wisdom and the perseverance to complete this thesis.

E. DECLARATION

I declare that this research is my own unaided work that is being submitted in partial fulfillment of the *Intercontinental Masters Programme in Adult Learning and Global Change*. It has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other institution and all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

NAME: Wilma de Villiers

DATE: 2 March 2015

SIGNED AT: Panorama, Parow.

SIGNATURE:



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CHAPTER 1: Introduction and Background to the Research

1.1 Introduction

This research paper focuses on the topic, *Factors in the workplace environment that influence the transfer of learning in Early Childhood Development (ECD) Learnership Programmes in the Western Cape*. The purpose was to determine the influences of the ECD work environment on the transfer of learning from the Further Education and Training (FET) College classroom to the ECD workplace. The research question is, *What are the influences of the ECD work environment on the transfer of learning from the FET College classroom to the ECD workplace?* The main focus is on the role of principals (managers) and peers at ECD sites regarding the transfer of learning.

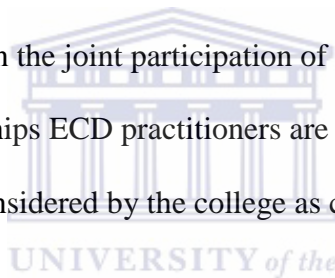
1.2 Rationale and Background to the Study

Before the current ECD policy was published there was a long history of neglect and an absence of a coherent government policy for ECD (Department of Education, 2008, p.8). The Children's Act No.38 of 2005 (Republic of S.A, 2005) and the National Integrated Plan for ECD (2005) prescribed that government should support the roll-out of ECD services on a large scale. The ECD policy supports the strategy that practitioners should develop professionally and obtain qualifications (DoE, 2008, p.2). According to a national audit of ECD provision, undertaken by the Department of Education (DoE) in 2001, most ECD practitioners (20,730) received their training from NGOs. The audit revealed that the vast majority of ECD practitioners were unqualified (58%) or untrained (23%) (Pillay, 2010).

One part of a comprehensive plan for reversing the historical neglect and addressing the human resource development needs in ECD is implementing ECD learnerships. The Skills Development Act No.97 of 1998 introduced learnerships, a structured learning process for gaining theoretical

knowledge and practical skills in the workplace leading to a qualification registered on the National Qualification's Framework. Learnerships challenge established teaching methods and approaches in terms of differences in teaching methodologies (Karlsson and Berger, 2006, p.54). ECD practitioners enter the programme with years of ECD experience, but not necessarily with any formal qualification or training. The majority of ECD practitioners have not studied for many years and now have to adapt to a formal learning environment, which may prove to be challenging. The programme needs to be flexible and designed to take the needs of ECD practitioners into consideration, i.e. contact classes taking place one day per week as opposed to the four days per week for full-time students.

Learnership programmes depend on the joint participation of the practitioner, employer and the training provider. In ECD learnerships ECD practitioners are employed at ECD sites and the needs of the workplace must be considered by the college as conditions differ from site to site.



Further Education and Training (FET) Colleges play an important role in training and learnerships in the ECD field. The Western Cape Education Department (WCED) signed Memoranda of Agreement and Understanding (MoA) with colleges in the Western Cape to train under-skilled and under-qualified practitioners at ECD sites. A contract must be signed between the training provider and the ECD student-practitioner, in accordance with the MoA. The Department of Social Development (DSD) prescribes the criteria for the selection of ECD practitioners. Training providers need to take into consideration the DSD's regulations and the Children's Act regarding ECD sites and the care of children when facilitating the training. The study focused on the Level 4 FET National Certificate: ECD. Work-based experience together with structured learning (theory and practice), were combined in the mode of delivery over 18

months. A challenge is to ensure that the learning attained through classroom-based learning at the college is translated into application in the working environment, the ECD sites.

A nationwide audit in 2001 highlighted a number of areas which require further research, including quality teaching and learning programmes and investigating the factors which affect programmes (Williams and Samuels, 2001, p.167). The research paper will be a small contribution to these two areas and open the door for further investigation. The research is especially relevant, because early childhood is recognised as a “sensitive period for survival, growth and psychosocial development” (Biersteker and Kvalsvig, 2007, p.161 in Dawes, et al.).

1.3 Structure of the Research Paper

This chapter provides a rationale, contextual background and an overview of the study. Chapter 2 details a literature review that draws on both national and international literature on the transfer of learning from the classroom to the workplace. Chapter 3 focuses on the research design and methodology as well as ethical considerations and limitations of the study. Chapter 4 presents data gathered through analysis of the curriculum and assessors’ reports and interviews and observation at the sites. Chapter 5 presents key research finding and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of relevant literature on learning transfer with particular reference to the transfer of classroom-based learning to the ECD site of practice. My study focused on factors in the workplace, particularly the roles of principals and peers at the ECD sites and how they could act as social resources for supporting transfer of learning to the workplace. It also explored opportunities afforded to apply what has been learnt.

Much of the literature on learning transfer is written within a human capital or human resource development (HRD) perspective. Traditionally the adult education literature has been critical of HRD perspectives because “of their alliance to human capital theory and possible exploitive organisational interests that undermine human development” (Fenwick, 2004, p.194). Some criticisms are that there is a lack of focus on social justice in the workplace or social issues such as race and gender. However Fenwick (2004) argues that HRD literature should not be dismissed because of these critiques. She suggests that this literature could provide insights relevant to educators whose work focuses on adult learning in the workplace and could inform our understanding of adult learning (pp.194-203). I therefore explored the HRD literature which provided useful information on factors in the workplace which support the application of learning. However, it gave limited insight into the learning issues that are relevant to my study.

This led to a focus on literature regarding adult learning and training in the workplace, guided in particular by studies by Billet (1998 and 2002) and Lave and Wenger (1991). Their focus on learning as a social process characterised by guided participation and communities of practice, links directly to my research question on the role of principals and peers in supporting learning transfer in the ECD workplace.

2.2 Importance of the Transfer of Learning

Training is one of the most important ways to obtain knowledge and skills and the transfer of training will contribute to as well as enhance the return on investment in training (Abozed, Melaine and Sace, 2009, p.9). Failure to utilise the knowledge and skills acquired through training can be seen as a poor return on investment (Lwanga, 2009, p.12).

Saks and Belcort (2001) indicate that there is a steady decline in the use of new skills over a period of time (p.645). Similarly Leimbach (2010) estimated that about 35% of skills are still in use twelve months after the training event (p.88). Transfer of learning is complex and many factors impact the effectiveness thereof. Organisations need to address these factors but they first need to find out where the breakdown in the transfer of learning lies (Abozed, Melaine and Sace, 2009, p.10).

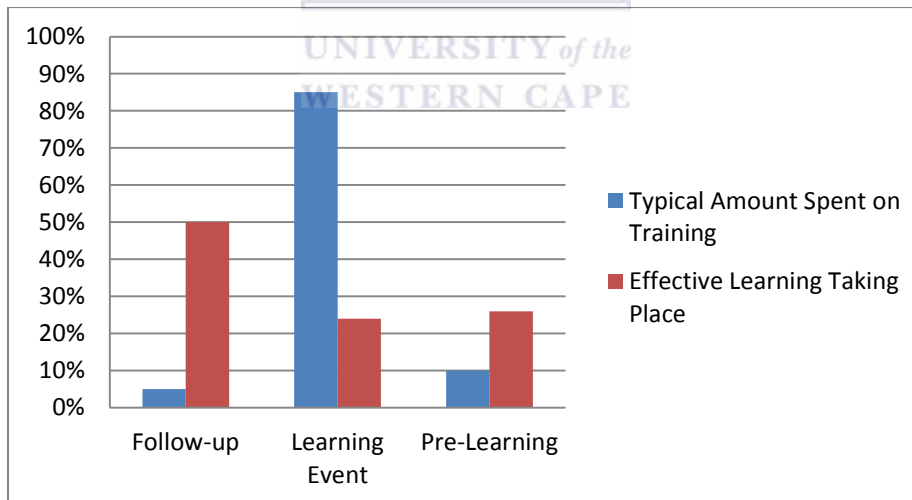
The results of research conducted by J. Kirkpatrick and W. Kirkpatrick (2010) challenge many assumptions concerning the value that structured training programmes add to adult learners' overall learning experience and to the transfer of learning into workplace performance.

According to Subedi (2004) transfer of learning should be the most important, if not only, criterion for the effectiveness of a programme (p.592). Similarly Everett (2009) suggests that one can only say that learning has only taken place successfully when the person can positively display that learning later in the workplace (p.2). According to Lovell (2010) training is only the beginning of the process that leads to benefits for the company. The second step is that students must use what they had learnt to increase their skills to lead to greater productivity. Lovell's third step is that increased productivity will lead to economic growth benefits (2010, p.1). These views illustrate a human capital perspective which suggests that employees' skills and

productivity can be improved by investing in their development and that high quality education is essential to contributing to economic growth (Fenwick, 2002).

As illustrated in the diagram below, the research found that 26% of learning occurred before training and 10% of the total cost is invested before the training event takes place. During the training event only 24% of learning occurred, but the largest amount of money, 85% of the cost is invested in this event. Fifty percent of learning occurs after training, which includes the application of knowledge and skills. Only 5% of the financial cost is spent on this area where most learning takes place. Participants are deemed competent when they leave the classroom, but it was found that 70% of “training failure” was caused by what is called the “application environment” (J. Kirkpatrick and W. Kirkpatrick, 2010, pp.7-8).

Table 1: Learning Investment



Based on original graphs compiled after research done by the University of Phoenix (J. Kirkpatrick and W. Kirkpatrick, 2010, pp.7-10).

The next section therefore examines literature on factors in the application environment that influence the transfer of learning.

2.3 Factors that Influence the Transfer of Learning

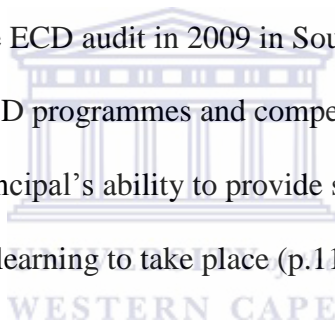
A review of the literature showed that a number of factors influence the transfer of learning.

Holton's (2005) transfer of learning model suggests that three crucial factors affect the transfer of learning: motivation to transfer, transfer design and transfer climate. The questions are firstly what motivates people to change their behaviour and implement what they have learnt, secondly what learning and teaching strategies or training design contribute to people's ability to transfer learning and thirdly what kind of environment supports people and is conducive to the application of learning in the workplace. J. Kirkpatrick and W. Kirkpatrick (2010) argue that there is a significant positive relationship between the workplace transfer climate and transfer readiness. The supportive transfer climate includes the supervisor's willingness and ability to identify opportunities where the use of trained knowledge and skills can be applied.

A culture where learning is valued will encourage staff to strive for high performance through the application of learning (Bates and Khasawneh, 2005, p.58). Clarke (2002) listed examples of factors in the workplace climate which influence the transfer of learning; namely workload, feedback and support and available resources and space (cited in Kirwan 2009, p.71). Lwanga (2009) identified manager and peer support and availability of resources in the workplace as important factors that influence the transfer of learning (p.23). Lovell (2010) showed a clear correlation between the manager's support, performance improvement and the transfer of learning to the workplace (p.3). Irrespective of successful learning it has been proved that most learners will "adopt the behaviour of the organisational role models" in their immediate work environment (Elangovan and Karakowsky, 1999). I therefore focused on the roles of principals (managers) and peers in the ECD workplace.

2.3.1 *Manager Support*

Some studies found that transfer of learning is enhanced if the learning is congruent with what management is reinforcing (Cromwell and Kolb, 2004, p.452). Principals need to consistently ensure that learning is congruent with what is informally practiced and reinforced daily to ensure that qualified and student-practitioners implement what they have learnt (Lwanga, 2009, p.22). Effective principals who have the capacity to connect different aspects in an ECD site can contribute to an environment conducive to transfer of learning. Waniganayake (2014) referred to a study which found that principals who could effectively manage financial and human resources as well as pedagogical practices contributed to the successful running of ECD sites. Similarly the recommendations following the ECD audit in 2009 in South Africa were that managers should be knowledgeable about ECD programmes and competent in different aspects of management. This included the principal's ability to provide support to the practitioners and to create opportunities for transfer of learning to take place (p.11).



A learning outcomes online survey, which involved 1,000 participants three months after training was completed, found that a quarter of all training was wasted because participants did not get the chance to apply their learning and received no support from their managers. The performance of participants in the survey who received support from their line managers was about 30% higher than those without line manager support. Thirteen percent indicated that they did not receive manager support nor did they transfer their learning to the workplace. The researcher claims that 94% of the 13% would have transferred their learning if they had the manager's support. However, managers are often reluctant to release their staff to attend off-the-job training. Managers will have to invest time and effort to work out an action plan to support students (Lovell, 2010, pp.3-6).

According to Baldwin and Ford (1988) managers can contribute to the transfer of learning by having a pre-course discussion with the students as well as setting post-training goals. Managers need to discuss and reinforce the relevance and implementation of the training. They should send out a clear message that they trust the staff to implement what has been learnt (Lwanga, 2009, pp.22). Supportive managers will generate a supportive climate and create a climate of openness, for example, by being open to new ways of doing things (Kirwan, 2009, p.78).

2.3.2 *Peer Support*

Holton et al. (2000) reported that peer support was one of the five factors which showed the highest correlation with the transfer of learning (cited in Cromwell and Kolb, 2004, p.454). Peer support is seen as “the extent to which peers reinforce and support the use of learning on the job” (Seyer et al., 1998 cited in Bhatti and Hoe, 2012, p.33). Allowing the student to share what she has learnt with her colleagues are conducive to transfer of learning (Kirwan, 2009, p.71).

According to Lwanga (2009) peers are collaborators in the learning process and can assist in various ways. Supportive peers will listen, question and discuss issues that arise from training and in the workplace. Successful experiences can be shared and students can make plans together to obtain resources needed and share ideas about how to cope in the work environment (p.24). Similarly Kirwan (2009) pointed out that peers can assist their colleagues in this process by giving feedback which will provide opportunities to discuss challenges and by standing in when the colleague is involved in training (p.72).

This section has highlighted the role of managers and peers as discussed in the management and HRD literature. Their roles are also discussed in the literature on adult learning in the workplace. In the adult education literature, however, these roles are discussed from the perspective of

supporting learning as a social process through guided participation and immersion in communities of practice. I discuss these issues in the next section.

2.3.3 Adult Learning in the Workplace

Lave and Wenger (1991) developed the term “Communities of Practice” (CoP) for groups of people who share insights and ideas and assist each other to solve problems at work. A CoP is described as a group of people with similar goals and interests. Newcomers who engage with more experienced peers in the CoP learn what they need to know to move from the periphery to the centre of practice (Wenger, 2008).

Where formal structures in the organisation can inhibit learning, CoPs promote informal learning (Harris, n.d., p.9). A CoP can facilitate and create opportunities for transfer of learning to take place. During classroom training students acquire knowledge but often do not know how to transfer it to complex everyday situations. It is here that CoPs can play an important role (Wenger, 2008, p.86). Through a CoP employees can learn about and from each other’s successes and failures.

Billett (1998) draws on “socio-cultural theory which emphasises how the social practice that individuals engage in influences the structuring of their knowledge and, hence, its transfer through engaging in particular kinds of activities” (p.3). Billett (1998) suggests that students in educational institutions may well learn many things in accordance with the goals of these institutions, but may not develop the specific knowledge needed for performance in the workplace. He uses the example of the activities in which student-nurses are involved in university training compared to hospital-based training. He suggests that knowledge is likely to

be constructed differently in each setting – “although they both focus on the same socio-cultural practice (nursing), the two settings comprise different kinds of CoPs” (p.11).

Billet (1998) further argues that transfer of learning will more likely take place across two similar circumstances, for example between two hospital wards. The reason for this is that the two types of settings are “nearer”. Transfer is based on how knowledge has been constructed, valued and used in the situations where it was deployed. What was learnt does not mean that student-practitioners will be able to transfer the knowledge to the ECD work environment. “Situational factors are key determinants” (Billett, 1998, p.7) in the transfer of learning from one community to another.

Social constructivist approaches discussed by Fenwick (2004), Billett (2002) and Lave and Wenger (1991) support the view that learning happens through and is enhanced by social interaction and practices in the workplace. Billett (2002) refers to “workplace participatory practices” that “shape the workplace”. He argues that “knowledge is socially sourced and mediated by social processes like the access to guidance and interactions with colleagues” (p.1). This socially constructed phenomenon focuses on the context in which learning takes place. Learning cannot be seen simply as knowledge acquisition or a process of individual development, because it is situated and relational and knowledge is constructed through the social interaction of the people in a particular situation (Merriam, 2004, pp.199–220). Social practices where the principal and peers interact to provide guidance will contribute to and reinforce the transfer of learning.

2.4 Factors Influencing Transfer of Learning in the South African ECD Context

The ECD audit in 2001 identified the lack of financial resources and inadequate physical facilities as the greatest challenge in maintaining quality of the ECD sites. The low funding allocation to ECD and a lack of teaching resources are a concern because of its negative impact on providing the necessary care to children (Williams and Samuels, 2001). Biersteker and Kvalsig (2007) refer to a 2004 report of the High Scope Educational Research Foundation that sufficient materials and equipment were associated with positive outcomes of the care of children in the ECD field (p.185).

Similarly a study in Zimbabwe found that 88, 9% of teachers indicated that insufficient resources affected the implementation of the ECD-programme. This study found that the academic qualifications of ECD practitioners might affect their ability to deliver quality service. Qualified practitioners were in a better position to help children develop and had sufficient techniques to solve problems whereas unqualified practitioners experienced challenges interpreting the curriculum and lacked skills in problem solving (Moyo, *et al*, 2012, pp.142-147).

The 2009 ECD audit found that the presence of a reception year class had a positive impact on the quality of the activities offered at the ECD sites, because these classes have better staffing and support provided by the WCED (Human Research Science Council, 2010).

A survey on the first learnerships offered in South Africa found that 24% of student-practitioners terminated their learnerships because staff members at work-sites did not accept them, viewing them as a threat to their jobs. A student-practitioner said, “There was resistance from staff members to accept us”. They did not support the student-practitioners and did not want to give them opportunities to transfer their learning (HSRC Technical Report II, 2012, p.77). It is

interesting that in this study the responses focused more on the influence of peer support, than the support of managers. Perhaps this is because student-practitioners spend more time in the presence of their peers than their managers

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter focused on factors which support transfer of learning in the workplace environment. Literature on learning transfer from a management and HRD perspective was explored. In some of these studies learning transfer was discussed mainly from a human capital perspective either in terms of its importance in improving workplace productivity or as a return on investment. These studies helped me to gain a broad understanding of the workplace as an environment for learning particularly with respect to the role of managers and peers. These issues are relevant for educators whose work focuses on adult learning in the workplace (Fenwick, 2004, p.203). The literature on adult learning in the workplace improved my understanding of adult learning issues related to the development of ECD practitioners and the social roles of the principals and peers in the workplace. Some of the key issues that emerged from the literature were explored through a study of the learnership programme leading to a FET Certificate in ECD.

In the next chapter the research design and methods used in this study will be discussed.

CHAPTER 3: Research Design and Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This study explored factors in the workplace environment which influence learning transfer in programmes for ECD practitioners particularly the roles of principals and peers. This chapter outlines the research design, methods for collecting data and processes of organising and analysing the data.

3.2 Research Design

In this study a mixed methods approach was used. This is a maturing field which integrates the collection, analysis and interpretation of both quantitative and qualitative research data within a single study (Bryman, 2012, p. 628, Creswell, 2003, p.4).

Qualitative research generally emphasises words rather than quantifications in the collection and analysis of data. It is about exploring issues, understanding phenomena within a certain context and thereby answering a question. It “embodies a view of social reality as a constantly shifting emergent property of individuals’ creation and therefore emphasises how the individual interprets his or her social world” (Bryman, 2012, p.36). “Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994, p.2).

Quantitative research is described as “entailing the collection of numerical data” (Bryman, 2012, p.160) that is “analysed using mathematically based methods, particularly statistics“ (Burns and Grove, 2005, p. 23) A value is that it contributes to greater objectivity and accuracy of results. A particular phenomenon can be explained by looking at the quantification of the data and it contributes to organising one’s social science research paper (Given, 2008).

The research process in this study included collection of both numeric and non-numeric data. The main focus was on collection of qualitative data through the semi-structured interviews and non-participant observation discussed in the section on data collection methods below. These methods enabled me to elicit information on the perspectives of ECD practitioners and principals regarding the transfer of learning from the college to the ECD site i.e. their natural setting. It enabled me to explore and analyse how the practitioners interpreted their learning and the roles that the principals and peers played regarding the transfer of the practitioners' learning.

The research process also included a collection of some quantitative data through the use of numeric rating scales drawn from the Learning Transfer System Inventory which was based on Holton's research (Holton, 2005, p.333). Both the interview and observation schedules included a section with statements that linked to the contents of the curriculum with a rating scale from one to five and a space where I could make notes as the researcher (Appendix C).

A high score suggested that interviewees had been able to apply much of what they had learnt whilst a low score suggested that less or nothing had been applied. Scoring was done by interviewees themselves during the semi-structured interviews and by the researcher during observation at each site, as discussed in the section on Data Collection below. The responses to the statements allowed me to clarify and probe certain understandings during the interviews and observation at each site.

The data has been presented in the form of tables and histograms which enable me to compare the scoring of the qualified practitioners with that of the student-practitioners. The histograms also enabled me to present an analysis of the researcher's scores done during observation. This

data was analysed and discussed in relation to the qualitative data gathered through the semi-structured interviews and document and analysis.

3.3 Data Collection Methods

Two of the most common qualitative research methods were used, non-participant observation at ECD sites and interviews with principals and ECD practitioners. The curriculum and assessors' reports were analysed in preparation for the interviews and observation. The research design allowed for an in-depth gathering of data about participants' experiences and perceptions to ensure a richness of data.

3.3.1 Analysis of Curriculum and Assessors' Reports

The curriculum and assessors' reports were examined with the aim of identifying issues relating to transfer of learning in the ECD workplace. As programme manager I had easy access to the curriculum and reports. The documents were valuable sources of data and guided the development of research instruments for interview and observation schedules.

The curriculum outline identifies aspects which ECD practitioners are expected to apply in the workplace such as presentation of activities to the children. The assessment reports on these aspects for each student-practitioner were completed by two external assessors appointed by the college who visited ECD sites. I grouped and analysed the assessors' reports according to three different areas from which the majority of student-practitioners came: City Bowl and Southern Suburbs (Area 1), Mitchells Plain and Athlone (Area 2) and Khayelitsha, Gugulethu and Phillippi (Area 3). These reports provided a broad picture of the application of the college curriculum in the ECD sites by all the practitioners in the learnership programme and laid the basis for a more

in-depth exploration of issues during interviews and observation with the sample of interviewees at the four selected ECD sites.

The assessors had also visited the sites where I conducted interviews and observation. I paid particular attention to these reports and compared my data with these reports.

3.3.2 Semi-structured Interviews

According to Bryman (2012) “the interview is probably the most widely employed method in qualitative research”. For semi-structured interviews the questions are planned in such a way that free responses are allowed (Bryman, 2012, p.471). This enabled me to overcome potential limitations of this method i.e. the challenge of getting interviewees to expand on their responses and the risk of confusion which may arise from interviewees misinterpreting or misunderstanding questions.

The interview schedule which was used to interview ECD practitioners consisted of two sections (Appendix C). In the first section statements with a rating scale from one to five were used, for example, “I have applied some of the learning in my work”. The rating scale was drawn from the Learning Transfer System Inventory which was based on Holton’s research (Holton, 2005, p.333). A high score suggested that interviewees had been able to apply much of what they had learnt while a low score suggested that less or nothing had been applied. The responses to the statements allowed me to clarify and probe certain understandings. For example, when the interviewee selected a rating of two, I probed by asking her to explain why she gave a low score. The qualitative design thus included a collection of some quantitative data, through these numeric rating scales. This data generated tables and histograms which were analysed in relation to interview data and is presented in chapter 4.

The second section of the interview schedule consisted of open-ended questions, which explored principals' and practitioners' views on the application of what they had learnt at the college and to what extent they were applying it in the workplace. Although open-ended questions can be time consuming the advantage is that they allow for focused two-way conversations and greater spontaneity because the interviewees could respond more freely and in their own words (Bryman, 2012, p. 246), Velada, *et al.* 2007, p.4). It allowed new ideas to be brought up and provided opportunities to explore themes and to probe interviewee's responses. The interviews provided opportunities to collect data about the interviewees' experiences and understanding regarding their learning (Mack *et al.*, 2005, p.2).

Interviewees and ECD sites were selected through purposive sampling which required pre-selected criteria (Velada, *et al.*, 2007, p.5). I originally planned to select interviewees at well-managed and less well-managed sites in each area, but it was a daunting task to determine whether a site was well-managed or not. A more important consideration for this study was that sites should include participants at particular stages in the learnership programme which provides opportunities to apply learning gained through the college classroom. Qualified practitioners had more time to reflect on what they had learnt at college and on their work experiences after completing their studies while student-practitioners were not exposed to all the aspects of the curriculum as yet. Criteria for selecting sites and interviewees therefore focused on the presence of both qualified and student-practitioners.

I interviewed and observed four qualified practitioners who had completed the qualification in 2012 and four student-practitioners who were still enrolled in the learnership programme in 2013 to explore perceptions and interpretations at different stages of participation. I observed and interviewed participants in their "natural setting" (Swanson and Holton, 2005, p.8), namely the

ECD Site where they were employed. The average working experience of the student-practitioner interviewees at the ECD site was two years and five months, whereas the average working experience of qualified practitioners was seven years and five months. All the participants were women.

The principals were selected for interviews as they played the role of the manager. They had more ECD experience than the practitioners at the sites. The number of years' experience working as a principal varied from seven to nineteen years. Selecting sites with qualified principals was not specifically planned; fortuitously all the principals had completed a qualification in ECD.

I personally discussed the purpose of my study with the student-practitioners whom I had identified and asked for their consent to participate in the study. The student-practitioners took the information letters to their ECD sites. Thereafter I phoned the principals to request consent to visit the sites to collect data for my study. I gave an explanation of the purpose of my research and the purpose of visiting the sites. After the principals gave me permission I set up appointments with them and the other interviewees. The semi-structured interviews were conducted at the four sites where observation took place. When I arrived, as a gesture of courtesy, I asked the principals if they wanted me to interview them or the practitioners first. All the principals chose to be interviewed first. I first did the interviews and thereafter the observation in order to compare and contrast what was stated in the interviews with what was observed.

I was made to feel welcome at the sites and the interviewees voluntarily and freely responded to my questions. The one student-practitioner said that she felt a bit nervous in the beginning but

started to relax after a while. The interviewees were more relaxed when I switched off the recorder. I then made notes. Everything went smoothly. I returned to one site because an interviewee was absent on the day that I visited the site.

3.3.3 Observation

After interviewing the principals and practitioners I spent some time observing how the practitioners interacted with the children in all the playrooms. Observation was necessary to see whether or not practitioners were applying the knowledge and skills learnt at college regarding for example, the presentation of activities to the children.

During the interviews information about various aspects related to the curriculum was collected and I could then determine whether the answers corresponded with what I observed in the playrooms of the practitioners. The observation schedule included two sections similar to those of the interview schedule i.e a section with statements that linked to the contents of the curriculum with a rating scale from one to five and a space where I could make notes of my observation (Appendix C).

Observation as a data collection method usually presents some challenges. Some aspects of the learning process cannot be observed (Fox, 1998, p.20) i.e in this study I could not observe how the practitioners perceived peer support. Similarly I could not observe all the practitioners presenting the same activities. Despite these limitations this was a very valuable method to collect data. Firsthand observation provided information that could not have been obtained through interviews. It also emerged that there was a gap between what the practitioners said they do and their practice as observed. Observation was appropriate for collecting data on naturally occurring behaviours in their natural context (Bryman, 2012, pp.270, 271 and 492). The

information I gathered relied on what was seen and heard during the observation session. It enabled me to record whether transfer of learning was taking place or not. Principals provided valuable information during interviews and it was evident that they knew what was expected of a practitioner. My observation data suggests that the practitioners did not apply what they had learnt in all instances. However, I could not determine whether guidance provided by the principal was applied or not.

3.4 Organising and Analysing Data

Interviews and observation were undertaken within a few days of each other so that it would be easier to compare the data while the visits were still fresh in my mind. I kept records on check lists and made notes during interviews and observation. After the visits I added notes to ensure that the data was clear and that it would not be necessary to depend upon memory later. I then started organising the data to make sense of it. Profiles of each site were constructed because the focus was on the workplace. I summarised interviewees' responses and my observations and integrated the information by converting the data into numeric codes. The coded data was then presented in the form of tables to generate the histograms and to facilitate the analysis and interpret the data according to key themes identified in the literature review and analysis of the curriculum (discussed below).

I used thematic analysis to help to organise the data and provide structure for analysing the data. The term 'thematic analysis' is used in connection with "the analysis of qualitative data to refer to the extraction of key themes" (Bryman, 2012, 717). The value of this approach is that it draws on key features. Although flexibility might be a disadvantage there are many benefits of using thematic analysis. It helped to identify explicit ideas i.e. the effect of the availability of resources

on the transfer of learning. The themes contributed to being able to systematically observe the practitioners. (Attride, 2001, p. 387, Mills *et al*, 2010, p.4).

Analysis thus drew on both numerical and textual data (Williams, 2007) which was collected through interviews, observation and document analysis. Using both qualitative and quantitative methods contributed to the process of triangulation and the validity of my study (Cromwell, 2003, p.15)

3.5 Validity and Reliability

Validity is used to determine whether the research measures what it intended to measure and reliability ensures that the results are consistent. The input and feedback of different parties contributed to the reliability and validity of the data (Bryman, 2012, pp.171 and 386).

Triangulation, through the use of different methods to obtain the data enabled cross-checking of data and findings. It contributed to reliability, transparency and a greater comprehensiveness (Bryman, 2012, pp. 171,386 and 392). Multiple methods of data collection allowed for an in-depth gathering of data about participants' experiences and perceptions and eliminated the possibility of making my own assumptions.

Data was cross-checked to contribute to reliability and to validate accuracy. It was triangulated to facilitate analysis and interpretation of the data as well as ensuring validity was maintained.

To clarify uncertainties data elicited through interviews and observations was cross-checked with data gathered from assessors' reports on the sites I visited.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Bryman (2012) raises the importance of ethical considerations in research to protect the integrity of the individual and the research sites. My first step was to secure ethics clearance by

undertaking to meet all the legal and ethical requirements of the University of the Western Cape (Appendix A). I obtained informed consent from the WCED and my employer, College of Cape Town (CCT), before conducting the research. The DSD informed me that their consent was not needed because they were not the employer of the staff at the ECD sites. Consent letters for the WCED and CCT are attached (Appendix B).

I was transparent about my research, informed relevant parties about the purpose and focus of the research and obtained informed consent. Participants were fully informed in an information letter of the nature and purpose of the research (Appendix B). This also protects me in the event of any questions being asked concerning my research (Bryman, 2012, p.140). I informed all the interviewees at the start of the interview that I was there as a researcher for the purpose of completing my research as a partial requirement of the masters' programme.

Informed consent is important to protect the individual's right. A letter of consent to guarantee anonymity and to give me permission to continue with the research was given to all participants (Appendix B). All the participants were informed that their participation in the research was voluntary and that they had a choice to participate or withdraw at any stage should they feel uncomfortable. I informed the interviewees that I would make my interview notes available to them upon request but nobody requested the notes.

I reassured the interviewees that I would maintain confidentiality and protect their identities. Pseudonyms were used for the sites and the names of the participants were not mentioned at any time. When I selected the interviewees I made sure that they were fluent in English so that they would understand the questions and explanations. This ensured that we could communicate

directly with each other in a common language and that I could conduct the interview without the need for translation or interpreting.

I kept it in mind that interviewees might feel nervous or unsure and tried my best to make them feel comfortable by being friendly in the manner that I asked the questions. I tried to be sensitive to their views and treated them with respect at all times. I allowed the participants to interpret their situation in their own way and to respond spontaneously. The student-practitioners were assured that any decision not to participate would be respected and none of their responses would influence their academic progress. I had no influence on the outcome of their academic progress as they were assessed by external assessors at the sites and lecturers at college.

The student-practitioners were enrolled at CCT where I am the WCED learnership representative for the college. It was important therefore to approach the research in a professional way. I was polite and did not interfere with the daily running of the programme. I tried to be conscious of my own biases and assumptions and to set these aside. Triangulation ensured that I was objective at all times when collecting, analysing and interpreting the data. All parties were informed that data collected through the research will be used for academic purposes and meeting the requirements of the *Masters programme in Adult Learning and Global Change*.

3.7 Relevance, Usefulness and Limitations of the Study

The first limitation of this study was the availability of literature, especially South African literature in the ECD field. I contacted an organisation which has a research department focusing on ECD. The contact person confirmed that there was a lack of relevant South African literature on transfer of learning in ECD.

The sample size of sites and interviewees was small. The focus was on four sites registered with DSD in two previously disadvantaged urban areas. The factors influencing the transfer of learning might be different in rural and other urban areas or in sites attached to schools and unregistered sites. Thus the findings cannot be generalised.

The time, space and scope allowed by the requirements of this paper imposed limitations. As the focus was on the role of ECD principals and practitioners this effectively excluded other important role players like the parents of the children. For the same reason, the sample size of sites and participants were small. Observation was conducted over a short period of time. The findings might be different if this was done over a longer period of time.

Despite these limitations, this study may contribute to an area which is under-researched. As discussed before, the nationwide ECD audits highlight a number of areas which require further research. This research paper will provide a small contribution to some of these areas and open the door for further investigation. It will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on transfer of learning in ECD and specifically on factors in the workplace, namely the role of the principal and peers and to a lesser extent the influence of resources and availability of space. It can assist training providers in designing learning interventions in ECD learnerships that consider ways of dealing with constraints on the transfer of learning to the workplace.

The transfer of learning to ECD sites is a frequent topic at the WCED Learnership Reference Group Meetings. At a meeting in January 2014 it was decided that the establishment of a support unit for ECD practitioners at each college should be investigated. Insights of this research can be shared with training providers and provide opportunities for improving systems and procedures for supporting student-practitioners to transfer classroom-based learning to the ECD site. Some

of the preliminary insights from my research have already been shared with my colleagues at CCT and had an impact on improving systems. The names of the sites and interviewees were not mentioned in discussions.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter has elucidated my research design, data collection methods, data analysis approach as well as the ethical considerations and limitations of this research. The next chapter presents the data collected during the research.



CHAPTER 4: Presentation of Data

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents data obtained from observation at ECD sites, interviews with ECD principals and practitioners and analysis of curriculum and assessors' reports. The data relates to my research question: *What are the influences of the ECD work environment on the transfer of learning from the FET College classroom to the ECD workplace?* It begins with an overview of the qualification to contextualise the discussion.

4.2 Overview of the Qualification

The ECD Certificate is registered with SAQA as a Level 4 FET Certificate: ECD Qualification ID 58761. The purpose and rationale of this National Certificate is that it is "... an entry-level qualification for those who want to enter the field of Education, Training and Development, specifically within the sub-field of ECD. This qualification will enable graduates to facilitate the all-round development of young children in a manner that is sensitive to culture and individual needs" (SAQA Qualification ID nr.58761).

The learnership targets people who are employed as practitioners at ECD sites. The WCED pays the tuition fee of the student-practitioners which covers the cost of training and two site visits by assessors. Training consists of 70% workplace experience and 30% classroom-based learning. The duration of the qualification is 18 months: one day per week attending college classes and four days per week working at ECD sites.

An active learning-approach is applied at the college such as involving student-practitioners in discussions, simulations, visiting other ECD sites and role play. Practical demonstration lessons are presented so that student-practitioners themselves experience the activities to be presented to the children at the ECD sites. Workshops are held at the college where participants make

resources from waste material, for example toys made from cardboard boxes. All of these activities are facilitated by qualified lecturers who have experience in working at ECD sites. Student-practitioners compile an in-service training manual in which they record their written planning and reflections on activities and experiences at the ECD sites. Written planning is regarded as important so that the practitioners will be well-prepared to present appropriate activities to the children. Student-practitioners are taught to assess children's developmental abilities, limitations and potential on a daily basis using different methods, for example checklists, rubrics, writing brief notes and compiling a quarterly progress report from the information collected through the different methods.

The ECD-specific evidence that the student-practitioners have to collect to be able to be declared competent demands a lot of time and there is not always sufficient time for focusing on more practical application in the college classroom. The evidence that student-practitioners submit may meet the criteria set by the college, but not necessarily the needs of the site where they are working. An example is that they may submit evidence of planning to present water play activities as stipulated according to the curriculum when the resources indicated in the planning may not be available on site. Similarly, the quality assurance done by the ETDP SETA, which needs to endorse the qualification, focuses on the portfolios of evidence which were completed by the student-practitioners. Therefore the SETA does not undertake quality assurance at the ECD sites to determine whether transfer of learning is taking place.

The ECD department at CCT holds morning meetings where feedback is given on what student-practitioners shared in the class regarding their learning at the college, including the transfer of what they had learnt. Feedback from the assessors' reports is also discussed at these meetings.

4.3 Assessors' Reports

Assessors are externally appointed by CCT. They visit the sites twice during the 18-month training period and use assessment record sheets designed by the CCT staff. Questions are based on the contents of the Level 4 curriculum and there is a section for general comments.

Table 2: Assessors' Reports Summary

ASPECT	SITE A	SITE B	SITE C	SITE D
Activities presented to children	Storytelling & creative art presentations were excellent	Presented creative art activities. Not very interesting	Interesting, stimulating activities	Well presented creative art activities
Interaction with children	Excellent. Caring	Walked around. No interaction	Good .Responded well to their needs	Good
Assessment records of children	Provided few checklists. Said she was still learning	Said that she still had to learn how to do assessment	Provided checklists. Some notes on the progress	No proof of assessment
Written Planning	Planning varied from poorly done to detailed	Very little planning was shown	Very little outdoor planning. Had daily and monthly planning. Some detailed	Average daily planning for activities

Assessors' reports on the sites I visited suggest that interaction with the children at Site A in Gugulethu and Sites C and D in Mitchells Plain was very good. There was hardly any interaction between the student-practitioner and the children at Site B. There was evidence that Sites A and C used checklists to assess the children, but there was no evidence at Sites B and D. However, there was evidence of written planning at all the sites. The written planning at Site C was more detailed than at the other sites. Resources varied from average (Sites B and D) to well-resourced (Sites A and C). Table 2 highlights comments in assessors' reports which relate to aspects I focused on in my examination of learning transfer at these sites.

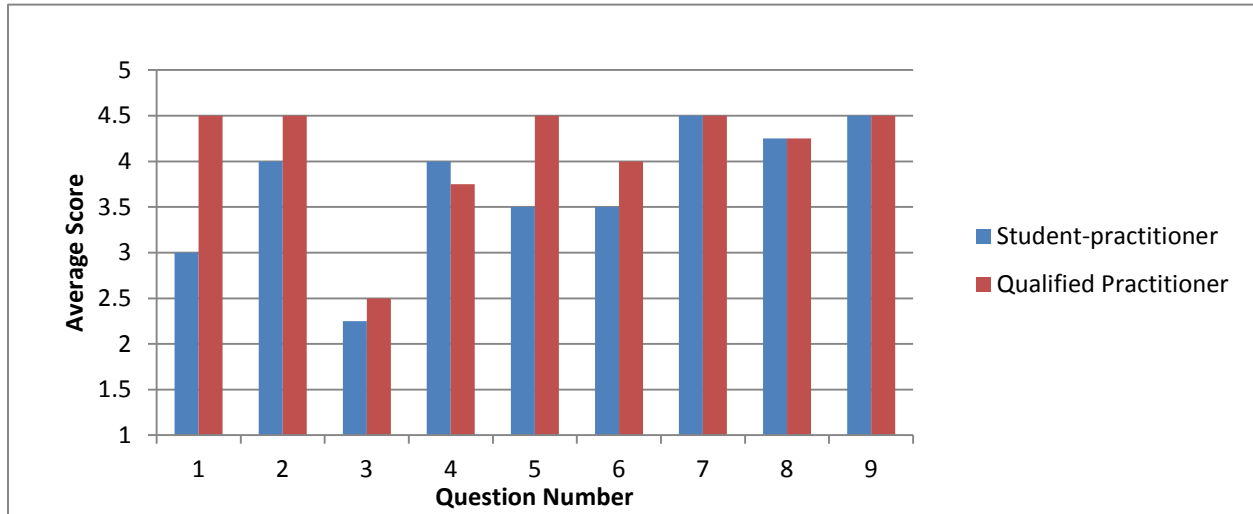
4.4 Observation and Interviews at ECD Sites

The main aim of the interviews was to elicit information on the perceptions of ECD practitioners, and principals regarding the transfer of learning from the college to the ECD site. I used observation as I wanted to see whether and how transfer of learning was taking place and also to compare my observation with what was said in the interviews.

As explained in the previous chapters, both the interview and observation schedules included statements with a rating scale from one to five in the first section. A high score suggested that interviewees had been able to apply much of what they had learnt while a low score suggested that less had been applied. The responses in the statements allowed me to clarify and probe certain understandings in the interviews. The research process thus included a collection of some quantitative data through the numeric rating scales which are presented in histograms.

The histograms present a comparison between the scoring of the qualified practitioners and the student-practitioners. The first histogram shows average practitioners scores where practitioners scored themselves. The statements asked practitioners to comment on transfer of learning to the ECD site and the role of the principal and the peers. Statement 3 was the only negative statement and therefore the direction of the scoring was changed in the graph.

Histogram 1: Average Practitioners Scoring Themselves



Statements and question numbers:

1. I have applied some of the learning in my work
2. I have changed my approach to my work to be consistent with what was taught
3. I believe there is not much time in my job to allow me to concentrate on the use of learned capabilities.
4. My principal has told me that my work behaviour has changed following what I have learnt
5. My principal encourages me to apply my training in the workplace
6. My peers had told me that my work behaviour has changed following what I have learnt
7. Whenever I get the chance I put the learning from the training into practice
8. Using what I have learned from the training benefits my ways of working
9. I am more confident in tackling unfamiliar tasks and situations thanks to what I have learned on the training

The next section presents data collected through observation and interviews at ECD sites. After a brief introduction to each site, the data is presented using headings related to the issues under research and aspects of the curriculum which practitioners are expected to implement at the sites.

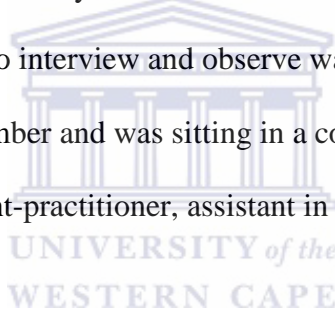
The headings are:

- Principal’s Support
- Peer Support

- Resources and Facilities
- Application of Learning
- Management of Children

4.4.1 Site A: Gugulethu

The site is in a residential area next to an open field. On arrival I found that the entrance gate was not locked and observed that the sand play area was full of broken bricks. The practitioners explained that the owners of the premises from whom they hired the facilities filled it with bricks. No explanation for this decision could be given to me. When I entered the building I walked into a playroom with about twenty children between the ages of one to two years. The qualified practitioner whom I had to interview and observe was taking care of these children. She was standing in for a sick staff member and was sitting in a corner. It was still possible to observe her application. The student-practitioner, assistant in the class, took care of her group of children.



The principal and practitioners were Xhosa-speaking and spoke to the children in their mother tongue, Xhosa. The principal obtained a National N4 Certificate in Educare. She said that she attended the classes for the Level 5 ECD qualification but did not complete the assessments. She has worked at an ECD site for 19 years. The qualified practitioner obtained the Level 4 ECD qualification and has worked at an ECD site for the past 12 years. The student-practitioner has participated in the learnership for the past seven months and had two years working experience at an ECD site. Before that she obtained a Level 1 Adult Basic Education and Training Certificate specialising in a small component of ECD.

- *Principal's Support*

The principal felt that it was her role to support the practitioners and that she was helping them wherever she could. She reported that she encouraged them to implement activities that they had learnt at college because she knew what was expected of ECD practitioners. She herself had completed a learnership and believed that it is important to participate in college-based learning.

Both practitioners said that the principal supported them at all times and helped them whenever they needed assistance to set up activities for the children. She allowed them to attend classes at college once a week. The student-practitioner said that she had been at an ECD site before where there was no support from the principal or practitioners.

- *Peer Support*

The qualified practitioner said that all the staff worked together and helped one another. Upon asking her how they helped each other, she said they helped whenever it was necessary but could not think of an example. The student-practitioner said that all her peers were very friendly and helpful when she asked them to assist her. They told her that they could see that she had learnt a lot at the college. They admired her for her English that was so “good” and how she taught the children English songs.

- *Resources and Facilities*

Both practitioners, one with 16 and the other one with 12 children, felt that the resources and facilities in the playroom were sufficient. They were comfortable sharing the room. They explained that they could present all the activities such as creative art activities for the children. The student-practitioner felt that they needed more outdoor equipment and resources like balls for the children to play with.

I observed a pleasant atmosphere in the play room. The children were involved in different activities. The room was divided into different areas which were labeled: book, fantasy, creative and educational toy area. The room was well-resourced but some of the resources looked very used and old. All the resources were safe for the children to use, for example they did not have sharp edges. The book area had a carpet and could accommodate two children at a time with only a few books displayed on the bookshelf. There was sufficient space for four to six children in the fantasy play area. Although different resources were available, the area did not look inviting. The creative area consisted of small tables and the children sat crammed at the table. The two groups took turns to do creative art activities. The children's art activities were not displayed in the playroom. There was no evidence of theme or experiment tables. The posters in the playroom looked old and as if they had been there for many years. I scored the resources as average.

- *Application of Learning*

The principal thought that it was important to know how to deal with children in the "right way". She allowed the practitioners to apply what they had learnt, for example, presenting all the different activities every day. She specifically mentioned that the practitioners' creative art activities had improved since they had been trained at college.

Both practitioners provided a high score on the rating scale to indicate that they had applied what they had learnt at the college. The qualified practitioner's responses were brief and vague, "I apply a lot." When asked to give examples of what she had learnt at college she mentioned different activities, namely, storytelling and music ring. The student-practitioner responded with more detail than the qualified practitioner to what she had learnt to apply as can be seen in the quote below.

“Creative art activities – how to implement the different types of activities, how to use visual cues to teach the children and how to work, to do written planning. The people here did not know about policies. I have learnt about policies and showed them how to do it. Now I know how to ask questions so that the children can learn, especially open-ended questions”.

The student-practitioner was busy presenting a story when I arrived at the site. She was sitting on a low chair to be on the children’s level. She presented the story in an interesting way and despite the fact that there was another practitioner in the room talking loudly to her group, the children were focused. I also observed her presenting music and later her involvement with the children during outdoor play, where she interacted freely with them.

Both practitioners could show progress reports that were sent to the parents on a quarterly basis but they could not show any records of their assessments of the children. The student-practitioner said that she had done assessment for a college task and the evidence was in her portfolio of evidence.

Both practitioners said that they did written planning, but not for all of the activities. The qualified practitioner said that it was too difficult and it took too long to do written planning every day. She could not show her written planning to me because she did not know where it was. The student-practitioner said that written planning was new to her and that she needed lots of practice. She never prepared written plans for outdoor activities and the extension activities such as block play because she still had to learn how to do it. She showed me her in-service training manual where there were plans for some of the activities and where she had completed the reflection section. She found it challenging to do written planning and mentioned that the

assessor's feedback during the site visit helped her to understand the planning better. She said that although she did not know how to plan all the activities, she knew that she would still learn how to do it.

- *Management of Children*

Keeping children safe is an example of managing children's behaviour. I observed one- to two-year-olds in a room and two practitioners sitting there. The children were sitting and standing around in the room where there was a heater within their reach. An open heater can burn the children if they touch it. One of the children followed me to the other playroom and I had to take her back myself. It seemed as if the qualified practitioner was unaware of her following me.

There was good interaction between the student-practitioner and the children. She observed the children all the time and was aware of what was happening. Two boys deliberately bumped into each other with their plastic motor bikes. The student-practitioner went to them, bent down to their level and said in an assertive voice that they should stop doing this. The qualified practitioner sat passively and looked at the children, but was not involved at all. When I observed her in the playroom with the babies and toddlers she was also sitting passively.

4.4.2 Site B: Gugulethu

This site is in a residential area, close to shops where adults were loitering. The gates were not locked and I was only noticed after a few minutes when I walked into the playroom where all the children were busy with activities.

The staff was Xhosa-speaking and communicated with the children in Xhosa. The principal has been working in the ECD field for 12 years and completed the Level 4 ECD qualification as a learnership. The qualified practitioner completed the Level 4 ECD qualification the previous

year and started with the Level 5 ECD qualification. She has been working for eight years at an ECD site. The student-practitioner obtained a Level 1 Adult Basic Education and Training Certificate specialising in a small component of ECD. She was currently in the seventh month of her Level 4 ECD learnership. She had two years working experience at an ECD site.

- *Principal's Support*

The principal believed that the practitioners must participate in learnerships because the college “helps you to find out there is a lot you don't know”. She felt that there were many people at sites “without knowledge”. According to her she needed to support her practitioners because it made them “feel fine” that she could help them. She supported them by explaining activities to them and allowing them to attend classes at college.

Both practitioners said that the principal supported them. She helped them with working with the children and presenting the activities to the children. The qualified practitioner said that the principal told her how “good” she was with the children since completing the course. She said that she reflected in writing every day on what she has done during the day and that the principal helped her to reflect. The student-practitioner said that the principal was very friendly and allowed her to implement activities, for example, music activities. She explained that most of the time the principal and qualified practitioners had already planned the activities. She was only allowed to plan the activities when the assessor came to assess her.

- *Peer Support*

Both practitioners felt that they received support from their peers. The qualified practitioner said that her peers told her that she was “good” with the children, because she could handle a large group. When the practitioners saw that one of them was doing things “wrong”, they would help

each other by giving advice on how to do it the “right” way. She explained that they would also assist each other when one of them was sick by taking care of each other’s group of children.

The student-practitioner said that they told her that she now had better ideas for the activities that she was presenting to the children than when she started at the site i.e she had more interesting ideas for creative art activities. She felt she could ask anyone for help and that they would assist her.

- *Resources and Facilities*

The student-practitioner shared a room with the qualified practitioner. The qualified practitioner told me that they had too little space to accommodate all the children inside and some children needed to play outside. The qualified practitioner said that the resources were only sufficient when 32 of the children were inside and the rest of the children, about 33, were playing outside. On rainy days the playrooms, about five meters by five meters, were overcrowded with 65 children in a playroom. They could not present the different activities to all the children such as creative art activities when it was raining and mostly sang or listened to stories. The student-practitioner said that she was “happy” with the resources and facilities but also found it challenging to work with the large number of children in the playroom on rainy days. From my observation it was clear that the room was too small for 65 children. The resources for the children were inadequate for this number of children.

There were 32 children in the playroom when I conducted my observation. There was a pleasant atmosphere in the playroom that was divided into different areas. According to the requirements for the layout of the different areas, there should be space for four to six children simultaneously. The areas were clearly labeled for example the book-area. Some of the areas were well-resourced for example the block-area. The creative area was spacious and sufficient for the number of

children present in the playroom. In the fantasy area there was hardly space for one child to play. A few examples of children's art were displayed on the wall but it was tattered. The resources were child-friendly and safe to be used by the children. Some of the resources looked old and were not displayed in an inviting way, for example some of the resources were stacked on top of each other.

- *Application of Learning*

The principal felt that participation in a learnership was important because it is necessary to have knowledge to deal with children. The principal said that when the student-practitioner did Level 1 she "did not mean much for the site" but since doing Level 4, she knows a lot about working with children. She mentioned that both practitioners' presentation of activities had improved and that they knew more about the layout of the playroom for the children.

The qualified and student-practitioners worked in the same playroom. The qualified practitioner provided a high rating to indicate that she had applied what she had learnt in her work. She said that in Level 4 she had learnt to manage her own and the children's stress. "I was stressed before I did this course. Now I am not stressed". She also learnt how to manage the children's behaviour because now she knew what techniques she could use to discipline them. Her knowledge about children with special needs had increased and she "now know(s) how to take care of them". Since she did the course she knew about different types of creative art activities for example, that there are different types of painting (finger painting or adding glitter to paint). She sometimes found it difficult to present the activities because of insufficient space. Sometimes there were so many children that she could not present certain activities such as a movement ring. At the time of the research, she was busy with her Level 5 ECD. She explained

that furthering her studies with Level 5 has reinforced prior learning and it made it easier to apply what she had learnt in Level 4 to her current position.

The student-practitioner felt that she did not apply what she had learnt at the college. She explained that she was sometimes confused regarding *what* to apply. She mainly assisted with the presentation of the activities. The student-practitioner's responses were very brief when she was asked about what she had learnt at college. She said that she learnt about the different types of activities and how to do written planning. I asked her to give me a specific example of an activity that she had learnt to do and her response was, "all the activities like creative art activities".

According to both practitioners, they had done written planning for every day but they could not show proof of it. They said that they did not understand how to do it. The qualified practitioner said that she "struggled too much" with the written planning. In the interview it was evident that she knew about all the different types of activities, but this was not reflected in her written planning. They all found that written planning and keeping records were a "lot of work" and time-consuming.

Both practitioners said that they assessed the children. They showed me quarterly progress reports of the children which were sent to the parents. I asked for evidence of ongoing assessments but they could not provide any.

- *Management of Children*

The principal responded to the children in a friendly way when they talked to her. There was good interaction between the children and the qualified practitioner. She was alert to the children's needs. When a child held her cup in a way that the soup would spill the qualified

practitioner stepped in and showed her how to hold the cup. During the music ring some children did not participate and she called them by name to draw them into the activity. She was enthusiastic and it was evident that the children were enjoying the activities. Although the student-practitioner was on her own with the children on one of my observation days it seemed that the children were undisturbed by her not interacting with them. They continued with their activities. On both days I observed that she walked around but there was no interaction between her and the children. On the second day she stood in a corner of the room whilst the qualified practitioner presented the ring and did not participate in any way. It was difficult to determine what the reason for her non-participation was. As an observer it was not my place to ask her about her behaviour.

4.4.3 *Site C: Mitchells Plain*

The site is in an urban area surrounded by open plots. The gate and entrance to the building had to be unlocked for me by the principal. When entering the site my impression was of an organised, professional environment. The staff wore over-jackets with the emblem of the site. It was a rainy day and all the children were busy with activities inside.

The principal and the practitioners were all English-speaking and they communicated with the children in English. The majority of the children were English speaking, a few Afrikaans- and a few Xhosa-speaking. The principal has been working in the ECD field for 12 years. The qualified practitioner completed the Level 4 ECD qualification the previous year and started with the Level 5 ECD qualification this year. She has worked for eight years at an ECD site. The student-practitioner completed a Level 1 Adult Basic Education Certificate specializing in a small component of ECD. She was currently busy with her Level 4 ECD learnership. She had two years' working experience at an ECD site.

- *Principal's Support*

The principal said that during the learnership she learnt how to implement the daily programme at the ECD site. She believed in the importance of participating in the learnerships because she felt that one should be able to implement the daily programme and thereby enrich the children's learning experience. She felt that it was important to support the practitioners because as the principal she was responsible for them. She had to make sure that they know how to "work with the children" and therefore allowed them a day off to attend classes at college. It was important to her that they all "need to be on the same path to growth in ECD". Because she had attended college she knew what hard work it was and how difficult it was to present the activities to the children. She completed Levels 4 and 5 learnerships at the college. She felt that she could therefore provide the staff with a lot of support. She wanted the student-practitioner and the other staff who had yet to do a learnership, to experience the same feeling of accomplishment as she did on completion of the qualifications.

Both practitioners indicated that the principal supported them and acknowledged their accomplishments. They made specific reference to the principal's willingness to assist them. The qualified practitioner said that her principal complimented her on how her confidence has grown. She said that the principal had helped her with working with the children and gave her advice on how to plan activities for the children. She said that the principal told her how "good" she was with the children since completing the course. The student-practitioner said that the principal was very friendly and allowed her to implement the activities that she had learnt to present for example music activities. During the Friday meetings she gave the practitioners ideas and advice.

- *Peer Support*

At this site there were weekly meetings to discuss the planning for the following week.

Practitioners also used this meeting to share successful experiences and make plans together about how to cope in the work environment. The student-practitioner said that they discussed their strengths and weaknesses at the meetings and how they could improve upon the weaknesses. Both practitioners felt that they received support from their peers, for example, in adapting the activities to suit the children's specific needs. An example is that if there was a child that was developmentally behind his peer group they would give ideas on how to make the activity easier for the specific child. Both practitioners referred to the value of the meetings. At the meetings the student-practitioner had to share what she was learning at the college. The qualified practitioner said that her peers complimented her and would ask her for ideas to assist them with the planning of activities. She was good with the setting up of theme tables and her peers often asked her to assist them with this. The student-practitioner said that her peers told her that they could see that she was more confident since she started the Level 4 qualification. She felt that she was still young and did not have as much experience as her peers. She therefore valued what she was learning from them and appreciated the way they were supporting her in giving her ideas for presenting the various activities to the children.

- *Resources and Facilities*

Both practitioners felt that there were sufficient resources to implement the activities for the children. They had, for example, enough resources to present different activities and to equip the different areas like the fantasy and book areas. They both said that the play area and resources were age-appropriate.

There was a pleasant atmosphere in the rooms. I observed that the centre was well resourced with a variety of resources in the different areas. All the resources were safe for the children to use, for example they had no sharp edges. The areas were spacious enough for the number of children. The room was divided in a way that made it easy for the children to move from the one area to the next and to reach the resources that they needed. The children's artwork was displayed on the wall. The theme and experiment tables were well-presented. The layout of the play room looked inviting and attractive because of how the resources were displayed and the room was divided into different areas. This was the only site where I allocated a high score for the resources for both playrooms.

- *Application of Learning*

The principal said that she provided the student-practitioners with opportunities to implement what they had learnt and that they also had opportunities to share that with the practitioners who were not in learnership programmes. It was a part of the practitioners' working contract that they needed to implement what they had learnt at the college. The practitioners had no ECD background or training when they started working at the site. The principal believed that they first needed to have experience working with children before they started with a course. Since they had started with the programme they were more eager and their teaching methods had changed.

Both practitioners provided a high score to indicate that they had applied what they had learnt in their work and that their approaches had become consistent with what was taught at the college. However, they mentioned that they needed more time to apply it. The student-practitioner said that the in-service training manual and all the college's assessment tasks that needed to be

completed were very time-consuming. At college there were opportunities to ask questions, but she wished there was more time for individual discussions with the lecturers.

The qualified practitioner said that she had learnt about the special needs of children and how to work with them. Her knowledge of the developmental stages of children and how to deal with them which she had learnt about at college have increased. The student-practitioner said that she learnt to interact with children and how to deal with stressful situations. She was always very shy and doing the course also gave her confidence to deal with the children's parents. In the past she had a problem with setting up theme tables, but now her colleagues commented on how "good" her tables were.

Both practitioners indicated that written planning was an area where they experienced challenges and needed more time to do it. They said that the reason was that it was "a lot of work". Weekly and daily plans were prepared in advance for the year for each age group. Both the practitioners could show a file with the planning, but there was no evidence of how the activities were adapted after meetings. They did, however, recall an incident where they had discussed at the meeting how to set up a theme table in a different way than what was originally planned. The practitioners said that they remembered the changes but these were not reflected in the written planning. The qualified practitioner said that she was used to receiving the prepared planning at the site and she was not used to doing the planning on her own. The student-practitioner showed her in-service training manual and there was evidence of some of her own written planning. The rest of her planning was the annual plan that was provided to her by the principal. She did not know how to combine what the college and the workplace expected of her and could therefore not transfer what she had learnt at college about written planning.

The children in both playrooms were involved in educational activities. Both practitioners were involved and walked between the different activities, guiding the children by asking questions, for example, “What else can you draw in your picture?” They greeted me, but immediately continued with interacting with the children. The qualified practitioner was confident. The student-practitioner seemed a bit nervous and sometimes glanced in my direction. She was responsive by assisting them with the activities that they were busy with. One child did not know where to find enough blocks to build with and she pointed out where he could find more blocks.

Both practitioners said that they assessed the children. They applied some of the assessment methods they had learnt at college namely the use of checklists, a few written notes on the children’s progress and the progress reports that were sent to the parents on a quarterly basis.

- *Management of Children*

I observed the principal interacting with the children in a warm and friendly way. There was very good interaction between the practitioners and the children. The one child grabbed blocks from another child and the student-practitioner took the blocks from him. She bent down and told him in a calm, assertive voice that it is rude to grab blocks from somebody who is playing with it. He needed to wait for his turn and she asked him to get other blocks to play with in the meantime. The qualified practitioner responded in a loving way towards the children by gently touching them when she spoke to them.

4.4.4 Site D: Mitchells Plain

The site is in an urban area where many people were sitting outside their homes and young people were loitering in the streets. The gate and door to the site was unlocked and I walked through the kitchen before entering the playroom. Most of the children were sleeping during my

visit. The principal of Site D specifically asked me to come when the children were sleeping. I asked her if I could come when the children were involved in activities, but she insisted that it is more convenient for her and the staff that I come when the children were sleeping. I felt it would have been unprofessional to insist on coming when the children were awake. I was still able to collect data to determine whether transfer of learning was taking place.

The principal had seven years experience working at an ECD site and completed a Level 4 ECD learnership. The qualified practitioner completed the Level 4 ECD qualification and was currently busy with Level 5 at the college. She had five years experience working at an ECD site. The student-practitioner has been enrolled in a Level 4 ECD qualification for seven months and she had two years experience working at an ECD site.

- *Principal's Support*

The principal said that it was important that the staff should participate in college-based education, because if one is not trained one could “harm” the children by not presenting the correct activities and not knowing how to handle the children. She felt that her support as a manager was important because she had the experience to support her staff. She supported them by allowing and helping them to apply what they had learnt and were still learning. The college also assisted by keeping her up to date with what is expected of the student-practitioners. What was happening at the site was also her responsibility as the principal. She said that they had weekly meetings to help each other to plan activities to present to the children.

Although the qualified practitioner gave a high score to the principal supporting her she said that the principal did not give her feedback on how her work had changed as a result of what she had learnt at college. She could not recall whether they had any meetings to discuss the activities at

the site. The student-practitioner gave the principal a low score and said that the principal was “not really helping” her. She said that they never had meetings to discuss the planning and activities at the site. Similarly she said that the principal had never commented on how her work has changed since she started the training at the college.

- *Peer Support*

The qualified practitioner said that her peers often complimented her on her creativity and sometimes asked her how they could make the activities more interesting so that the children do not get bored. They all worked well together. However, the student-practitioner said she could not understand why the practitioners were not sharing ideas and why they were so focused on themselves. According to her she never received any support from them. They never had time “to teach one something”, but she sometimes shared ideas with them when they were talking during breaks, for example discussing how to make painting activities more interesting.

- *Resources and Facilities*

The qualified practitioner’s playroom looked inviting and was divided into different areas that met all the criteria for an appropriate playroom, including age-appropriate resources for the children. She said that she had enough resources. There were enough equipment, for example, paint brushes for the children to use. She felt that the room was spacious and she could set up the different areas such as book and fantasy areas. Although there was no experiment table, there was a theme table. There were posters on the wall but the children’s creative art was not displayed. A high score was allocated for all the areas.

The student-practitioner felt that that the room should have been bigger for the children to be able to move around more freely. She felt she had enough resources for the children. I observed

that the room was too small for 15 children and that there were very few resources. The room was not divided into different areas. She said that she packed away the resources for the children to have space to sleep. Only a birthday chart was displayed on the walls.

- *Application of Learning*

The principal said that the qualified practitioner had “a lot of potential”, but that her personal problems had a negative impact on her work. She felt that the practitioner was able to apply much more of what she had learnt at college. According to the principal, the student-practitioner showed more potential than the qualified practitioner.

The qualified practitioner provided a high score on the rating scale to indicate that she had applied what she had learnt in her work. She said that she could apply her learning all the time because they “follow a daily programme” in which all the different types of activities are presented. She allocated a low score when asked if there was enough time to implement what she had learnt. She felt that due to a lack of time she could not apply everything, for example, presenting more interesting activities. She gave examples of what she had learnt at college: how to present the daily programme and what the importance of all the different activities was. She felt that it made a difference in a child’s life. She said that Vygotsky’s theory about scaffolding taught her how to help the children when they needed help and then to allow them to continue on their own. She now understood children “better”, but she wished that she knew more about children with special needs, for example children with attention deficit disorder.

The student-practitioner mentioned that although there were opportunities to apply what she had learnt, she still needed to learn a lot because she had only started with the ECD-specific unit standards recently. For the first semester she was enrolled for the fundamental unit standards i.e

Communication Literacy. During the second semester she learnt about morning rings, creative art activities, how to do planning according to the new curriculum for children younger than four years and how to be more observant. “I have learnt how to take notice of every little thing”. I asked her for an example and she said, “...how a child reacts when he is doing an activity”.

Both practitioners indicated that they found the written planning challenging. The student-practitioner said that she forgot her in-service training manual at home. The following week she brought her written planning to college to show me. There was evidence of the planning for most of the activities, but no planning for the extension activities or outdoor play. The qualified practitioner said that she changed her written planning since she studied at the college. She found the new curriculum for children younger than four interesting, but the planning was still new to her. The student-practitioner said that it took her a lot of time to do written planning.

Both practitioners said that they assessed the children. They did not keep record of the assessments, because they knew the children well. The student-practitioner said that she had not learnt about the different assessment methods. They showed me quarterly progress reports that were sent to the parents.

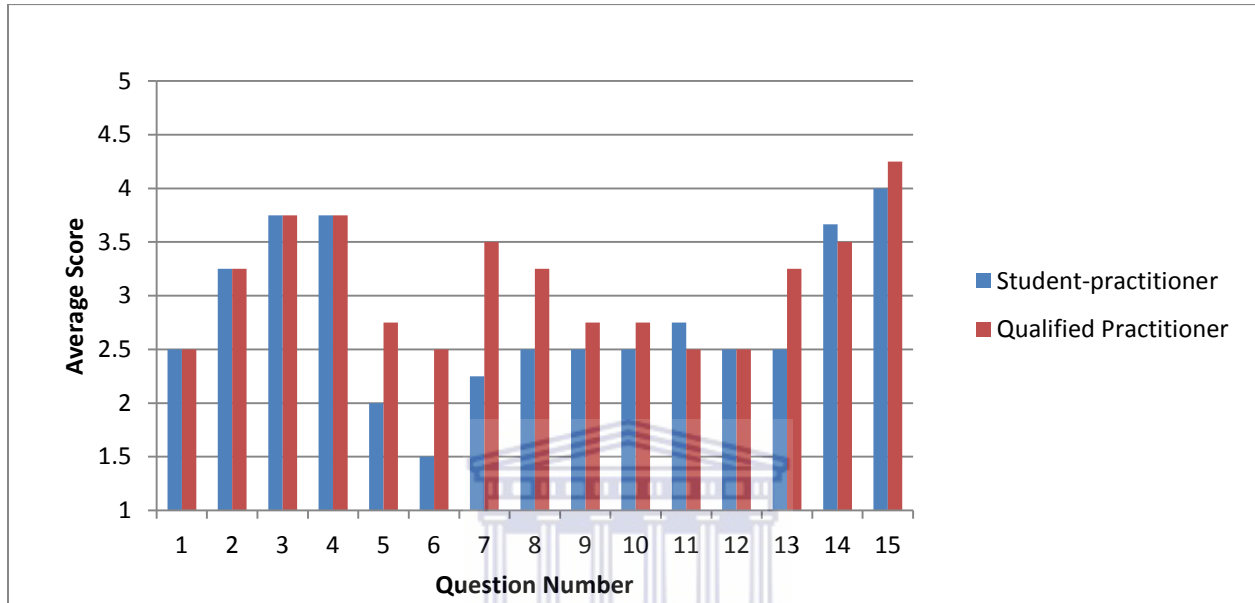
- *Management of Children*

While interviewing the qualified practitioner it happened twice that children came to her to ask a question. She apologised to me and immediately paid attention to them by informing them in a friendly, assertive way not to disturb her now. While talking to them she looked them in the eyes and gently touched them. The student-practitioner seemed to be unaware or uninterested in the children when they tried to get her attention while I was interviewing her.

4.5 Overview of Researcher’s Scoring

The second histogram shows the average scoring I recorded during observation at the ECD sites.

Histogram 2: Average Practitioner Scoring by Researcher



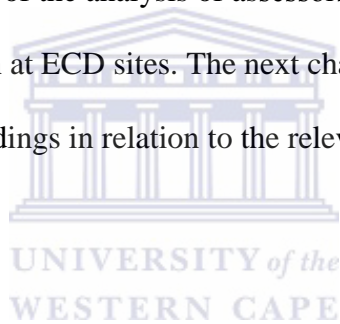
Statements and question numbers:

1. Written planning of activities
2. Different activities are planned and presented each day
3. There is a pleasant atmosphere in the playroom
4. There is good interaction between the practitioner and the children
5. A theme table is displayed in the playroom
6. An experiment table is displayed in the playroom
7. There is a book area
8. There is a fantasy area
9. There is an educational toy area
10. There is a creative area
11. The children’s creative art activities are displayed
12. There is evidence that the children are assessed
13. There are posters in the playroom
14. The management of the children is appropriate
15. The environment in the playroom is safe

As shown in the histogram my scoring indicated that the transfer of learning was similar in 5 of the 15 areas: written planning, presentation of activities, pleasant atmosphere, good interaction with children and evidence of assessment. In 8 of the areas the outcomes were higher for the qualified practitioners: setting up theme and experiment tables, safety in the playroom and the five areas previously mentioned. In only two of the areas, behaviour management and the display of creative art activities, the scoring of the student-practitioners were higher - this was because of the high score of the one student-practitioner.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of the analysis of assessors' reports and data collected through interviews and observation at ECD sites. The next chapter provides an analysis of the data and discussion of research findings in relation to the relevant literature.



CHAPTER 5: Findings and Conclusions

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the data presented in Chapter 4 in relation to the literature and theoretical concepts discussed in Chapter 2.

Learning transfer can be defined broadly as “effective and continuing application by learners – to their performance of jobs or other individual, organisational or community responsibilities – of knowledge and skills gained in learning activities” (Broad, 1997, p.2, cited in Merriam and Leahy, 2005, p.3). It is “the process of disembedding knowledge from one situation and transforming it to have utility in another” (Billett, 1998, p.1). Transfer can take place when there is an overlap between situations where what was learnt in one situation is related to a similar situation (“near”), but when the situation differs or there is little overlap (“far”) transfer will be challenging or not take place at all (Billett, 1998, p.8). My research did not focus on “near” and “far” transfer but examples of this were observed as indicated in this chapter. The focus of my research was on the influences of the ECD work environment on transfer of learning from the college classroom to the ECD workplace with a specific focus on the role of the principal (manager) and the peers of the ECD practitioners

I drew on the literature on adult learning and training in relation to two main issues, learning as a social process (Lave and Wenger, 1991) and guided participation (Billet, 2002). Manager and peer support were among the factors identified in the literature as important for transfer of learning in the workplace and which showed the highest correlation with the transfer of learning (Cromwell and Kolb, 2004, Kirwan, 2009 and Lwanga, 2009).

5.2 Learning Transfer and the ECD Learnership Curriculum

My discussion of whether transfer took place focuses on specific areas in the curriculum namely presentation of activities, written planning, layout and atmosphere in the playroom, resources, management and assessment of children.

One of the key findings of the study is that some transfer of learning took place at all the sites.

The average scoring of the qualified practitioners on the rating scale was higher for the application of what they have learnt than it was for the student-practitioners as shown in histogram 1 in Chapter 4. It was expected that qualified practitioners would give a higher score because they have worked at these sites for a longer period after completing their qualification and had more time to apply college-based learning. Student-practitioners have not completed their training and therefore have not had as much time to apply college-based learning.

Only one interviewee, the student-practitioner at Site B, indicated that she did not apply college-based learning in her work and that her approach in working with the children had not changed. I observed that she was not involved with the children and in the interview her responses were vague. By contrast the student-practitioner at Site A felt that she was applying college-based learning and that her approach had changed a lot.

Practitioners are expected to take care of the children on a daily basis and implement the daily programme as discussed in the curriculum at college. All the qualified practitioners and two of the student-practitioners were in charge of their own group of children whilst the other two were assistants of qualified practitioners. All the sites followed a daily programme which included a variety of activities, for example, morning rings and storytelling. Interviewees could discuss most of these different activities. Qualified practitioners seemed to have more knowledge and

insight into different activities than the student-practitioners. They answered in more detail in the interviews and evidence of these activities was observed in their playrooms, suggesting that greater transfer of learning had occurred.

Although all the interviewees claimed that they did written planning on a daily basis no or very little evidence was observed at most sites. However, at Site C, there was evidence of good written planning. Although planning was not done according to the layout taught in the college curriculum it met the requirements of activities for pre-schoolers as learnt at college.

Practitioners at Site C received pre-prepared written plans. They discussed the plans with each other, and under the guidance of the principal could adapt the plans to suit the needs of their own group of children. Interviewees at Site C commented that they had learnt a lot about preparing written plans even though at the site it was not done according to college guidelines. My research and the assessors' reports suggest that proper and regular written planning coincided with greater application of college-based learning. Overall it is clear that written planning was a challenging area to implement. This is consistent with my own experience that the planning according to the current curriculum is comprehensive and challenging to understand.

One of the key areas in the curriculum is the layout of the playroom. The playrooms at all the sites were divided into different areas except that of the student-practitioner at Site D. Although the space was adequate it was not always used effectively. An example is that the creative area at Site A was cramped. Three of the playrooms of the two practitioners at Site C and the qualified practitioner at Site D met all the criteria identified in the college curriculum. What was learnt at college was evident in these playrooms.

The availability of resources is important to support transfer of learning (Lwanga, 2009, p.24).

The data obtained at Site B indicated that the lack of sufficient resources inhibited the transfer of learning on rainy days when all the children had to be accommodated in the playroom which only had enough resources for half of the children. The resources were adequate at the other three sites. According to assessors' reports resources varied from sufficient for example in the City Bowl to very limited, for example in Khayelitsha, Gugulethu and Crossroads. ECD playrooms attached to schools were all well-resourced and assessors' reports suggested that the resources facilitated transfer of learning. A lack of resources can inhibit the transfer of college-based skills and knowledge at the ECD sites.

My data and assessors' reports show that the practitioners' management of and interactions with the children were good and that the practitioners were caring. This suggests that they were applying what they have learnt at college about managing children. The management of children is a part of the college curriculum and included when discussing the implementation of the daily programme. Only two practitioners, the qualified practitioner at Site A and the student-practitioner at Site B, did not interact with the children. All the qualified practitioners and one student-practitioner indicated that they were confident in their dealings with the children. My observation showed that the qualified practitioners interacted with more confidence than the student-practitioners, excluding the student-practitioner at Site A, who interacted with the same confidence as the qualified practitioners.

Although the assessment of the children's development is an explicit part of the curriculum I found this to be a neglected area and much of what was taught at college was not applied at the workplace. Most practitioners could show me quarterly progress reports only. Only the practitioners at Site C could show evidence of ongoing assessments such as check-lists and a few

written notes on the children's progress. Assessors' reports indicated that most students did not meet the requirements for assessment and that at most sites there was no evidence of ongoing assessments as taught by the college.

The next two sections specifically focus on support from principals and peers for transfer of college-based learning.

5.3 Principals' Support

The literature suggests that training may be wasted if trainees do not have opportunities to apply their learning (Lovell, 2010, pp.3-5). Principals have an important role in creating an organised environment so that practitioners can apply what they have learnt and practice the full range of tasks required in the curriculum. In addition principals are expected to provide mentoring and support and to ensure adequate resources. All the principals interviewed agreed on the importance of staff participation in college-based programmes and their role in supporting and encouraging the practitioners to apply what they have learnt. They felt that college-based learning could enable practitioners to become better employees to the benefit of the children. They provided the practitioners the opportunity to take a day off at work to attend training. All the principals had participated in learnerships at colleges and this could have contributed to their positive attitude towards college-based training. Moreover they knew the content of the curriculum and what practitioners were expected to apply at the sites. .

Although principals said they had supported the practitioners they did not have structures in place to support them, except at Site C. My interviews and observation at Site C provided evidence that the principal played an outstanding mentoring and supportive role. The weekly meetings that the principal convened provided a forum for reflection and structured

conversations with practitioners about the successes and challenges that they experienced at the site. These practitioners were actively involved under the guidance of the principal in contributing to an environment that enhanced learning and the application of learning. At the other sites the practitioners were not as actively involved. The principal at Site D referred to meetings but the student-practitioner said that no meetings took place. The qualified practitioner said that she “could not remember” if they had meetings. The practitioners at Sites A and B said that they never had meetings.

All the practitioners reported that they were afforded opportunities to implement what they had learnt. The scores of student-practitioners at Sites A, B and C about the principal’s role were much higher than those of the qualified practitioners. However, the responses at Site D were contradictory. The qualified practitioner was more positive about the principal’s role than the student-practitioner who said that she received no support from the principal.

An important role of the principal is to establish a culture where learning is valued (Lwanga, 2009, p.6). Direct feedback by principals, i.e, that they could see how the practitioners were implementing what they have learnt at college, contributed to creating a feeling of being valued. The student-practitioner at Site D is the only one who said she never received feedback from the principal. The practitioners gave examples of direct comments that were made by the principals, i.e, how the presentation of activities improved. In general, the principals’ reactions reflected a culture of appreciation and interest in what the practitioners had learnt at college.

5.4 Peer Support

The value of peer support is highlighted in the literature (Billet, 2002 and Lave and Wenger, 1991). Student-practitioners all had peers at their workplace who provided assistance and stood

in for them when they had to attend training at college or if one of them was absent due to being sick. The fact that they stand in for each other is a good example of the supportive role that they played as peers (Kirwan, 2009, p.103).

Another example of peer support was that they shared their learning with each other. Informal support was provided at all sites. Discussing the work and the progress of the children in meetings or informal conversations are examples of “social processes to strengthen the transfer of learning” (Billett, 2002, p.28). At Site C the structured meetings provided a more formal mechanism for peer support. Practitioners could share experiences, discuss what they learnt and what challenges they were experiencing in the implementation of the daily programme. Here more experienced peers could provide assistance and ideas could be shared within a community of practice (CoP).

Only the student-practitioner at Site D felt that her peers never commented on her work nor gave her advice although she often assisted them. Other practitioners gave examples of how they worked collaboratively with their peers. However, it seems that peer support did not extend to written planning and assessment records possibly because they all struggled with written planning and record keeping.

Knowledge is constructed through social interaction in a CoP (Lave and Wenger, 1991). In this study student-practitioners and more experienced practitioners who worked in the same teams shared ideas that contributed to construction of knowledge and transfer of learning. These types of participatory practices develop knowledge and have implications for the support and application of learning (Billett, 2001 and Wenger, 2008) which enable a newcomer to move from the periphery to the centre of the practice. However, the practitioners are not newcomers to the

CoPs. They have worked for several years at the sites where CoPs were formed. They were used to interaction with peers with more or less experience than themselves and had similar goals and interests even before they enrolled for learnerships. Most of the colleagues of the practitioners in this study have also studied or were studying towards ECD qualifications which strengthened the support amongst them while they were at college and at the sites where they worked.

5.5 Further Research

My research gave me insight into factors in the work environment which support transfer of learning, particularly the role of principals and peers. It also identified issues that need further investigation. I will discuss three of these issues.

My research showed that at Site C the responses of the practitioners were extremely positive about the role that the principal played in supporting them. The principal's responses were also positive and showed that she valued the transfer of learning. It is clear that she played a leadership role which went well beyond the roles for managers identified in the literature such as mentoring and support and creating a positive ethos and climate of respect. This leadership role seems to have had a more positive effect on transfer of learning at this site. Further research is needed in to the leadership roles of principals at ECD sites over and above the management roles identified in the literature.

A second area for further research is to explore whether there is a correlation between written planning and learning transfer. My data and assessors' reports suggest that proper and regular written planning coincided with greater application of college-based learning. However the research data does not provide sufficient basis to determine if there is a direct correlation.

Although near and far transfer of learning was not the focus of the research it was observed that some aspects of what was learnt at college could not be applied. This could be because the college curriculum did not always make allowances for the site context as illustrated in the examples about the different activities. Another possibility is that the lecturers did not take the site context into consideration. Further research is needed to investigate whether the college curriculum and facilitation address the knowledge and skills needed at ECD sites.

In the methodology chapter I discussed limitations of this study which limits the generalisation of the findings. Further research could involve a larger sample and be conducted over a longer time period. The research should be extended to other areas, e.g. suburban and rural areas. Unregistered sites should be researched.

5.6 Conclusion

Transfer is a complex concept and principal and peer support was found to be an important factor in the transfer of learning. Social interaction through practice was evident at all the sites, mainly between peers but also between practitioners and principals. This research provides important information for future researchers to focus specifically from the perspective of a training provider on the transfer of learning to the ECD workplace.

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7. APPENDICES



UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

APPENDIX A: Ethics Statement





**OFFICE OF THE DEAN
DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT**

**UNIVERSITY of the
WESTERN CAPE**

19 April 2013

To Whom It May Concern

I hereby certify that the Senate Research Committee of the University of the Western Cape has approved the methodology and ethics of the following research project by:
Mrs WJ De Villers (Education)

Research Project:

Factors in the workplace environment that influence the transfer of learning in early childhood development (ECD) learnership programmes in the Western Cape.

Registration no:

13/3/18

Any amendments, extension or other modifications to the protocol must be submitted to the Ethics Committee for approval.

The Committee must be informed of any serious adverse event and/or termination of the study.

*Ms Patricia Josias
Research Ethics Committee Officer
University of the Western Cape*

APPENDIX B: Letters of Consent & Information Sheet



Request to College for Consent

The CEO (acting): Mr Louis van Niekerk

334 Albert Road

SALT RIVER

7925

Tel. no. 021 404 6700

5 March 2013

Dear Mr Louis van Niekerk and Academic Board

Request for Consent to interview ECD educators for research in the Master's Programme in Adult Learning and Global Change : University of Western Cape

I am currently doing a Research Paper in partial fulfillment of the abovementioned Master's Degree and would like to interview ECD practitioners who are participating or have participated in learnerships funded by WCED. My research question for the Research Paper is: *What are the influences of the ECD work environment on the transfer of learning from to the classroom to the ECD workplace?*

This letter request permission from the Department of Social Development to interview and observe practitioners who voluntarily agree to be interviewed by me for the purposes of this research. All participants will receive and sign a letter of consent.

In turn, I confirm that the interviews will be treated with absolute confidentiality and will not be used for any other purpose other than for academic purposes. The names of participants will not be used in the research paper and a pseudonym or code will be used to attribute extracts from the interview. I also confirm that the names of the ECD sites will not be used in the research paper in order not to compromise the integrity and identity of participants in this research process.

You are welcome to contact me should you have any questions regarding this matter or you may contact my research supervisor at UWC, Ms Rahmat Omar at the contact details below.

My contact details are:

Mrs Wilma de Villiers

ICM ALGC Student

Ph. (021) 930 4238

E-mail: wdevilliers@cct.edu.za

Yours Sincerely

Mrs Wilma de Villiers

My research supervisor's contact details are:

Ms Rahmat Omar

Senior Lecturer: Faculty Education

Ph.: 021-959 2231

E-mail: raomar@uwc.ac.za

Abie & Wilma de Villiers

From: "Andrew J. Winks" <awinks@cct.edu.za>
To: "Abie & Wilma de Villiers" <abcdeville@polka.co.za>
Cc: <epeters@cct.edu.za>; <lvanniekerk@cct.edu.za>
Sent: Monday, April 29, 2013 3:22 PM
Subject: Permission granted to perform research at the College of Cape Town



Dear Wilma

Your proposed research to be conducted at the College of Cape Town has been endorsed by the Deputy CEO Academic, and has approved by the Chief Executive Officer. In terms of our research policy it is not necessary for the research to be approved by the Academic Board.

The thorough documentation and complete dossier meant that I did not have to spend time in collating the dossier. This greatly speeded up the approval process.

As a member of the College staff you already know who is who in the College, but if you require any further assistance then please feel free to contact me.

All the best for your studies!

Regards

Andrew J. Winks
QUALITY MANAGER

Telephone 021 404 6726

CENTRAL OFFICE

334 Albert Road, SALT RIVER, 7925 | P.O. Box 1054, CAPE TOWN, 8000
Tel: +27 21 404 6700 1/2 Fax: +27 21 404 6701
Info Line: +27 86 010 3682 | email: info@cct.edu.za | Website: www.cct.edu.za

Any views expressed in this message are those of the individual sender, and the College of Cape Town accepts no liability therefore, except where the sender specifically states them to be those of the College of Cape Town.

PLEASE DON'T PRINT THIS E-MAIL UNLESS YOU REALLY NEED TO

6/22/2013

Request to the Western Education Department Town for Consent

The ECD Learnership Co-ordinator

Sandra Fortuin

Western Education Department

CAPE TOWN

8000

Tel. No. 082 7739 056

March 2013

Dear Mrs Sandra Fortuin

Request for Consent to interview ECD educators for research in the Masters in Adult Learning and Global Change: University of Western Cape (UWC)

I am currently doing a Research Paper in partial fulfillment of the abovementioned Masters Degree and would like to interview ECD practitioners who are participating or have participated in learnerships funded by WCED. My research question for the Research Paper is: *What are the influences of the ECD work environment on the transfer of learning from the classroom to the ECD workplace?*

This letter request permission from WCED to interview and observe practitioners who voluntarily agree to be interviewed by me for the purposes of this research. All participants will receive and sign a letter of consent.

In turn, I confirm that the interviews will be treated with absolute confidentiality and will not be used for any other purpose other than for academic purposes. The names of participants will not be used in the research paper and a pseudonym will be used to attribute extracts from the interview. I also confirm that the names of the ECD sites will not be used in the research paper in order not to compromise the integrity and identity of participants through participation in this research process.

You are welcome to contact me should you have any questions regarding this matter or you may contact my research supervisor at UWC, Ms Rahmat Omar at the contact details below.

My contact details are:

Mrs Wilma de Villiers

ICM ALGC Student

Ph. (021) 930 4238

E-mail: wdevilliers@cct.edu.za

Yours Sincerely

Mrs Wilma de Villiers

My research supervisor's contact details are:

Ms Rahmat Omar

Senior Lecturer: Faculty Education

Ph.: 021-959 2231

E-mail: raomar@uwc.ac.za



Western Cape
Government

Education

Directorate: Research

Audrey.wyngaard2@pawc.gov.za

tel: +27 021 467 9272

Fax: 0865902282

Private Bag x9114, Cape Town, 8000

wced.wcape.gov.za

REFERENCE: 20130503-10491

ENQUIRIES: Dr A T Wyngaard

Mrs Wilhelmina De Villiers
16 Fiona Crescent
Panorama
7500

Dear Mrs Wilhelmina De Villiers

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: FACTORS IN THE WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT THAT INFLUENCE THE TRANSFER OF LEARNING IN EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT LEARNERSHIP PROGRAMMES IN THE WESTERN CAPE

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Approval for projects should be conveyed to the District Director of the schools where the project will be conducted.
5. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
6. The Study is to be conducted from **15 May 2013 till 15 July 2013**
7. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr A.T Wyngaard at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number?
9. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
10. Your research will be limited to the list of schools as forwarded to the Western Cape Education Department.
11. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
12. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:

**The Director: Research Services
Western Cape Education Department
Private Bag X9114
CAPE TOWN
8000**

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.

Signed: Dr Audrey T Wyngaard

Directorate: Research

DATE: 03 May 2013

Lower Parliament Street, Cape Town, 8001
tel: +27 21 467 9272 fax: 0865902282
Safe Schools: 0800 45 46 47

Private Bag X9114, Cape Town, 8000
Employment and salary enquiries: 0861 92 33 22
www.westerncape.gov.za

Information Sheet

INFORMATION SHEET: Transfer of Learning from the College to the Workplace

I am enrolled as a student in the *Intercontinental Masters in Adult Learning and Global Change: University of Western Cape*. A brief explanation of what the study is about and how you would take part follows:

The purpose of the study is to determine factors in the ECD site (workplace environment) that influence transfer of learning from the College to the workplace. The question is: “What are the influences of the ECD work environment on the transfer of learning from the College to the ECD site?”

Your view will be appreciated and I would like to interview you. If you agree to this, the interview will be audio recorded and will last approximately 45 minutes. I would also like to observe you in the playroom for approximately 30 minutes. For you to participate in this study I have received the consent of your supervisor for you to participate.

The information provided by you and my notes of my observation will be used for research purposes. It will not be used in a manner which would allow identification of your individual responses.

I have the consent of the Department of Social Development, the Western Education Department, and my employer, the College of Cape Town.

The study has been considered by an Ethics Committee at the University of the Western Cape and has been given a favourable review.

For more information, please contact me or my research supervisor of the University of the Western Cape.

My contact details are:

Mrs Wilma de Villiers

ICM ALGC Student

Ph. (021) 930 4238

E-mail: wdevilliers@cct.edu.za

Yours Sincerely

My research supervisor’s contact details are:

Ms Rahmat Omar

Senior Lecturer: Faculty Education

Ph.: 021-959 2231

E-mail: raomar@uwc.ac.za

Mrs Wilma de Villiers

Letter of Consent to be Interviewed

June 2013

Dear

Letter of Consent to be interviewed by Wilma de Villiers for her Research Paper of the Intercontinental Master's Programme in Adult Learning and Global Change: University of Western Cape

I am currently doing a Research Paper in partial fulfillment of the abovementioned Master's Degree and would like to interview ECD practitioner who are employed at ECD sites. My research question for the Research Paper is: *What are the influences of the ECD work environment on the transfer of learning from the classroom to the ECD workplace?*

This letter serves to confirm that you voluntarily agree to be interviewed by Wilma de Villiers for the purposes of this research. Your signature at the bottom of this agreement signifies that you agree to the terms outlined below and give your consent to be interviewed.

In turn, I confirm that your interview will be treated with absolute confidentiality and will not be used for any other purpose other than for the research paper. Your name will not be used in the research paper and a pseudonym or code will be used to attribute extracts from the interview.

I also confirm that the name of your ECD site will not be used in the research paper in order not to compromise your or the site's integrity and identity through participation in this research process.

Copies of the transcribed interviews will be made available on request.

You are welcome to contact me or my research supervisor at UWC should you have any questions regarding this matter.

Yours Sincerely

.....

Wilma de Villiers

My contact details are:

Mrs Wilma de Villiers

ICM ALGC Student

Ph. (021) 930 4238

E-mail: wdevilliers@cct.edu.za

Yours Sincerely

Mrs Wilma de Villiers

My research supervisor's contact details are:

Ms Rahmat Omar

Senior Lecturer: Faculty Education

Ph.: 021-959 2231

E-mail: raomar@uwc.ac.za

LETTER OF CONSENT

I,
 hereby voluntarily consent to be interviewed and observed by Wilma de Villiers for this research which is being undertaken as part of the *Intercontinental Masters in Adult Learning and Global Change: University of Western Cape*. I confirm that:


- I have read and understood the information sheet.
- I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- I understand that taking part in the study will include being interviewed and audio recorded.
- I have been given adequate time to consider my decision and I agree to take part in the study.
- I understand that my personal details such as name and workplace name will not be revealed in the research paper
- I understand that my words may be quoted for academic purposes, but my name will not be used.
- I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time and I will not be asked any questions about why I no longer want to take part.

Name	
Contact Number	
Signature	
Date	
Researcher's Name	Wilma de Villiers
Contact Number	082 724 3329
Supervisor's Name	Rahmat Omar
Contact Number	021-9592231

APPENDIX C: Research Questionnaires

OBSERVATION AT ECD SITE

Name of Student					
Name of Site					
Date					
CRITERIA					
Written planning of activities	1	2	3	4	5
Different activities are planned and presented each day	1	2	3	4	5
There is a pleasant atmosphere in the playroom	1	2	3	4	5
There is good interaction between the practitioner and children	1	2	3	4	5
A theme table is displayed in the playroom	1	2	3	4	5
An experiment table is displayed in the playroom	1	2	3	4	5
There is a book area	1	2	3	4	5
There is a fantasy area	1	2	3	4	5
There is an educational toy area	1	2	3	4	5
There is a creative area	1	2	3	4	5
The children's creative art activities are displayed	1	2	3	4	5

There is evidence that the children are assessed	1	2	3	4	5
There are posters in the playroom	1	2	3	4	5
The behaviour management is appropriate	1	2	3	4	5
The environment in the playroom is safe	1	2	3	4	5
General Comment:					
					
1	There is no evidence				
2	There is very little evidence				
3	The minimum evidence to be competent is evident				
4	More than the minimum evidence is evident				
5	The evidence is outstanding				

INTERVIEW WITH PRACTITIONER

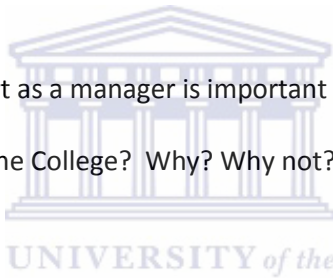
Name of Practitioner						
Name of Site						
1	I strongly disagree					
2	I disagree					
3	I neither agree or disagree					
4	I agree					
5	I strongly agree					
		1	2	3	4	5
1	I have applied some of the learning in my work					
2	I have changed my approach to my work to be consistent with what was taught					
3	I believe there is not much time in my job to allow me to concentrate on the use of learned capabilities.					
4	My manager/ supervisor had told me that my work behaviour has changed following what I have learnt					
5	My manager/ supervisor encourages me to apply my training in the workplace					
6	My peers had told me that my work behaviour has changed following what I have learnt					
7	Whenever I get the chance I put the learning from the training into practice					
8	Using what I have learned from the training benefits my ways of working					
9	I am more confident in tackling unfamiliar tasks and situations thanks to what I have learned on the training					

1. You scored yourself ... for question 1. Briefly explain your scoring. Can you give examples of what you have applied?
2. What did you learn at the college? Mention 3 important things that you've learnt at the college.
3. Do you get the opportunity to apply what you have learnt? Why?/Why not?
4. Do you apply what you have learnt every day? If not, how often.
5. What are the factors in the workplace environment which help you to apply the learning you gained at College? Give an example.
6. How does the training benefit your way of working? How can you do your job better?
7. Give me an example of a peer that commented on how your work practice has changed. Did he or she give an example of how your work changed?
8. Give me an example of the manager that commented on how your work practice has changed.
9. You scored ... for question 7. Explain how you get or do not get the chance to put into practice what you have learnt during your training at the college.
10. What do you find difficult (challenging) to implement? Give reasons for your answer.
11. Do you get the opportunity to share what you have learnt? Please explain your answer.
12. Do you get advice from others how to do your job? Explain your answer.

INTERVIEW WITH MANAGER

Name of Manager	
Name of Site	
Date	

1. Do you think that it is important that the staff should participate in college-based education and training? Why? / Why not?
2. Does the learner have opportunities to apply what has been learnt at college? Please explain your answer.
3. Do you think that your support as a manager is important to make it possible for the student to apply what she has learnt at the College? Why? Why not?
4. How are you supporting her?
5. Did her training improve her practices at the ECD site? How?/Why do you say so?
6. Can you give examples of how her work has improved since she started with training at the college?
7. Does she get the opportunity to share what she learnt? Please explain.



APPENDIX D: SUMMARY OF RATINGS ON RATING SCALES

The table below provides a summary of the practitioners' ratings for each statement in the rating scale. The scores provide an overall view and the table makes it easier to see what the outcomes were for each statement that the practitioners had to respond to.

Table 1 Summary of Practitioners' Ratings on the Rating Scale during Interviews

STATEMENT		Number of Responses for Following Ratings									
		Student-practitioner					Qualified Practitioner				
		1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
1.	I have applied some of the learning in my work		1	2	1					2	2
2.	I have changed my approach to my work to be consistent with what was taught		1		1	2				2	2
3.	I believe there is not much time in my job to allow me to concentrate on the use of learned capabilities.		1		2	1	1			2	1
4.	My manager/ supervisor has told me that my work behaviour has changed following what I have learnt			2		2		1		2	1
5.	My manager/ supervisor encourages me to apply my training in the workplace		2			2				2	2
6.	My peers had told me that my work behaviour has changed following what I have learnt	1			2	1			1	2	1
7.	Whenever I get the chance I put the learning from the training into practice				2	2				2	2
8.	Using what I have learned from the training benefits my ways of working			1	1	2				3	1
9.	I am more confident in tackling unfamiliar tasks and situations thanks to what I have learned on the training			1		3				2	2

Key:

1	I strongly disagree
2	I disagree
3	I neither agree or disagree
4	I agree
5	I strongly agree

Table 2: Summary of Scoring done by Researcher during Observations at the Sites

STATEMENT		Number of Ratings of Observations									
		Student-Practitioner					Qualified Practitioner				
		1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
1.	Written planning of activities	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	
2.	Different activities are planned and presented each day		1	2		1		1	2		1
3.	There is a pleasant atmosphere in the playroom			2	1	1			2	1	1
4.	There is good interaction between the practitioner and the children		1		2	1		1		2	1
5.	A theme table is displayed in the playroom	2	1		1			2	1	1	
6.	An experiment table is displayed in the playroom	3		1			2			2	
7.	There is a book area	1	1	2					2	2	
8.	There is a fantasy area		2	2				1	1	2	
9.	There is an educational toy area	1	1	1	1			2	1	1	
10.	There is a creative area	1	1	1	1			2	1	1	
11.	The children's creative art activities are displayed	1		2	1		1	1	1	1	
12.	There is evidence that the children are assessed		2	2				2	2		
13.	There are posters in the playroom	1	1	1	1			1	2		1
14.	The behaviour management is appropriate			2		1			3		1
15.	The environment in the playroom is safe			1	2	1				3	1

Key:

1	There is no evidence
2	There is very little evidence
3	The minimum evidence to be competent is evident
4	More than the minimum evidence is evident
5	The evidence is of a very high standard