



Research Title:

Early childhood development practitioner's experience of the occupation of nurturing with children from birth to five years: a descriptive qualitative study.

Researcher: Barbara Stemmert

Student number: STMBAR001

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Supervisor: Dr. Amshuda Sunday

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Abstract

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to describe the meaning of what the occupation of nurturing was for Early Childhood Development (ECD) practitioners practicing in Khayelitsha educares. This information gave rise to a shared understanding of what the occupation of nurturing was for ECD practitioners. An occupation not explored on the national or international platforms though greatly needed in supporting a thriving learning environment for young children.

The Aim

The aim was to describe the experiences of ECD practitioner's occupation of nurturing within educares in a low socio- economic environment of Khayelitsha.

The Objectives

To describe the ECD practitioners experience of participating in the four-day psychosocial Healing Arts training workshop facilitated by Bamblela. To explore how the ECD practitioner's self-awareness informed their understanding of their occupation of nurturing in providing a nurturing learning environment. To describe what the enablers and barriers were as experienced by ECD practitioners in fulfilling their occupation as nurturer. To describe practitioner's understanding of how their behaviour influenced the learning environment in how children learn.

The Methodology

Application of the qualitative approach utilized the descriptive tradition of inquiry which captured the nurturing experiences of the participants. The application of purposeful sampling in the selection of participants guided by the inclusion and exclusion criteria ensured a standardized baseline of skills and training. Data collected used semi structured interviews, document reviews, researcher notes and member checking for data verification. The data analyses process was guided by the application of the five stages as described by

Pope, Ziebland and May namely familiarization, thematic framework development, indexing, charting and mapping. The data analyses stages were guided through familiarization of the saturated data collected, which led to the identification of a thematic framework. This framework informed a structured process, which linked participant's responses to the study's objectives. The indexing comprised of the development of codes from the data, after further sorting and clustering the categories evolved. The charting process provided more information as the data was sorted into categories. This process further collapsed the categories, which informed the development of three themes. The mapping of categories per theme was undertaken, which informed the various facets interacting and diverging in the occupation of nurturing.

Guba's model guided the scientific rigour of the study by focusing on credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

Findings

Three themes emerged The Journey, The Awakening and The Game Changers. The findings showed the value in sharing life experiences through interaction with peers, which led to healing. Practitioners shared their positive and negative attitudes towards child handling as well as the power of knowledge and self-regulation. Exploration of the technical skills needed for child stimulation and management, characteristics of a practitioner, and environmental enablers and barriers.

Conclusion

The findings elucidated that practitioners became aware of the attributes and skills needed to provide children with a positive, caring and stimulating foundation within an educare. They achieved this through guided group facilitation in the psychosocial training workshop, which in turn ignited a healing process.

The holistic approach to the practitioner training created the awareness and motivation for them to explore their occupation of nurturing. They articulated the critical enablers and barriers to their role as practitioner in fulfilling this occupation.

Definition of Terms

- Early Childhood Development Centre (ECD) / Educare- “A partial care facility that provides an early childhood programme with an early learning and development focus for children from birth until the year before they enter Grade R / formal school” (Department of Social Development, 2015, p. 11).
- ECD Practitioner - “A person who provides early childhood development services through formal early childhood development programmes, family services and playgroups and training, as well as those providing as well as those providing management support services to these workers” (Department of Social Development, 2015, p. 12). Note: The ECD Practitioners will be referred to as practitioners in the text to follow.
- Early childhood – “Refers in this policy to the period of human development from birth until the year before a child enters formal school” (Department of Social Development, 2015, p. 11).
- Nurturing - “Encourage the growth or development of (a child or plant, etc.) (Soanes, Spooner, & Hawker, 2001, p. 607).
- Nurturing environment – “When children feel protected they display confidence to explore, which expands their learning opportunities” (Leo, 2007)
- Occupation - “[...] engagement in activities, tasks and roles for the purpose of productive pursuit, maintaining oneself in the environment, and for purposes of relaxation, entertainment and creativity, and celebration; activities in which people are engaged to support their roles” (Christiansen & Baum, 1997, p. 600).
- Self-Awareness – “Conscious knowledge of one’s own character, feelings etc.” (Soanes et al., 2001, p. 813).
- Township – Born out of the group areas act during apartheid in South Africa, the various race groups resided separately. Railways and pieces of land demarcated separation of the areas. People of colour lived in township areas further away from city centres. These

areas remain under resourced and majorly populated by black people. (Findley & Ogbu, 2011).

- National Qualifications Framework – ““National Qualifications Framework” is a comprehensive system approved by the Minister for the classification, registration, publication and articulation of quality assured national qualifications” (South African Qualifications Authority, 2012, p. 4).
- Levels of training – “level descriptors describe the learning achievement at a particular level of the NQF that provides a broad indication of the learning achievements or outcomes that are appropriate to a qualification at that level” (South African Qualifications Authority, 2012, p. 5).
- Level 1 – “Scope of knowledge, in respect of which a learner is able to demonstrate a general knowledge of one or more areas or fields of study, in addition to the fundamental areas of study” (South African Qualifications Authority, 2012, p. 5).
- Level 4 –

“Scope of knowledge, in respect of which a learner is able to demonstrate a fundamental knowledge base of the most important areas of one or more fields or disciplines, in addition to the fundamental areas of study, and a fundamental understanding of the key terms, rules, concepts, established principles and theories in one or more fields or disciplines” (South African Qualifications Authority, 2012, p. 7).
- Level 5 –

“Scope of knowledge, in respect of which a learner is able to demonstrate an informed understanding of the core areas of one or more fields, disciplines or practices, and an informed understanding of the key terms, concepts, facts, general principles, rules and theories of that field, discipline or practice”(South African Qualifications Authority, 2012, p. 8).

Acronyms

DSD - Department of Social Development

ECD Assistant – Early Childhood Development Assistant

ECD – Early Childhood Development

EPWP - Expanded Public Works Programme

FET – Further Education and Training

NCF – National Curriculum Framework

NELDS – National Early Learning Development Standards

NGO – Non-Government Organization

NQF – National Qualifications Framework

SAQA - South African Qualifications Authority

SETAs - Sector Education and Training Authorities

WCED – Western Cape Education Department

DoE – Department of Education

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1 Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Contextualizing the study

Early childhood Development in South Africa has been on the agenda of government and civil society for years. Various documents outline the child's rights to education, how principals are to manage the institution, as well as structural compliance for health and safety, this is mentioning a few of the focal areas These pertinent documents that inform this field: The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa addresses children's rights holistically ensuring they are protected (Republic of South Africa, 1996). The Children's Act No. 38 of 2005, chapters 5 and 6 has a specific focus on early childhood development (*Children's Act, No. 38 of 2005*, 2005). The White Paper on Education and training of 1995 highlights the value of early childhood stimulation and addresses the child's basic care through health, nutrition and safety (Department of Education, 1995). The National Early Learning Development Standards (NELDS), was developed by the Department of Social Development and the Department of Education to guide the development of learning programmes for 0 - 4 years old (Department of Education, 2009). The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) developed by the Department of Education refined the scope of learning programmes (Department of Basic Education, 2012). The National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy of 2015 addresses a comprehensive service for young children. The policy has short (2017), medium (2024) and long-term (2030) goals. This is inclusive of objectives and principals for implementation (Department of Social Development, 2015). A regulatory requirement includes implementing a registered learning programme of which the content is measured against the key areas addressed in the NELDs and NCF documents (Department of Education, 2009).

Prior to all the regulatory bodies, policies, and procedures, Ikamva Labantu, a community development organization based in the Western Cape, supported educares since 1954.

Although initially operating informally as this organization was established because of the need to support black South Africans in the townships of Langa and Gugulethu. Helen Lieberman the founder of Ikamva Labantu in the 1950's together with many community activists worked diligently to create opportunities for dignity, safety and survival of the most vulnerable. Much later, the need for a formalized organization arose which led to a constituted Non-Profit Organization in 1992 named Ikamva Labantu.

While the researcher performed site visits to educare two poignant areas requiring attention became evident. Firstly, the observations of rough handling and limited practitioner child interaction. This was distressing to observe although upskilling was provided for by early childhood development training organizations it remained a common occurrence. As an example, practitioners during nappy changing picked babies up by the arm and transferred them dangling to the nappy changing area. They had no to limited verbal interaction with the babies other than cleaning their bottoms as they moved along to the next baby. The large numbers of children allocated to the practitioners across all age groups was a causative factor which led to rough handling, corporal punishment and aggressive communication. This was but desperate negative measures to gain control in overwhelming circumstances. The practitioners limited training and child-handling skills could have been contributing factors that negatively influenced their relationship with the children. Reviewing teacher training found courses focused on child development and early child education produced teachers with a greater likelihood of implementing positive guidance techniques. They to used more verbal encouragement and viewed children as active agents contributing to their learning. (Lang, Mouzourou, Jeon, Buettner, & Hur, 2017) This further impeded healthy practitioner child interaction, resulting in compromised learning opportunities within the classroom. Secondly, most practitioners whether they had basic training in early childhood development or none, grappled with implementing developmentally appropriate activities to stimulate the children cognitively, emotionally, socially and physically with the ultimate goal to produce a child who was school ready. A plethora of research highlighted the importance of early stimulation and the long-term positive effects it had on children's scholastic achievement. In particular, in 2012, Heckman had

placed a strong emphasis on this correlation. More so for children living in impoverished conditions, they were not adequately prepared for school causing poor scholastic performance (Labantwana, 2013). There is undeniably a pertinent link between early stimulation of children and the impact on their health, scholastic abilities and influence on their later life achievements (Heckman, 2012). A longitudinal study undertaken to measure the performance of 8 year olds found two vital factors which influenced children's cognitive performance in primary school. The first was the quality of the early child care experienced by the child and secondly the interaction the child experienced with the adult. The latter indicated the attainment of higher verbal skills where the quality of the adult interaction was of a high standard. (Broberg, Wessels, Lamb, & Hwang, 1997)

Ikamva Labantu identified the need for a simplistic, developmentally appropriate training programme with extensive practical based learning opportunities for practitioners.

In 2012, this organization undertook a process of developing a training programme for practitioners which utilized the experiential learning model. The experiential learning model as applied in this training programme acknowledged people learnt better through doing. Learning concepts were integrated with greater ease and information retained for future implementation. The curriculum built on this practical model had a three-pronged approach. The first part was the development of a learning programme, secondly the establishment of an educare of best practice for in service training and lastly upskilling community-based workers to problem-solve, and guide practitioners in implementation of their training at their respective educares.

The learning programme informed by the NCF framework and the NELDS began and received registration by the DSD in February 2014. The DSD and the WCED requested that educares implement learning programmes according to the NELDS and NCF framework. The development of this learning programme answered two needs; one, the skills development for the practitioners, and two, the requirement of the DSD for educares to implement registered learning programmes. Practitioners attended training twice per month learning new theoretical concepts at the training centre.

In 2012, Kwakhanya Educare opened its doors in Khayelitsha as an educare of best practice. The role of this educare was to create a place for hands on implementation of theoretical learning under the direct supervision of skilled staff. This educare created a benchmark for practitioners to aspire towards to deliver quality childcare and education. Most practitioners needed this yard stick as they had not attended an educare as a child and had no or limited training in the area of child development. As a result, they had no point of reference as to what constituted good practice within their work domain. In 2015, ABSA Bank ECD Awards, bestowed the title of “Best practice educare within a township setting” to Kwakhanya Educare.

Practitioners attended this educare once per month to either observe or implement the theoretical topic learnt at that time. They received immediate feedback from the staff as each session was evaluated and highlighted strengths and areas needing growth.

Each practitioner had the task of implementing the learning programme, topic by topic within his or her classroom over a 10-month period. For many, this was not a process without its challenges as they experienced overcrowding, limited resources and years of operating from a place of comfort. Ikamva Labantu understood the complexities of implementing new skills and more so, sustaining the change. The response was the upskilling of Community Based Workers to visit each practitioner twice per month to guide and support, which in most instances involved executing extensive problem solving. Although strides were made at a gradual pace in offering children developmentally stimulating learning opportunities, child engagement and disciplinary techniques remained for the most part negative.

In address the need for more caring interactions from the practitioners the introduction of a four-day psychosocial training programme occurred. It became the precursor to the learning programme training. It was found that personality contributed positively to the effectiveness of a teacher. The lack of assessments determining whether the teachers had manifested traits such as a friendly attitude, positive engagement and being accommodating of others before selection to their profession were lacking. As these

personality components were critical, they were recommended to be included as part of a comprehensive assessment during the training process.(Soulis, 2009) The desired outcome of the psychosocial training was for the practitioners to develop an awareness of their behaviour, with a special focus on the children. Through the process of guided facilitation, they explored their past and the various impacts life events had on their thoughts and interactions with the world around them. The awareness raising and self-exploration of their life journey, deepened their self-awareness. This new sense of awareness was hoped to ignite insight which would lead to positive behavioral shifts.

As the learning programme developed a collaborative initiative with a non-governmental organisation, named Persona Doll immersed. This organisation focused on anti-bias and inclusive methodologies promoting tolerance and understanding within diverse contexts. The tools used were fabric dolls manufactured locally to represent all gender, religions, races, disability etc. These dolls received a persona profile and were never to be treated as a toy. Viewed as visitors to the classrooms who made his or her appearance according to what the practitioner observed as a need for addressing at a particular point in time. As the practitioners became competent in using the dolls they were able to engage with children in areas of need. For example, supporting a grieving child, to a child learning how to disclose abuse and or neglect they suffered at the hands of their carers.

Parallel to the in house training developments, Ikamva Labantu was conscious of accredited training offered at Further Education and Training colleges.

Practitioners participating in the Ikamva Labantu training since 2012 had varying levels of early childhood development qualifications. Some possessed no prior training while others had achieved a qualification at an FET College. Generally, they were not adequately practically trained although certified with a level 4 or 5 ECD qualification. They were unable to step into a classroom and deliver meaningful daily programmes. To achieve implementation of the learning programme they required explicit activities for each section of the daily plan.

Further Education and Training (FET) colleges offer the early childhood development qualifications. This course has levels of progression, starting with level 1, level 4, level 5 respectively through to higher education and training levels. Established post-apartheid when the identification of skill shortages in various employment sectors were noted. Its origin rooted in the 1994 the National Training Strategy Initiative, it was established to address the education and training needs of South Africa. The training was informed by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) Act of 2005. This body known as SAQA became responsible for the National Qualifications Framework, which encompassed all levels of education and training across all industries. The range of qualifications is from level 1 developed for people who had limited training, to post graduate qualifications (Grawitszky, 2007).

There are a number of Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) established for the various industries. The Education, Training and Development Practitioners (EDTP) Seta is the authority training practitioners for early childhood development amongst other portfolios.

It is within this sphere that practitioners' access accredited and skills development training for early childhood development. Practitioners with limited formal schooling would participate in a level 1 training. Practitioners with grade 10 and higher would access level 4 and practitioners with grade 12 would access level 5 early childhood development training. (Grawitszky, 2007).

1.2 In all this being said about training a great need continued to exist. This was to change educare environments into spaces that exuded caring for children. Rationale

This study set out to understand the occupation of nurturing of practitioners in educares located in a township setting. Children in these communities were faced with many socio-economic challenges. One life altering experience was exposure to inferior early childhood stimulation which influenced the children's school readiness. Without adequate school readiness these children had a limited opportunity to achieve academic success. Children

residing in poorer communities had by far a better chance to progress positively in a scholastic environment when their educare provided meaningful learning programmes .(Bakken, Brown, & Downing, 2017) In the reviewed literature, information on the occupation of nurturing to understand the practitioner involvement with children five years and younger could not be found on a national or international domain. The international arena had recorded information on nurturing and caring in isolation of occupation and it was worth mentioning more within resourced locations.

As the occupation of nurturing was part of the early childhood development practitioner function, information for understanding this complex component was needed. The findings of this research informed:

- Training organizations in what to include in the curriculum to upskill practitioners in their occupation of nurturing to improve child-handling and engagement strategies.
- Provided employers with insight into how to offer care and support to their practitioners. “How to achieve a healthy state and maintain it.”
- Added to the Occupational Therapy literature on the occupation of nurturing.

1.3 Problem Statement

A lack of positive child interaction with the early childhood development practitioner can negatively influence the learning environment. It further hinders opportunities for mutually beneficial interactions between the ECD practitioner and the children. Training service providers in the field of early childhood development could contribute to the development of practitioner’s ability to deliver stimulating learning programmes. It was noteworthy insufficient attention was placed on the acquisition of skills to enhance child handling within the paradigm of nurturer. The value of consistent teachers builds strong relationships, which is similar to a mother-child relationship providing a sense of security. Emphasizing it was not the concept of attachment as with a parent, it was more so an offer of stability which supported the children at an emotional level (Howes & Hamilton, 1992).

A child who had at least one adult who positively engaged them, made gainful impact in their development.

Literature reviewed produced no evidence in understanding what the occupation of nurturing was for practitioners both internationally or nationally. This brought attention to the gap in knowledge and the need for the generation of literature to understand the occupation of nurturing. Through the undertaking of a qualitative descriptive study the occupation of nurturing was explored. The process determined the various influences on the application of this occupation. This being vital information for training service providers to be cognizant of when reviewing the quality of trainee practitioner's classroom interactions. In particular, the Further Education and Training (FET) colleges, and non-governmental organizations involved in ECD practitioner skills development.

1.4 Purpose

This descriptive qualitative study was aimed to explore the practitioners experience of the occupation of nurturing working with children five years and younger. In doing so practitioners explored this occupation as they described their experience in the psychosocial training which set the scene for self –awareness development. The continuous effect of the self-awareness created the opportunity for influencing variables acting out in either a positive or negative manner on this occupation could be explored. Most importantly practitioners understanding of their behavioral influence on children's learning was foregrounded.

The findings add to the body of knowledge in the field of early childhood development focusing on nurturing more than a character trait. An occupation of practitioners, that requires more attention by training providers to enhance the learning platform for developing children to be school ready.

1.5 Research Question

What are the ECD practitioner's experiences of the occupation of nurturing in low socio-economic educares in Khayelitsha?

1.6 Aim of the study

To describe the experiences of ECD practitioner's occupation of nurturing within educares in low socio-economic environments of Khayelitsha.

1.7 Objectives

- To describe the ECD practitioners experience of participating in the four-day psychosocial training workshop.
- To explore how the ECD practitioner's self-awareness informed their understanding of their occupation of nurturing in providing a nurturing learning environment.
- To describe what the enablers and barriers were as experienced by ECD practitioners in fulfilling their occupation as nurturer.
- To describe practitioner's understanding of how their behaviour influenced the learning environment in how children learn.

2 Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction to the chapter

The following chapter will provide a review of the literature as it pertains to the focus of this study. Databases searched were EBSCOhost, Cinhal, SAGE, PschInfo, Psych Articles, Africa Wide, Pub Med and Google Scholar. The word search included: occupation of nurturing, teacher's role in nurturing, role of a preschool/educare teacher, nurturing and the learning environment, creating nurturing environments, teachers in township preschools in South Africa, early childhood development impoverished communities in South Africa, ECD practitioners nurturing role and ECD practitioners in South Africa.

2.2 Introduction to the literature review

The reviewed literature focused on gaining an understanding of the occupation of nurturing as experienced by practitioners in South Africa as well on the international front. This led to the current situation of early childhood development in South Africa within a township context. Critical it was to gain an understanding of what the role of the occupation of nurturing would be within a learning environment. The review then branched off and explored how the creation of nurturing learning environments occurred and how the practitioner had a role to play. As the occupation of nurturing is a culmination of various facets for a group within a specific community, the model chosen had to be malleable and able to review the interconnected and divergent facets. The Person-Environment-Occupation Model was chosen for its appropriate lens through which to view the practitioner, the learning environment and the occupation of nurturing. This model provided a framework to gain an understanding of the interconnectedness of the practitioners within the educare environment and the influence it had on the occupation of

nurturing would provide insights into the level of occupational performance. (Law et al., 1996)

2.3 Role of the practitioner in early childhood development

Access to quality age appropriate, comprehensive, developmentally stimulating environments for young children from lower income areas had the capacity to set a positive trajectory on children's scholastic abilities. When they are equipped with the cognitive, emotional and physical foundational skills prior to entering primary school they are at an advantage to understand and retain new information with greater ease. This creates a solid base upon which their foundation phase learning is concretized, thus enabling future learning to present with fewer learning obstacles. The value of early childhood development is critical in an unequal resource allocated country. (Fourie, 2013).

According to Harwood, Klopper, Osanyin, and Vanderlee (2013), in both third and first world countries two common factors were present when early childhood development teachers were asked about their roles. These common factors were being able to connect with children at an emotional level and an environment which was conducive to exploration which promoted learning. Further to this, the juxtaposition of carer and education limited the acknowledgment of the early childhood teacher seen as a professional. Some dynamic thinking teachers saw their role as far reaching beyond the basic classroom needs. They viewed their roles as influencing the child holistically, inclusive of spirituality, safety, family involvement and influencing their communities.

In a first world country such as the United States of America, they acknowledged the positive impact of quality early childhood education. Especially amongst children residing in poverty-stricken nodes of society. A longitudinal study with various cognitive tests were performed which indicated a connection between the higher level of cognitive performance and children who participated in the early childhood development programme. The teachers delivered a child centered approach and utilized a specific regiment of games according to the developmental stages and ages of the children. In

addition, the provision of individualized attention to younger children were evident. This implied that the knowledge and skill levels of the teachers were vital to the successful delivery of a quality programme that displayed positive impact into adulthood (Campbell, Ramey, Pungello, Sparling, & Miller-Johnson, 2002).

Besides the knowledge and skill level of teachers, it was important to consider the human or emotional aspect in the scholastic environment with young learners. For example, children viewed their teachers with high regard and watched them closely. The teachers' every action and reaction was absorbed by the young and curious minds. Many children emulated their teachers and therefore they needed to be conscious of their behaviour and general attitude. As role models they laid the foundation upon which future learning was constructed; their influence was far reaching beyond the scholastic years. (Gokarn, 2018).

In summary, emphasis was placed on children who resided in poorer communities having a greater chance to succeed at school when they received the appropriate stimulation at a young age. Research has shown that the skill, abilities and attitude of the practitioners were vital to maximizing the children's learning potential. The improved learning potential showed its benefits into adulthood which not only positively affected the individual, but their families, community and of course the greater society. The societal gain from quality early childhood development was for one the cost benefit. The reduction in the need to access remedial intervention through the establishment of strong and meaningful relationships influenced development and in turn maximized the children's learning potential. These components were found to be building blocks to the achievement of success in life. (Knudsen, Heckman, Cameron, & Shonkoff, 2006)

2.4 Early Childhood Development within township communities in South Africa

There were various names attached to facilities providing education and care for children under the age of five years. A common name used in South Africa is educare. It reflects the two components expected for such a facility, which is **education** and **care** thus "**educare**" (Liddell & Kemp, 1995).

A long-standing problem existed in not having appropriate programmes for young children residing in impoverished communities. This existed prior to the abolishment of apartheid and continued for many years (Ebrahim, Killian, Rule, & Care, 2011).

In 2015, the National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy was implemented which covered a range of comprehensive services for children under five years, inclusive of their parents. The establishment of a goal by the Department of Social Development to be achieved in 2030 was to provide young children with exposure to quality learning programmes that met their age and stage of development. This would create a platform for school readiness, which in turn would adequately prepare children for their schooling years. Reference was made in one of the five listed objectives to practitioners being knowledgeable and skilled to deliver the learning programme (Department of Social Development, 2015).

Access to training for both centre-based and out of centre early childhood development sites were readily available, although varying factors influenced the quality of training implemented. These factors referred to limited practical opportunities to refine skills as well as limited onsite support. (Eric Atmore, Van Niekerk, & Ashely-Cooper, 2012). Harwood et al. (2013) added that a South African practitioner highlighted inequalities in access and quality child educares, and saw the need for the government to address this imbalance. The practitioner went on to share her own need to expand her skills in early childhood development.

Apartheid created huge disparities across racial groups which limited levels of access and impacted on basic human rights. The oppressive nature of this racial device created various social ills, of which poor quality and limited educational access was one. Post-apartheid resulted in the abolishment of laws around segregation of the poor. For the most part, these laws targeted or affected black people. Despite the abolishment's, black people (like those in Khayelitsha) continued to experience extreme hardship.

Children who are the future of South Africa's economic and social development experienced limited access and poor quality health, social and educational services. This perpetuates a negative cycle as poor health and education leads to poor socio-economic levels and feeds into many of the social ills (Liddell & Kemp, 1995).

In a study conducted in both South Africa and Nigeria it was found teachers in both countries understated the relevance of play as part of the learning process in their classrooms. Their classrooms showed little visual appeal to captivate young minds and were not set-up as environments that welcomed play as a methodology for learning. In the absence of this teacher insight children experienced challenges in their development as learning and mastering skills were hampered. The poor levels of training offered to the teachers as well as unrealistic expectations placed on young children's learning outcomes, led to the divergence from play. Limited resources from structural to equipment, overcrowding, and limited finances contributed to the diminished focus on play (Ogunyemi & Ragpot, 2015).

Similarly, various influences such as poor provision of early childhood development services linked to inadequate financial resources, poor levels of training and commitment of practitioners to ill fitted structural environments all affected children's learning negatively. Once again the poor child in lower income areas experienced the effects of inequality (Eric Atmore, 1998).

“..... only 35% of practitioners responsible for infant and toddler classes had any form of ECD qualification, and only 47% of practitioners responsible for older children had any form of ECD qualification” (Western Cape Department of Social Development, 2010, p. 43).

The author emphasized the need for the development of quality early childhood development programmes. It would rapidly enable practitioners to translate theoretical knowledge into practical skills. As the need for competent early childhood development

practitioners was pertinent to affect the developing young minds and bodies to embrace future learning from a concretized learning foundation (Eric Atmore, 2013).

After training, the value of reflective practice was observed in how practitioners improved on their teaching delivery as having positive influences on the children's learning. Although improvement was noted, there remained a void in impact assessment of teaching interventions as related to the context of the children extrapolating what worked and what did not, and the way forward in achieving the teaching outcomes (Fourie, 2013).

In summary, during the course of the South African post-apartheid period, gross inequalities remained and the poor continued to experience it daily. Although the name *educare* depicted education and care, accessing quality early childhood development education within the township communities remained a long-standing dream. Practitioners were not adequately skilled which formed part of the reason behind the South African government's development of the National Integrated ECD policy with a goal for all children to access quality learning programmes by 2030.

2.5 Occupation of nurturing and the learning environment

Numerous studies were reviewed, no literature that addressed the occupation of nurturing as an intertwined unit in practitioner's daily classroom function was found. This study created an understanding of nurturing as an occupation. It brought awareness to what the influences and various activities that were encompassed in this occupation. Literature was found which addressed nurturing as a stand-alone which focused strongly on the impact it had on attachment, and the teaching models applied in the classroom and levels of support that was offered to children.

A definite link was found between the teacher-child relationship and their long-term school performance. The impact was far reaching into the child's long term school performance. This placed emphasis on the value of the attachment theory, which identified the value of at least one adult who provided a consistent supportive relationship to a child. (Bridget K Hamre & Pianta, 2001). Attachment was one of a few behavioural

systems that formed the precursor to unlocking other systems as it was related to the age and stage of the child's development. Attachment was identified as an emotional bond a child experienced which created the feeling of security (Hazan & Shaver, 1994).

Critical to the learning environment was the model practitioners drew from which guided their teaching practice. The teacher-centered approach with the traditional didactic style relied strongly on the teacher to lead and the child followed. The child was the passive participant in the learning trajectory. This stunted creativity by the reduced active participation opportunities withheld from the children. Shifting to the child-centered approach would have elicited opportunities for the children to lead and explore. They would have held the learning process under the guidance of the teacher. (Hayes, 2008).

Emphasis was placed on the need to advocate for positive interaction between the teacher and child. This relationship was viewed as critical in the creation of a nurturing and supportive learning environment. Teachers would need a different training regime which placed emphases on the child as the active agent of change in his learning. Parallel to the shift towards the child-centred approach would be have been how teachers would have brought nurturance into their relationships with the children. (Hayes, 2008).

A nurturing relationship between the teacher and the child flourishes as a cause and effect awareness developed. The teacher is encouraged by the child's positive responses to her interaction and in turn, the child learns what to expect when they behave in a positive manner. This interaction created a platform for the children to learn self-regulation inclusive of how to respond in a composed fashion in other situations. This supports emotional maturation through emotional awareness (Denham, Bassett, & Zinsser, 2012).

Teachers trained in beliefs, knowledge, skills and practices related to their interaction with children in their classrooms created a substantial awareness. This awareness raising was sufficient to influence the teacher child engagement to increase the learning potential of the children (Bridget K. Hamre et al., 2012).

The young inexperienced teacher in most instances lacked the capacity to shift from being self-focused to child focused as they navigated through their new role. Training opportunities were encouraged for further development of self, as the teacher matured through self-awareness development, her skills refined to engage with a child-centred approach. Research indicated that teaching staff had to be a mix of fledglings and experience to maximize children's opportunity to experience a nurturing environment (Lundeen*, 2007).

In summary, no documented understanding of the occupation of nurturing was found nationally or internationally. However, documentation of the value of nurturing interactions and relationships between teacher and children acknowledges the invaluable contribution within the classroom. The general thought was teachers needed awareness raising of their interaction with the children. This awareness raising aided in improved interaction, which resulted in improved learning experiences by the children.

2.6 Creating nurturing environments

Emphasis was placed on how teachers assisted children in managing negative behaviour and supported them in their responses. The importance of how teachers are trained influenced the social emotional environment of the classroom (Zinsser, Shewark, Denham, & Curby, 2014).

ECD teachers played a vital role in the creation of the learning environment for children. They were encouraged to engage with kindness and caring as they moved away from the negative punishment reaction. A hurdle to the achievement was the structure of the training curriculum the Irish implemented. A need to promote the child-centered model was identified to promote understanding of the various processes the teachers needed to build nurturing relationships and encouraged the development of teacher confidence for sustained application. (Hayes, 2008).

The National Association for the Education of Young Children in the United States of America stipulated the minimum standards of a quality programme for young children. It had a comprehensive focus as to what encapsulated a quality programme. They mentioned relationships between children, how the teacher implemented her lessons, the appropriateness of the activities for developmental stage, and the visual appeal of the classrooms (Mashburn et al., 2008).

Practitioners employed in poorer educarees who had limited monthly income faced many challenges. The lack of resource acquisition was but one factor that hampered implementation of their theoretical knowledge. This was their reality though not a deterrent to attending training (Fourie, 2013).

Creating meaningful relationships within the classroom from kindergarten and throughout the school years had various aspects that needed to be intertwined in the teacher's approach. These aspects included: treating the child as a whole person which was inclusive of emotional expression, emotional intelligence and spirituality.(Carlsson-Paige, 2001) A tendency to omit these aspects in the learning sphere gave preference to systematic learning such as pre-mathematical skills. This approach disconnected the child from their autonomy as they plodded through the tick box approach to achieving the rote learning outcomes. It was believed teachers approach to teaching had the capacity to shift if they become skilled in understanding and applying the child-centred approach. When the learning environment did not take cognizance of the child's needs, the learning opportunities were lost. Without the relevant child-centered training teachers were placed in a disadvantaged position by gravitating towards the didactic approach. This left the child's emotional intelligence unmet which opened a situation of resentment as the child was left to grapple with grasping concepts, craving to be heard and the opportunity to listen to others and respond to different situations (Carlsson-Paige, 2001).

In summary, teachers training must incorporate the concept of nurturing with skills in child handling. The teacher-child interaction constitutes a vital component in creating a nurturing learning environment. This is as important as the day-to-day learning programme delivery, if not more important serving as a precursor to learning. Acknowledgment must be made for the environmental resource constraints in poorer community settings teachers' face when they attempt the implementation of newly acquired skills.

2.7 ECD Practitioners role in nurturing

A research project was undertaken to develop teachers' social-emotional competencies with the purpose to prevent burnout. The valuable gain was twofold; firstly, it was not only self-serving to prevent burnout, but in addition, it allowed the enhancement of their skills to develop insight into the behavior of children before they administered punishment as the initial response (Zakrzewski, 2013).

Opportunities for practitioners to voice their thoughts and feelings regarding their experience in the field of early childhood development provided clarity. By telling their stories, common performance areas emerged and collectively evolved into a unified understanding of their role. This process had additional benefits, one being reflective practice, which substantiated their expertise (Harwood *et al.*, 2013). The active role of practitioners to not only educate children but nurture as well, the latter was noted as a newer concept identified as part of their role. This was interesting that it was observed as a new concept especially as the children were young and needing a stronger emotional connection with the practitioners. In addition, they mentioned the training would need review to be inclusive of the nurturing approach (Hayes, 2008).

The young child and his parents needed support when they transitioned from the home environment to the preschool setting. This shift was stressful and required emotional grounding by the teacher to respond supportively and create caring interactions with both

parties. The teacher had to connect with the child in a caring manner to gain trust as well as settle into the stimulating learning environment (Wright, 2010).

Noting teachers who were socially-emotionally in tune with themselves were better equipped to provide a learning environment for children. In addition, they showed insightful management of challenging behaviour (Zakrzewski, 2013). For example, respect underpinned two key areas which promoted caring and stimulating classroom environments for children. Firstly, the child was viewed as an autonomous being who had the ability to make choices. The learning experience needed to take the child's right to actively engage in the teacher child relationship. The second was the teachers understanding that providing education was not separate to caring when they engaged young children. The incorporation of these areas into practice was likely when nurturing informed the teachers practice (Hayes, 2008).

Our emotional state and ability to self-regulate determines how we respond in a particular context. In this instance, teachers who were not emotionally fit and competently able to manage their responses in a challenging classroom environment tended to provide limited to no support. These teachers implemented harsher consequences as they lacked the impartial introspective ability to assess the situation. This perpetuated a lack in their problem solving ability as they succumbed to their internal emotional state (Jeon, Hur, & Buettner, 2016).

Young children who entered a new environment found the experience extremely overwhelming and become unsettled. The teacher played a huge part in embracing the children in a warm and caring manner thus grounding them emotionally. This process supported the child's capacity to learn as they felt protected and become adventurous to explore and learn with greater ease (Gokarn, 2018).

In summary, the teacher had an important role to play in nurturing. Numerous facets existed which required attention, enabling teachers to incorporate the nurturing approach

into daily practice. Self-care observed to enable cognitive agility informed improved caring and decision-making regarding child handling. Shared experiences through storytelling created learning opportunities of which reflective practice was one. Teachers who possessed the understanding of self, inclusive of the value of respect were better able to offer children the needed nurturing. In saying this, nurturing was seen as a “new” concept to teacher’s roles. Its inclusion in their training was critical to promote its value and implementation.

2.8 Person- Environment- Occupation Model

The Person- Environment– Occupation model being dynamic, was applicable to an individual and a group of people and the environment was the context of the enactment of the occupational performance. The environment as an example could be a meaningful event linked to the individual or group member’s culture or within a work or education setting. The occupation is an amalgamation of roles and activities. The occupation has meaning to the person and requires levels of skill and knowledge for mastery (Strong et al., 1999).

This model looks at three components: the person, their various occupations and the particular environment they act within at a particular time, resulting in occupational performance. The term transactional used by the author, described the relationship which is ever-changing and almost fluid; emphasizing an input and output amongst the variables which are the person’s occupation, the occupation and environment, and the person and environment. Additional influences such as the roles played by the person, the context within which they play out, and the timing of the needed occupational performance, informed behavioural adjustments. These adjustments made within the person’s behaviour enabled occupational performance(Law et al., 1997). Further to this, the greater the synergy between these three components influenced the level of occupational performance (Law et al., 1996).

The person required skills and knowledge of the specific occupation as well as social and emotional skills guiding their behaviour. These are the enablers activating occupational performance (Law *et al.*, 1996).

There is a belief that the person was intrinsically driven when acting out their roles; this elicits learning opportunities promoting the necessary change in behavior and influencing the level of occupational performance (Law *et al.*, 1996).

In defining what an occupation is to an individual, it is found that it encapsulates their inherent needs for self-care and their ability to assert influence. This creates meaning to their participation and the benefits to those they interact with, inclusion of the environment (Law, 1991).

Two scenarios existed: people selected their work occupations based on their interests, or employers identified them. The key factor was the connection they experienced within the work environment. The more dedicated individuals worked at refining their skills to gain a higher level of occupational performance. A person could either terminate their work occupation or find solutions in how to mold the work occupation to better compliment them (Wille, Beyers, & De Fruyt, 2012).

Contextualizing the environment as having four segregations: physical, cultural, societal and social. Each of those four have components influence on how the person engaged in their range of occupations (Law *et al.*, 1997) . Occupational performance is maintained or improved when adjustments are made to the environment, thereby enhancing or maintaining the individual's experience (Law *et al.*, 1996). A suggestion of being mindful of environments creating risks, thus preventing the fulfillment of a particular occupation relevant to the individual. No matter how much the person changes, the environment creates the barrier. In these cases, adequate exploration of the environment to identify areas of environmental adjustment, which will thereby promote occupational performance (Law, 1991).

The Person Environment Occupation Model focused on the continuous interaction between the person, the environment and their various occupations. When viewing these

three components at different periods in time, the interaction varies resulting in changing occupational performance (Law et al., 1996). This model assisted in presenting the various internal and external factors that enabled and hindered the implementation of a particular occupation. By defragmentation of the three; the person, the environment and the occupation and how they interact, provided the ability to analyse the source of the challenge. This in turn enabled action at the point of need to improve occupational performance (Strong *et al.*, 1999).

In summary, this model was applicable to an array of situations, applicable at an individual level and to a group in a micro or macro environment. It reviewed three components: the person, the environment and the occupation. The interplay between these three informed the occupational performance. It further explored the enablers and barriers the person and environment possessed in relation to the specific occupation. This process provided detailed analyses forming a base for corrective action to improve the occupation function, referred to as occupational performance.

2.9 Chapter conclusion

The reviewed literature was to understand what research existed regarding the occupation of nurturing by exploring the role of the practitioner generally and in relation to nurturing. How the context of the township setting played a role as well as understanding how to create a nurturing learning environment and its influence on learning. This was viewed through the lens of the Person-Environment-Occupation Model. The interplay between the various components of the model developed an understanding of the cause and effect aspects together with enablers and barriers to achieving the desired level of occupational performance of nurturing.

The literature showed that the importance of emotional connection between a teacher and a child laid a foundation for learning. The value teachers gained in experiencing positive responses by the children when they became intentional about their positive interaction

served as motivation for ongoing implementation. This showed the value of feedback between the teacher and the child in the classroom thus growing the teachers' positive engagement.

Further to this, the definition of the word *educare* when separated into the two syllables represented the connection of education and caring as an intertwined entity. The syllable "edu" represented education and "care" as the emotional responsibility provided to safe guard and nurture young children. The latter informed the occupation of nurturing, although it is noted as being a new concept to be added to teacher training.

The value of teacher self-care opportunities provided platforms to listen to others and have others listen to them. Learning environments required teachers who were emotionally present and engaged in healthy child interactions. Creating opportunities of support for teachers reflected in positive classroom management and influenced the children's learning experience. Nurturing relationships were viewed as important, but no documentation was found by the researcher which addressed the teacher's occupation of nurturing on an international or national platform. This led to the need for the current research to inform this pertinent occupation.

3 Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter covered the research process, approach and the selected design. It further explained the data collection and analyses processes, tailing off with ethical considerations.

3.2 Research Approach

Utilization of the qualitative methodology best suited the type of data needed to understand what the occupation of nurturing was for early childhood development practitioners. Moser and Korstjens (2017) mentioned the qualitative method enabled the exploration of how others captured their exposure and responses to a particular situation. This process would lead to understanding the influences that informed their thoughts and responses in particular contexts. The descriptive inquiry captured the experiences of practitioners as they pieced together the various facets of this undocumented occupation. The practitioners shared their stories through prompting by the questions posed in the interviews. Gathering information from the source, by listening to how the participants experienced a particular issue within their context created an empowering experience (Creswell, 2007).

3.3 Research Design

Qualitative descriptive design as described by Sandelowski (2000) explored the experiences of the occupation of nurturing as described by the ECD practitioners. The research aimed to describe their experiences in relation to their engagement with young children. In addition, extrapolation of the key influencing factors, namely barriers and enablers, provided insight into their experiences as a nurturer. Qualitative description provided information on how people experienced their spaces in relation to what hinders and supports the area of focus

(Sandelowski, 2000). Qualitative description provided invaluable information as it captured people's real experiences. This included but was not limited to gathering information on the factors that enabled and hindered, why people participated in a particular process or service or how time influenced their experience. Gathering information from the source provided real information that was required to describe the particular research focus. This tradition of inquiry was fluid and better positioned to capture information in a more organic approach as it had less rigidity. It unfolded according to the context at a particular point in time in order to understand the experience (Colorafi & Evans, 2016).

3.4 How sites were approached for selection

After receiving ethics approval for this study, an information and permission requesting session took place at the training organization's centre with the educare principals, to gain access to their practitioners during the educare operating hours. A translator was available for clarification and questions as the medium used was English. Firstly, an explanation of the purpose of the study, followed by the process, risks and benefits, confidentiality took place. This was followed by how the dissemination of the research findings would take place. Following this engagement, repetition of the information to the practitioners took place with the intention to recruit voluntary participants.

3.4.1.1 The introduction of the research project to the principals and their practitioners.

The introduction began with the focus of the study, which was describe the early childhood development practitioner's occupation of nurturing through their experiences, within the context of their educares as they delivered learning opportunities and cared for the children from birth to five years.

It was further explained how the research would be conducted through the shared understanding of process.

The requirements of the participants who qualified to participate in this study were practitioners from the Ikamva Labantu Persona Learning Programme who completed the psychosocial training. Their educare would have been situated in Khayelitsha. In addition to this, the practitioners would have had at least three months of support visits from the Community Based Workers who assisted with implementation.

The selection of seven participants was from the volunteer group who would participate in individual interviews. The interviews lasted approximately two hours and took place at the training centre. A translator was present for clarification and all information was recorded on a Dictaphone as well as the researcher took notes. A transcriber signed a letter for confidentiality as all information was to be transcribed for analysis purposes.

The possibility of a second interview existed for member checking of the data collected and to ensure correct interpretation was discussed.

3.4.1.2 Management of confidentiality

All information was handled confidentially by not sharing the recorded information with the broader community or any other source. Attention was brought to agreements signed by the transcriber and translator to maintain confidentiality. All findings and in referencing quotations, pseudonyms were used. Possible risks for participants when sharing traumatic experiences where they could be left feeling vulnerable as they relived events. Although there was the incorporation of pseudonyms, the use of direct quotes could have resulted in identification of a participant by staff. Particularly the trainer and community-based workers as they engaged with participants over an extended period creating familiarity.

3.4.1.3 *General information*

Benefits would have been being part of a group that contributed to creating an understanding of what the occupation of nurturing was for practitioners and how it would be further developed. Practitioners would be playing an important role in informing early childhood development organizations of what additional training and support was required in training programmes.

Voluntary participation: participation in this research project was voluntary and the participant could withdraw at any time.

Compensation covered travel costs, which was paid to participants on the day of their respective interview.

Research findings: upon approval of the final report, the researcher committed to inviting all practitioners and principals on the Ikamva Labantu training programmes to a presentation of the research findings.

3.5 *Researcher*

Barbara Stemmert, an Occupational Therapist has twenty-three years' experience of which nine years was devoted to early childhood development. The prior years included community rehabilitation and community development, in addition to two and a half years' experience in gerontology rehabilitation abroad. The researcher is not a coworker to the participants however, the level of authority as the manager of the training department existed. The delay in data collection removed the power dynamic; the participants completed their training in 2017, the data collected took place in 2018 and post the researcher's role change in the organisation.

3.5.1.1 *Researcher's' assumptions*

- The lack of insight from the practitioners in how their behaviour hindered the creation of a nurturing environment.
- ECD Practitioners where not aware of how their behavior influenced the children's learning opportunities.
- Unsupported children are at risk of not developing their full potential in an environment, which does not nurture.
- Lack of adequate training in early childhood development does not promote practitioner's awareness of how they should support children's emotions.
- Social ills traumatized practitioners, which created the need for psychological interventions.
- Practitioners choose employment in educares, as other options were limited. This resulted in uncommitted practitioners negatively influencing young children's development.
- Participants from the psychosocial and learning programme training possessed insight into how their interaction with the children influenced their learning experience and development.

3.5.1.2 *Translator*

- The translator was a 29-year-old Xhosa speaking female. She had achieved Grade 12 and a Diploma in Tourism. She was in the position of an Early Childhood Development Assistant at Ikamva Labantu. She had experience in the role of translator prior to assisting in the research interviews.

3.5.1.3 *Transcriber*

- A graduate from the University of Cape town (UCT). English speaking female in her late twenties. She had extensive experience in transcription to mention a few of her clients:
 - Honours and Masters candidates from UCT
 - PHD candidates at Rutgers University in Newark, USA
 - Avedia Energy in Cape Town
 - Community Chest in the Western Cape

3.6 Participants

3.6.1.1 *Sampling*

Application of purposeful sampling for the selection of participants was guided by the inclusion and exclusion criteria. This ensured participants possessed the similar baseline criteria for an objective review. Purposeful sampling as described by (Guba, 1981, p. 86):

“purposive sampling, that is, sampling that is not intended to be representative or typical (such a purpose focuses the investigator on similarities and makes sense only when one is trying to generalize) but that is intended to maximize the range of information uncovered. The nature of the sampling process is governed by emergent insights about what is important and relevant.”

According to Berg (2001), purposive sampling also known as judgmental sampling, is guided by the researcher as they understand which group best represents the purpose, as the area of research falls within their scope of practice.

The selection of seven participants from the Ikamva Labantu Persona Doll learning programme according to specific inclusion and exclusion criteria as listed in the table below. Inclusion and exclusion criteria was applied to ensure complete objectivity. All participants meeting the same criterion adds to the quality assurance (Creswell, 2007).

The sample size was adequate to draw data that presented sufficient similarities and fewer differences to arrive at an understanding of the occupation of nurturing.

3.6.1.2 Table: Selection criteria

Inclusion	Exclusion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECD Practitioner with at least 2 years’ experience employed in an educare. • Participated in at least 3 days of the 4 days of the psychosocial 2017 training workshops. • Has a baseline assessment prior to the psychosocial training on the interaction between practitioner and their children. • At least three months of onsite support provided by the Community Based workers (CBW) post psychosocial training. • Attended the Ikamva Labantu and Persona Doll learning programme (ILPDLP) training with not less than 60% attendance. • Employed in Khayelitsha. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less than 75% attendance (3 days) of the psychosocial training. • Baseline assessment completed post the psychosocial training. • Did not receive consistent onsite support visits from CBW’s for three months post the psychosocial training. • Attended less than 60% of the Ikamva Labantu and Persona Doll learning programme (ILPDLP).

3.6.1.3 Recruitment

During the recruitment process, the principals and practitioners attending the training at the training centre were informed of the following:

- The purpose of the research.
- Why participants from the training are needed to participate voluntarily in the research.
- How selection of the participants will occur, explaining the inclusion and exclusion criteria.
- Participants will have two weeks to give the request consideration and the trainer will follow up on who would like to volunteer through a telephone call.
- They have the right to decline participation request.
- Confidentially in research write-up using participant numbers for identification and not names.
- Participants could bridge confidentiality in the focus group.
- Explained the timeframe of the data collection and the location of the individual and focus group interviews will take place at the Centre.
- When and how research findings will be shared with the participants.
- Provided an information sheet with an informed consent form to be signed by the participants and researcher.
- Opportunity for questions was created on a one-on-one basis.

3.6.1.4 Introducing the participants

The research intent was presented to sixty-six principals and practitioners respectively explaining that seven volunteers were required. The inclusion and exclusion criteria was

shared, highlighting only Khayelitsha and Mitchells Plain areas were eligible, as well as noting the remaining inclusion and exclusion criteria. This reduced the selection total to fifty-eight educare sites. Post the final canvassing for volunteers, Mitchells Plain had only six participants of which no one volunteered. This changed the study’s area coverage to only Khayelitsha.

The following statistical information for the area of Khayelitsha contextualized the operating environment of educares.

“Khayelitsha is one on the largest township areas in the Western Cape with a population size of 391 749”, as per the 2011 Census: Key results for 2011 Census Suburb Khayelitsha: The population is predominantly Black African (99%), 36% of those aged 20 years and older have completed Grade 12 or higher. 62% of the labour force (aged 15 to 64) is employed. 74% of households have a monthly income of R3 200 or less, 45% of households live in formal dwellings. 62% of households have access to piped water in their dwelling or inside their yard. 72% of households have access to a flush toilet connected to the public sewer system. 81% of households have their refuse removed at least once a week. 81% of households use electricity for lighting in their dwelling” (City Of Cape Town, 2011, p. 2).

The seven volunteers presented with varying levels of early childhood development qualifications and work experience of which the table below provides an overview.

Table 1: Practitioners training and work experience in early childhood development.

Participants (pseudonyms)	Training in Early Childhood Development	Years of Educare Experience
Amy	Level 5	Working in an educare since 2013 and was a waiter prior.

Betty	Level 1	Working for 4 years at an educare, no previous employment.
Carmen	Level 1	Since 2008 working in an educare and pastoring in a church. Worked in the mines and sold clothing.
Didi	No training prior to Ikamva Labantu	Since 2012, she has been working in an educare. Started as a helper and now a practitioner. No prior work experience.
Edna	No training prior to Ikamva Labantu	Many years working in various educares. Actual number of years not confirmed.
Freda	No training prior to Ikamva Labantu	Started taking care of children in her home and later went to work in an educare. Number of years in the educare not confirmed.
Gayle	Basic information on Early Childhood development at another non-government organization	Working in an educare since 2013 with no other work experience.

3.7 Research process

Upon ethics approval, the researcher initiated access to the participants and the data gathering process began.

3.7.1.1 Data Collection

The process began with the development of open-ended questions to gather data related to the four research objectives, cumulatively answering the research aim and question. The researcher ensured the questions were clear and would yield the data needed for the research topic. Semi-structured interviews were used to gather data in individual sessions. This is being a frequently used data collection approach, which needed well thought through questions. This ensured the correct data was collected and data quality was maintained throughout (Kallio, Pietila, Johnson, & Kangasniemi, 2016).

The researcher contracted with a translator from the expanded public works programme, namely an Early Childhood Development Assistant based at the training organization. The manager of the Early Childhood Development Department was tasked to identify the strongest English speaking ECD Assistant. The aforementioned was present in all interactions with the participants. This ensured the highest quality of understanding, as participants were first language isiXhosa speakers and could ask for clarification as well as express themselves in isiXhosa when the need arose. The translator signed a confidentiality form which emphasized the sharing of information outside of the interviews was not acceptable. The contracted transcriber signed a confidentiality form to strongly discourage the sharing of data with other parties. Invitations were done via the telephone where the seven participants confirmed a suitable date and time for their individual interviews at the training centre. Scheduled seven interviews over five different days with no more than two interviews per day to ensure the researcher was fully attentive within each session.

These were the questions posed in each interview:

1. What training have you had in early childhood development?
2. What has your experience been over the past 2 years working with children in Khayelitsha or Mitchell's Plain area?
3. Describe what about the psychosocial training you enjoyed the most?
4. Describe what about the psychosocial training you enjoyed the least?
5. Could you describe what parts of the training was most helpful in your work with children?
6. Could you describe what parts of the training were not helpful in your work with children?
7. Consider this statement: "Having good or bad days' affects how we interact with other people".
 - Describe how the children react when you have a good day?
 - Describe how the children react when you have a bad day?
8. How does your behaviour to listen and being supportive in your classroom affect the children's ability to learn?
9. How does shouting, ignoring and using negative ways to punish the children in your classroom affect their ability to learn?
10. Describe how the children's participation in the classroom have changed since you have been on the training, if any.
11. This is a statement: "Making children feel relaxed, safe and supported is not as important as teaching them." Please describe your thoughts about this statement?
12. Describe your understanding of your role as a practitioner.
13. Describe what assists you to fulfil your role as a practitioner.
14. Describe what challenges you when trying to fulfill your role as a practitioner.

(Kallio et al., 2016) noted the value of including the questions in the study write-up. It has a twofold benefit; firstly, the ease of reviewing past research against current findings. It would substantiate prior understanding and emphasis knew perspectives regarding the study. Secondly, future research would be able to investigate areas of interest with ease by building on the findings related to the questions.

The following additional documents were developed: an information letter which explained the research project (appendix F); a consent form ensured participants understood the purpose of their volunteering and their right to withdraw at any time (appendix E); a confidentiality form for the translator (appendix I); and a transcriber confidentiality form (appendix H).

Prior to the commencement of each semi-structured interview, participants were assisted in reviewing the information sheet containing the research title, purpose, who the researcher was, the research process, confidentiality of information as the translator and transcriber both signed confidentiality agreements, as well as how the data would be stored and explained the use of pseudonyms. The risks and benefits, their voluntary participation, and how they would be compensated for transport costs incurred were explained. Finally, how and to whom the research findings would be shared was discussed. Each participant signed a consent form reflecting the ethics approval reference number as well as the Human Research Ethics Committee's contact details and confirmed their voluntary participation. "Informed consent meant knowing consent of individuals to participate as an exercise of their choice, free from any element of fraud, deceit, duress, or similar unfair inducement or manipulation." (Berg, 2001, p. 56)

Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions stimulated participants to share their experiences and thoughts. "Semi-structured interviews also allow informants the freedom to express their views in their own terms. Semi-structured interviews can provide reliable, comparable qualitative data" (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006, p. 2). Depending on the varied responses, additional questions were asked spontaneously to either clarify or extrapolate additional information. All interviews were recorded on a Dictaphone then uploaded to the University of Cape Town server and delivered to the transcriber via the Dictaphone. Deletion of the content from the device after each transcribed session took place, thus maintaining confidentiality. During each interview the researcher made notes on any points mentioned that were poignant or body language observed. Each interview

lasted approximately one hour and the translator was present ensuring understanding of each question.

At the end of each session, the participants signed for reimbursed transport costs and a small monetary token of appreciation. The latter was a surprise and not mentioned in the recruitment process thus not a factor in participants volunteering.

Documents reviewed consisted of the perusal of the CBW’s progress notes in the selected practitioner’s file.

Table 2: Extrapolation of data from document reviews

Documents reviewed	Information used
Practitioners baseline Assessment form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interaction with the children. • Disciplinary methods observed
Community Based Worker checklists – noting there were several per site monitoring various areas of skill application from the training.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section three – Practitioners engagement with children. • Section four – The practitioners’ management of the children’s behaviour. • Section five – Reflection child engagement and behavioural management.
CBW process notes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Points speaking to child interaction.

Researcher’s field notes were recorded during the reviewing of the documents. Omissions in reporting were noted during the review process. This information was shared with the departmental manager as a learning opportunity for the Community Based Workers.

3.7.1.2 Data Analysis

Application of the inductive thematic approach informed the data analysis. This process ensured data was analysed according to the research objectives. This process had to be methodical as various authors suggested listing this process in stages. Pope, Ziebland, and Mays (2000) framework for data analyses was used. The five stages were: Familiarisation, Identification of a thematic framework, Indexing, charting and Mapping and Interpretation.

1. Familiarisation

This entailed reading each transcript and listening to the recordings to ensure correct capturing of all data. The transcripts reviewed in relation to the research question, aim and four objectives to determine the data collected was relevant and sufficient to begin the analysis process.

2. Identifying a thematic framework

Identified the responses for each question as per the scripted fourteen open-ended questions across the seven transcripts. The question design linked directly with the purpose to answer the four research objectives. The responses were grouped accordingly and recorded on excel spreadsheets. Data analysed across the seven participants to understand responses, noting similarities and differences.

3. Indexing

According to each of the four objectives, the development of codes from the emerged responses per participant recorded in excel spreadsheets. The codes marked with a number one only to document the number of times it repeated across the seven participants. Noting the numbering was not to quantify the responses, it served as an enabler for the identification of the importance of each code in relation to each objective.

4. Charting

Clustering the codes created lists of categories, which after review were further collapsed creating nine categories. The researcher checked all raw data once again ensuring all vital data was accounted for after the initial analyses process. Each of the nine categories with its codes were recorded against their respective research objectives. Bearing in mind the data had to answer the research question; to describe the experiences of ECD practitioner's occupation of nurturing within educare in low socio-economic environments of Khayelitsha.

5. Mapping Interpretations

The nine categories were plotted individually with their codes utilising mind mapping to determine the interconnected and independent codes for each. Throughout the process, the researcher remained mindful of cause and effect factors, which led to an understanding of the various facets of the occupation of nurturing. These various facets gave rise to three themes that spoke to the individuals' journey and how the environment with its enablers and barriers influenced participant's ability to actively engage their occupation of nurturing within the educare context.

3.7.1.3 Rigour in qualitative research

Guba's model (Guba, 1981) was used to inform the rigour of this study. The trustworthiness of this research project was supported by:

Credibility

The seven participants reviewed the data collected which was presented in the data coded format and the theme categories. This ensured the interpretation was correct. All anomalies were recorded and corrected before the final analyses process concluded. Member checking ensured credibility of the data and

accurate recording of responses. Once data analysis was completed, the interpretation was verified during the analyses process which was invaluable as it precluded subjectivity of the researcher. Adhering to this process ensured the interpretation of the data was credible (Guba, 1981).

Member checking of data interpretation was imperative as mentioned before, this ensured no occurrence of misleading information. In this study, the advantage of having the translator present in the interviews and during member checking enabled the participants to express themselves more freely in their mother tongue. This process validated the interpretation of the data, especially sections gathered in isiXhosa was what the participants expressed. Credibility of the data took place when the participants commented on interpretation, therefore ensuring the information presented was accurate and preventing skewed findings (Krefting, 1991).

Data gathered from the community-based workers process notes were reviewed against the interview data, to determine general congruency from both parties. This process of cross-referencing these data sources influenced the interpretation, especially the level of honesty in the participant's responses inclusive of the level of reporting by the community-based workers. Cross-referencing data was critical as it played a part in exposing any data that might have been questionable. A consciousness to remain objective was imperative as participant's experiences, skills and thoughts varied which could have presented as conflicting information (Guba, 1981).

Transferability

This research is replicable by using the same inclusion and exclusion criteria to select participants from other areas within the ILPD training programme. Utilisation of the same descriptive qualitative tradition of inquiry with practitioners employed in other areas in the Western Cape in order to

understand their experience of the occupation of nurturing. To enable the transfer of a specific tradition of inquiry in other settings, the researcher would need to document a comprehensive record of the key factors that could influence the data collected. The criteria of the previous process needs to guide the demographical area selected to ensure a maximum match (Guba, 1981).

Dependability

Describing the inquiry process thoroughly with the relevant supporting documentation in place strengthens the level of accountability. The reconciliation of all documentation confirmed the entire process was critical. In addition, the quality of data integrity was sustained by maintaining consistent processes. However, as the environments are ever-changing, accommodating minor variations will inevitably occur (Guba, 1981).

Confirmability

After every interview, the researcher recorded feelings, thoughts, biases and assumptions. This created awareness, in order to not impose prejudices on the participant's experiences. The research process documented within the methodology; the confirmability would involve making all data available for an auditor to ensure all findings are verifiable. It is imperative to complete an audit trail ensuring data collected, analysed and interpreted have distinct links leading to the findings (Guba, 1981). The authenticity of the data collected must be tested by reviewing the reliability of the methods used in the data collection process, ensuring no other influences existed which could skew the quality of the data collected (Krefting, 1991).

3.8 Ethical considerations

3.8.1.1 *Autonomy*

During the recruitment process, the principals were informed of the purpose of the research as well as why participants from the practitioner's programme were needed. This was shared through reading a letter, translated into isiXhosa ensuring all practitioners fully understood. Questions were encouraged confirming their understanding. Upon the arrival of participants on their respective interview days, once again the purpose of the research and withdrawal at any time without any consequences clause was explained. Consent forms translated into isiXhosa were available, as well as a witness and the translator who signed the information sheet. This ensured participation was voluntary and all aspects of the research understood. The witness cosigned the consent form as additional verification. All aspects of the research project required full disclosure with clear and concise explanations, inclusive of the risks and benefits before pursuing consent. This ensured potential participation based on relevant information and understand they are afforded the right to change their decision even after agreeing to participate (Ford & Reutter, 1990).

3.8.1.2 *Beneficence*

The participant's experience in the project may not require referral for counselling but exploration of their experiences could bring about a deeper awareness of themselves Ford and Reutter (1990) undertook a study where the participants' benefit was the awareness of how to view their life experience in a logical way and appreciate the challenges they experienced. The participation of the ECD practitioners in this study contributed to the knowledge and understanding of what the occupation of nurturing was for their role within an educare. Including how to develop and maintain it over a sustained period. Insights gained will inform training curriculums and the support needed for the

ECD practitioners to implement this occupation to support young children and increase their learning potential.

3.8.1.3 Non-maleficence

Assuring participants experienced no harm a devised support plan was in place. If traumatic experiences shared created emotional distress, participants would require follow-up interventions in the form of referral to either the organizations Psychosocial programme or the counselling service provider identified prior to the data collection. One participant required follow-up as the psychosocial training was the start of her healing journey. She needed additional support to address the feelings that had resurfaced after the psychosocial training. She was referred to the Ikamva Labantu 's Psychosocial programme. No research was worth causing any form of harm to the subjects (Williams, 2008). Observing the participants closely during data collection was vital, as many shared experiences rooted in deep emotional hurt. Left unsupported, participants would be vulnerable as reliving what, for some, was suppressed (Ford & Reutter, 1990).

Confidentiality was maintained to protect the participants by having the translator and transcriber sign confidentiality forms. Their awareness raising of the exposure to sensitive information they heard prohibited the sharing of information with a third party. The use of pseudonyms further protected the participants in the write up of the findings. These mechanisms for anonymity encouraged the participants to disclose freely as they expressed feelings and shared experiences through the descriptive process. There were two critical concerns the researcher was constantly aware of: The first one was , throughout the data collection process to be sensitive to emotional difficulties presented as participants shared personal experiences and thoughts, and secondly, never reveal who the participants were (Ford & Reutter, 1990).

4 Chapter Four - Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focused on the research findings that emerged from the interviews conducted with seven participants. The research question for this study was:

What are the Early Childhood Development practitioner's experiences of the occupation of nurturing in low socio economic educares?

Three themes emerged from the data analysed: The Journey, The Awakening and The Game Changers.

Table 1 below provides an overview of the themes and categories.

4.2 Table 1: Themes and Categories

Themes	Categories
1. The Journey	1.1 Sharing Life Experiences 1.2 Interaction 1.3 Healing Self and Others
2. The Awakening	2.1 Child Behaviour and Positive Attitude 2.2 Child Behaviour and Negative Behaviour 2.3 Knowledge is Power 2.4 Self-Regulation

<p>3. The Game Changers</p>	<p>3.1 Technical</p> <p>3.2 Characteristics of a practitioner</p> <p>3.3 Environmental enablers and barriers</p>
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4.3 Themes

4.3.1.1 Theme 1: The Journey

This theme described the experiences shared by the practitioners while being part of the four-day psychosocial training. The training had a focus on “making peace with your past”. The theme, The Journey emerged as it encapsulated the process of their learning how to share life experiences.

Through guided participation, practitioners who might not have ventured to render themselves emotionally vulnerable took a step to listen to and share with their peers. In the process, they confronted negative emotions of fear, shyness and lack of confidence and arrived at a point of articulating experiences they never shared before. The words spoken by the practitioners echoed emotional relief.

Three categories described the journey from uncertainty to self-awareness. They are Sharing Life Experiences, Interaction, and Healing Self and Others.

The value of creating a group space that fosters support through listening and mutual sharing provided an emotional release. Unspoken hardships held people captive as some mentioned feeling free.

4.3.1.2 Sharing life experiences

This category presented the experiences of sharing life events and the impact made on the practitioner's emotional wellbeing. The seven participants unanimously indicated the psychosocial training was their first opportunity for self-exploration and articulation of their life stories. Some mentioned feeling apprehension to sharing in a group setting. Venturing into the unknown with this type of experience was initially daunting, with the increased expectation of sharing personal information with fellow peers was not an easy ask, but the result was cathartic. With guidance from the facilitator and acclimatizing themselves to the process, the practitioners shared information.

“...The first time that we started the training I didn't like to speak or share in front of other people...” (Amy, interview, May, 25, 2018)

And,

“...It was her first time in dealing with other people and she could share her story with the group and that was interesting for her.” (Edna, interview, June, 8, 2018)

There was a sense of empowerment expressed by Betty as she was able to share with others. She went on to say the sharing of her problems linked to her feelings of freedom and self-acceptance. This allowed for a powerful experience, showing release of emotional bottling to a positive acceptance of self. She was no longer shy, based on sharing her story.

“She expressed herself and that was what was amazing, she learned to accept herself and she feels free now, and she is not shy anymore.” (Betty, interview, June, 1, 2018)

The stories shared were helpful as they created the opportunity to listen to others and to be listened to. Participants shared information about themselves they had never shared with anyone else. Terms used such as feeling ashamed, shy, afraid, or “I shared my secret” were used, depicting the negative emotions practitioners were suppressing until the creation of a platform for sharing and release.

“I felt ashamed.” (Betty, interview, June, 1, 2018)

And

“I’m a shy person but it helped me to develop self-confidence.” (Didi, interview, June, 8, 2018)

The value of creating a group space that fostered support through listening and mutual sharing provided an emotional release. Amy shared the importance of sharing in a non-judgmental environment. This was an important factor in encouraging sharing of information. Unspoken hardships held people captive as some mentioned feeling free. Didi mentioned initially being unaware of emotions linked from her past affecting her present day life. Carmen experienced feeling a sense of relaxation and relief.

This category captured the emotional benefits of creating opportunity with a guided process of how to share life stories, listening to others and reflect on the past.

4.3.1.3 Interaction

This category explored the changes in interaction between the participants and their children post the psychosocial training and its emotional sharing and awareness raising.

Awareness raising of how the participants engaged with the children, prior to the sharing of their life stories, uncovered default responses generally being negative. Amy shared when she felt annoyed by the children her short temper brought about negative child handling such as shouting and name-calling. Since the training, she has learnt self-control when feeling overwhelmed by the situation.

Participants noted the value of the psychosocial training in aiding the change in interaction with the children. Carmen acknowledged negative interaction with the children being viewed as oppression and leading to lasting negative effects. Freda shared she was no longer angry, hence responded to the children from a place of love.

“.....I don’t have that anger in my class because when the children were misbehaving, I used to get angry so now I don’t have that anger anymore.” (Freda, interview, June, 13, 2018)

And,

“It helped ... she used to shout at the children and beat them. After she attended the psychosocial training those things were not her regular thing to do. I was a person with no love for the children and I was not patient with them.” (Gayle, interview, June, 29, 2018)

Didi noted the training taught her skills in how to work with the children in her class. The educare was not about eating and sleeping but understanding children and interacting with them through play. The training changed how she viewed her employment as a practitioner.

“It changed me, first how to talk to the children and it help me to love my job.” (Did, interview, June, 8, 2018)

Disciplinary styles prior to the training was corrective action in a negative form. There was no consideration for the children’s emotional wellbeing, but more a desperate need to enforce control. Lack of skill in positive child handling exacerbated the practitioner’s negative behavior:

“She would shout in class and call them names. If the child were dirty, I would say, ‘You are dirty’.” (Amy, interview, May, 25, 2018)

The participants’ self-awareness of how their handling affected the children brought about constructive behavioural corrective measures as well as conscious decisions to respond positively:

“ I now put him in a timeout corner or her on a timeout corner and I will tell a story on how he is behaving in order for him to relate to my story and know that he has done wrong or she has done wrong.” (Amy, interview, May, 25, 2018)

And,

“ ... I used to shout at them but now I talk with them patiently and I try to make them understand, ‘This is wrong, this is right’ and they must not do that again.”
(Betty, interview, June, 1, 2018))

Didi explained how personal issues from home as an example could evoke negative emotions. If the practitioner did not consciously decide to separate their work and home environments, the children in her class would experience the backlash. She remained adamant that conscious emotional separation from her work and personal life ensured her children would receive positive handling to maintain their happiness.

Developing skills improved the quality of work delivered, as well as confidence levels to try new approaches that firstly, best suit the children. In this instance, Gayle admitted to beating the children was no longer the corrective action she relied on. She now interacts with the children explaining behavioural expectations and challenges. Edna is on a similar path as the importance in conversing with the child to gain the understanding of what they did wrong and how to behave in future was imperative. Freda mentioned she no longer used the naughty corner and found bringing the child physically closer and explaining the effect of his behaviour was most effective. She noted having to speak more to the children.

This category showed a ripple effect which began with caring for the practitioner. Now she was able to create a happy supportive learning environment for the caring of children placed in her care.

4.3.1.4 Healing Self

The focus was on the how the participants felt after the opportunity of self-exploration and understanding. Some participants realised they were not alone in carrying past experiences that caused emotional hurt. Five out of seven participants noted a change in either their feelings and or responses to the children or others they interacted with in general.

Betty shared her fear in sharing her congenital hand defect with a partner as part of the story of how she grew up. She reported to being taught how to embrace the opportunity to tell her story and share her feelings about her hands. She experienced feelings of shame, anger and shyness that she could finally let go of. She gained self-acceptance and felt comfortable with her hands. She expressed feeling free.

Opportunities for support to share very deep and personal experiences and feelings led to deeper understanding of self. This self-awareness was developed through exploring and reflecting on what they experienced in life and how they felt and behaved in their current situations. One practitioner shared how she replicated her traumatic childhood experiences on her own children. She owned carrying the negative behaviour right through to the children in her class. Through participating in the training process, she became aware of her behaviour being inappropriate.

“...She was doing it to even to her children but when she came here to Ikamva Labantu they have taught her not to do the same thing that has happened to her, to her children and also to the other children that she is taking care of.” (Edna, interview, June, 8, 2018)

Another practitioner became aware of emotional hurt while participating and shared she was never consciously aware of the feelings of hurt. This participant had the role of a pastor who counselled others who were experiencing challenges in life.

“...I thought that I am all right, because when the people come to me I tried to counsel them so when I come here, there was another thing that told me ‘Hayi, man! I’m out.’ I’m injured inside me so I ought to take another step.” (Carmen, interview, June, 1, 2018)

Becoming aware of not being the only person who had challenges created feelings of relief and it produced a supportive function. This highlighted the value of listening to and being listened to by others as being equally important. The listening developed further confidence to share with the group. The following participant had said:

“...She had learnt and seen that she is not the only one who has challenges so now she is relaxed to share with others because she is not alone.” (Freda, interview, June, 1, 2018)

The interactions ended the suffering in silence for some who finally disclosed personal information. The sting of the happening is less tormenting when shared with others. One participant referred to her information as a “secret”. One participant eagerly enquired as to whether access to more sessions could be possible. As mentioned earlier, none of the participants had the opportunity prior to the psychosocial training to engage in a group which addressed emotional issues.

“What helped me is that I shared my secret. It helped me a lot when I spoke with others about my secret. It was my first time to speak about it.” (Gayle, interview, June, 29, 2018)

Amy was eager to explore the application of the training with others.

“I have seen that it’s something that can help other people in our community, in our ECD. So, I am interested to see the teachers, because they don’t understand that there is something that can make them to feel free.” (Carmen, interview, June, 1, 2018)

Acknowledgement of secrets shared, subconscious emotional hurt surfacing, and the awareness of replicating negative past experiences were noted. These realizations became the turning point for participants in how they engaged with others. The psychosocial training appeared to have changed behaviour through self-exploration and interpersonal awareness of others life journeys.

4.4 Theme 2: The Awakening

The theme “The Awakening” described the participant’s interaction with the children based on their attitude being both positive and negative. Participants described how their behaviour had changed after participating in the psychosocial training. Further to this, they

shared how the children had responded to them positively once their interaction became supportive. They acknowledged how the way they interacted with the children affected their quality of learning. In addition to these insights, the participants saw the value of developing their skill in self-regulation. This self-regulation was the conscious decision to engage with the children in a positive manner leading to children being happy and feeling safe and secure.

The following categories Child Behaviour and Positive Attitude, Child Behaviour and Negative Attitude, Knowledge is Power, and Self–Regulation will expand on the conscious awareness that developed.

4.4.1.1 Child Behaviour and Positive Attitude

The participant’s attitude influenced the children’s interaction with her as she held the power in the learning environment relationship. The children became attuned to her temperament. Most participants agreed the happiness experienced in the classroom depended on the practitioners’ expression of their happiness. Betty mentioned when she was happy the children were happy. Carmen spoke of having the ability to influence the atmosphere of the class and the importance of dealing with the children respectfully. The practitioner’s mood played a key role in how the children responded.

“...When you have a good day, children feel happy they will dance, smile at you and they will follow your mood.” (Edna, interview, June, 8, 2018)

Gayle mentioned listening to a child encouraged passion for learning and improved learning outcomes as well as development of self-confidence. Practitioners noted children when listened to felt happier. When provided with the opportunity to speak in the class, they developed self-confidence and they felt special. In addition, consistency in how the practitioner interacted with children fostered happiness. When the child felt free to speak and ask questions, she will have improved understanding and learn more.

“...That child will be happy now that at least teacher can listen to her and she’s consistent with her or him and she has been given that opportunity to speak and that gives that child encouragement to talk more and to understand more.” (Betty, interview, June, 1, 2018)

When the practitioner actively engaged a child providing hands on support through repetition, the child developed an understanding of the task. In addition, with time, mastery will occur. This level of support required patience and skill from the practitioner as well as interest in understanding each child’s capabilities and areas in need of developmental support. Betty mentioned an example of construction play; she would repeatedly build a chair with a child until the child was able to perform the task independently. The persistence of the practitioner delivered a result of mastery.

Practitioners were aware t their behaviour influenced the children’s responses and feelings within their classes. In addition, they positively influenced the learning environment when their attitude was friendly and happy.

4.4.1.2 Child Behaviour and Negative Attitude

Children felt scared when they experienced unhappy attitudes from practitioners, this was a general point raised. They linked children not feeling happy to feeling scared. The result of this was not asking questions and decreasing the understanding of information or instructions in the class. As the participant noted:

“If you are not happy at all children will not feel okay, they will be shy to speak with you, afraid to ask any questions.” (Edna, interview, June, 8, 2018)

Amy explained the negative impact of shouting as a disciplinary measure. The children become afraid to ask questions and reduced interaction with the practitioner. This reduces the learning opportunities, as they do not seek clarity out of fear.

“...If he wants or she wants to report something to you she will be scared to report because you are shouting. So, he doesn’t know what is right or wrong.” (Amy, interview, May, 25, 2018)

And,

“I ignore them because I am not feeling well. Whenever they try to express themselves to me I would shout at them.” (Betty, interview, June, 1, 2018)

Shouting influenced the child negatively and beyond the learning spectrum. This resulted in poor attendance or fear of coming to the educare. Not being able to communicate basic needs such as a need to use the toilet resulted in wetting which in turn caused the practitioner to shout. Didi mentioned that shouting escalated to ugly name-calling, which some children might have never experienced within their homes. Betty mentioned the shouting makes the children feel insignificant and causes them to fear coming to the educare, again affecting the learning opportunities. She said:

“When you shout at them they feel so small they don’t want to come to school. ... that affects them by not wanting to come to school and learn. They want to stay at home because they’re afraid that their teacher will be fighting and now it’s ruining, let’s say, it’s ruining their opportunity to learn.” (Betty, interview, June, 1, 2018)

Practitioners mentioned altering the daily programme to accommodate their emotional state for the day. They did this by structuring the programme to be as non-interactive with the children as possible. This impeded the learning opportunities for the children.

“...Her bad mood affects the children because she sometimes does group work for them in order for them not to notice that she is not in a good mood...But they will always annoy her, by calling her ‘Miss something is missing’, ‘someone is doing this to me’.” (Amy, interview, May, 25, 2018)

Freda shared how she shuns the children away when she is in a bad mood and tends to be quite rude. She later reflected on her behaviour and felt guilty, and went on to admit her behaviour traumatized the children.

Participants showed awareness of their negative attitudes and the influence it had on the children's emotional wellbeing and learning environment. Some have mentioned feeling a sense of remorse, but it is not clear how they managed this remorse with the children. Generally, the children are at the mercy of their practitioners for how their educare day will unfold.

4.4.1.3 Knowledge is Power

Employment of practitioners in educares were historically based on their interest in working with young children and not on their skill levels. The general thought was, educares were places of safety and nutrition, and not of stimulation and development with the long-term impact on scholastic achievement. Four of the seven practitioners indicated no training in the field of early childhood development that qualified them for their role as practitioner. After participating in the Ikamva Labantu Training, participants shared expectations of their role became clear as well as how to interact with the children.

Amy shared that she had no understanding of what was expected of her as a practitioner. Clarity in this regard was reached post training. She went on to share as she was able to make sense of her role the emotional investment of love from her side became intertwined in her planning and implementation. She highlighted that her participation in the training provided her with knowledge.

“None ... besides the one that they had in here, in Ikamva Labantu.” (Edna, interview, June, 8, 2018)

Gayle proudly shared understanding how to plan lessons and creating order in the learning materials. She based this on the learning materials received during the training as well as the continued use of this resource.

Training provided knowledge and skills in how to engage with the child at the correct developmental age, as a participant mentioned:

“What she is saying is that she has learned how to be on their level. When she is teaching now she is teaching them on their level.” (Edna, interview, June, 8, 2018)

And,

“I can observe a child now because I have learned how to and I can see when a child is having a problem. I sit down with that child and speak with the child to understand what the problem is. I was keeping them and looking after them but I didn’t notice any challenges. If there was a child who had a challenge or a problem I didn’t notice.” (Freda, interview, June, 13, 2018)

The classroom activities have captivated the children’s interest and they have become a source of encouragement to the participant. The participant noted they are eager to learn and this encourages her to provide learning opportunities. As she mentioned:

“It helped a lot because now children are reminding her to do her work. They always on her case that, ‘when are we doing this? When are we doing that?’ So, they are so eager to learn.” (Freda, interview, June, 13, 2018)

Practitioners are feeling empowered as they were taught how to deliver a learning programme in a developmentally appropriate manner. Clarified role expectations resulted in an increased sense of self-satisfaction. The rewarding feedback to these practitioners was the observation of the positive change in their children’s participation and skills.

4.4.1.4 Self-Regulation

The awareness-raising of practitioners mentioned in the category “Healing Self” mirrors the change in interaction with the children. Some practitioners expressed a conscious choice to

display a positive happy demeanor when in their classrooms. As mentioned in the earlier category “Child Behaviour and Positive Attitude”, the practitioners are aware of the influence their emotional responses have on how the children engage and learn.

“So just like when you go to church, she is making an example; you are told there if you have stress please leave your stress at home ... So it’s the same when you go to school, you need to leave your stress at home, go there and be happy with them all the time.” (Edna, interview, June, 8, 2018)

Carmen spoke of not compromising and wanting to give of her best to the children. Part of this best was to engage with the children with a happy disposition to maintain a positive classroom atmosphere. This practitioner went on to share that the children evoked feelings of happiness and thus was encouraged to reciprocate this emotion to them.

Negative disciplinary techniques identified, such as shouting and name-calling, have adverse emotional effects on children, creating feelings of fear. Edna had learnt through the training that this method was destructive to children, causing fear to attend the educare and herself as the practitioner. She is actively trying to steer away from this negative method of behavioral correction. Her aim is to maintain a happy classroom environment. She mentioned:

“It affects a child if you are shouting and howling, calling names it affects the child very badly, if you are shouting, the child will be afraid of you ...They will cry because they are scared of you and they were taught not to do that in these trainings so she’s trying by all means not to do it in her class anymore because she wants a happy child in her class.” (Edna, interview, June, 8, 2018)

These practitioners were bold enough to be honest about their past negative behavioural techniques and how the knowledge gained through the training changed their practice. They understood the role they played in creating a learning environment which was

conducive to child stimulation. Their conscious decisions made to ensure the children are happy seems to be quite important to them.

4.5 Theme Three: The Game Changers

The theme “Game Changers” addressed critical areas that supported the learning environment. Receiving training on why and how to stimulate the child was critical and the implementation thereof required a range of softer skills inclusive of a conducive environment. The interconnectedness of the practitioner’s skill and personality, together with relationships with parents and the principal, formed the foundation for the children’s ability to learn. Secondary to this were the resources; including the physical environment and the influence it had on the practitioner retention rate. This theme described three areas: technical skills, characteristics needed as a practitioner, and environmental enablers and barriers.

4.5.1.1 Technical skills

Two participants spoke of how they utilized their administrative skills in recording information. They mentioned three types of record keeping. The first was tracking children’s attendance through maintaining a register; the second was basic information about the child, which included parental details; and thirdly, recording observations made of the children, especially concerns of which they communicated to both the principal and the parents.

“I write down and I will go to the principle before I will go to talk to the parents and tell the principal.” (Freda, interview, June, 13, 2018)

Edna explained how she planned prior to introducing a new concept; in particular, she referred to introducing the children to the Persona Doll. She first demonstrated herself interacting with the doll and found this encouraged the children to accept the doll. The training had encouraged Freda in improving her planning for lessons and ensured it was

done the day before. This was followed by the displayed lessons on the wall. This enabled her to arrive each day and engage with the children knowing what the day's schedule held. Her lessons were planned and intentional and formed part of a larger learning plan.

Participants generally saw the value and practiced planning their work at least a day before. It seemed to create an easier start to the day knowing what laid ahead.

“I plan for the following day. I know by the time I come on the day I will do this and this and this.” (Didi, interview, June, 8, 2018)

Practitioners shared some problem-solving ideas such as approaching their work creatively to enable them to deliver on tasks. This related to resources and managing large classroom numbers. A positive use of observation as a tool to support the child at their level of competency was valuable in supporting their development. Bearing in mind, prior to the training this was absent in their work.

“You observe the child then you assist where that child needs help” (Betty, interview, June, 1, 2018)

The training upskilled the practitioners with a range of soft skills and more importantly consistent implementation. It improved their ability to plan by integrating the available resources with the children's current stage of development.

4.5.1.2 Characteristics of a practitioner

There are character traits practitioners need to possess, and when merged with knowledge and skill, become a powerful combination in promoting children's development. Knowledge and skill are learnable, the character traits however are more complex to change, yet play a fundamental part in nurturing.

Amy mentioned the value of listening to children, emphasizing her ability to listen was a skill. She expressed when the children felt heard it fostered feelings of safety and built trust between herself and them.

“You need to have that listening and ability, of caring in a child in order for a child to trust you and feel safe with you....” (Amy, interview, May, 25, 2018)

Two participants spoke of love underpinning their role as a practitioner. This indicated a deeper level of investment beyond the financial reward at the end of each month. The one shared that with love it was easier to perform her work. Experiencing enjoyment while working made the processes so much easier.

“I want to do it with that love ...” (Amy, interview, May, 25, 2018)

And,

“When you love your job, it’s easy.” (Didi, interview, June, 8, 2018)

Gayle had an inclusive approach to the children in her class, she stated welcoming children who spoke different languages and who were from different race groups. Leading by example is important to developing minds as they learn through example and observation of behaviour.

The desire to learn made an individual teachable whether it was to become self-aware of thoughts and behaviours or skilled in child development. Some participants shared their thoughts on learning. Betty felt that learning began with self-respect and not blinded by one’s sense of power in the position as a practitioner. She went on to say, a need for assistance as well as the ability to ask for assistance had to exist for learning to occur. Other participants had the following to say regarding learning:

“The guidance of the books is important.” (Carmen, interview, June, 1, 2018)

And,

“I gain more knowledge about the children, and things I didn’t know.” (Didi, interview, June 8, 2018)

The ability to listen, be accepting, and engage with care created a positive learning space for children to thrive. Practitioners who invested positive feelings such as love in their role were for many children the first exposure of kindness. The interconnectedness of the relevant soft skills as well as knowledge acquired, created a competent practitioner who was able to place the children in her stewardship on an advantageous learning platform.

4.6 Environment

The environment had positive and negative influences which created enablers and barriers to the practitioner’s role. Participants mentioned various enabling factors such as supportive colleagues, feeling appreciated, providing a caring and safe environment, and access to resources. The barriers explored related to educares that had not met the Department of Social Developments norms and standards. In addition, an emphasis was placed on poor parental involvement. Literacy levels of the practitioners and their adhoc role extensions were not common but noteworthy to mention.

4.6.1.1 Enablers

Edna shared she experienced support through active participation of the principal. Emphasis was made on the leadership style of the principal which informed how staff members engaged as a team. In particular, the planning of lessons was developed with input from the principal. This approach built on the learning experience of both the practitioner and the principal.

Other participants felt appreciated and supported by their principals when the correct resources were available for the implementation of the learning. They had the following to say:

“I don’t need much from the principal because she appreciates me and my job and she’s supportive of me.” (Betty, interview, June, 1, 2018)

And,

“If the principle was not helpful then I wouldn’t have the resources, so I have all the resources that I need in the class.” (Freda, interview, June, 13, 2018)

Amy mentioned she provided peer support by sharing her knowledge and skills from the training received at Ikamva Labantu. She observed her colleague with the younger children was challenged by not being trained. Highlighting the support in this scenario was not as a recipient but as a giver and an enabler for her colleague and the children of this colleague.

“She is assisting the practitioner in zero-to-three-year-old class because she doesn’t understand what she needs to do.” (Amy, interview, May, 25, 2018)

In addition to practitioners being and providing support to their colleagues, they needed to create a safe and caring environment for the children. There was mention of protecting, making a child feel safe and providing love. These enablers supported the children to develop and learn.

The following showed the insight of the participant as to what had to precede learning.

“The first is care. If you care for a child, she or he will be all right, she will receive the right teaching according to her level.” (Carmen, interview, June, 1, 2018)

And,

“Is to guide children, and protect children and to give them education...” (Betty, interview, June, 1, 2018)

4.6.1.2 Barriers

Income

Carmen explained that not being a registered and subsidized educare operating on fees of R2000 per month presented many challenges. The challenges in no particular order were: insufficient money for salaries as food for the children and electricity took priority. This left items like maintenance and repair on the back burner causing winter months to be unbearable as rain poured in through the rusted zinc roof.

“So, we want to buy food for the children with this money, we want to pay electricity, we want the things to clean this house. If we want to do something, sometimes the water comes dripping in we want to buy the zinc to have that it’s this money. So, we can take a long time before we fix that thing.” (Carmen, interview, June, 1, 2018)

Gayle shared the lack of resources impacted on how she was able to implement the learning programme. She attributed this to not being a registered and subsidized educare. She added their salaries were a challenge by either not being paid in full or by receiving late payment. The educares main source of income was fees received from parents. The fees in most cases were used to provide food for the children as for many children only ate at the educare.

“Yes, they’re not registered, they are using the fees to do things, to buy stuff, they are using the fees. The challenge is with their payment. Sometimes they do not get their money on time because they have to buy food from the fees.” (Gayle, interview, June, 29, 2018)

In the day-to-day operations of educares, the lack of income had an influential role in the attrition rate of practitioners. This hampered the preparation of children for their scholastic years.

Parents

Critical to supporting the child holistically was the inclusion of including the parents in the education of their children. It presented as a simple task on the onset but by no means was it simple, as parental disengagement was a common occurrence.

Amy shared the general disrespect of time keeping by the parents. They were sporadic in when they brought their children each day. Some children would arrive much later than 8 am causing them to miss parts of the planned learning programme. Practitioners felt parents were not acknowledging the value the educare played in their children's development. In addition, requests to parents for basic stationery was dismissed. Practitioners felt this was another indicator of parents not viewing the educare as a place of development and learning.

“They don't understand the time for the arrival of the children. It's disturbing to the teachers when they are in class and there are still children coming in. They still don't understand that in the ECDs the children are learning.” (Amy, interview, May, 25, 2018)

Betty and Didi shared having no substantial challenges other than parental apathy. They refused to buy basic items such as nappies but held the practitioner accountable if the child returned home with a soiled nappy. In addition, sick children were sent to the educare and some cases the practitioner assumed the role of primary caregiver by taking the child to the clinic when attempts to contact the parent failed.

“There's a clinic here I have to take the child to the clinic ... I will stay the whole day in the clinic no one come to pick up ... even if we phone the parents.” (Didi, interview, June 8, 2018)

And

“I need their support because some parents they don't support us at all.” (Betty, interview, June, 1, 2018)

Parental apathy remained an alarming concern, as children required the active support of at least one adult “cheerleader” to assist them on their journey of life. This “cheerleader” was a vital role player in supporting a child as they navigated various hurdles in growing up.

Literacy and Role Extension

Two respective participants mentioned literacy and role extension. Although not frequently mentioned by other practitioners the researcher included this category as they do play a pertinent role in implementation of the learning programme. Amy shared her literacy level held her back from pursuing training and mentioned this was her only current challenge.

“... I didn’t go to school so that’s the only challenge that I have for now.” (Freda, interview, June, 13, 2018)

Amy shared she currently had a merged class of children due to educare renovations. This resulted in her being unable to fulfill her role adequately.

“She’s working with other age groups as she said because the crèche is being renovated so they have other children as well. She doesn’t use her job description because she’s all over the place ... doing everything.” (Amy, interview, May, 25, 2018)

Irregular learning programme implementation was influenced by the trainability of practitioners, in this case the level of literacy as well as unrealistic expectations placed on their daily roles.

4.7 Chapter Summary

The seven practitioners shared they never participated in any form of psychosocial training prior to enrolling at Ikamva Labantu. The process of the four-day psychosocial training provided them with experience in how to share past experiences, the value of sharing

experiences and how to listen to others as they shared. The sharing and listening to others was cathartic and brought about feelings of healing. In addition, prior awareness of how their behaviour affected the children's sense of wellbeing and learning was absent.

Four of the seven practitioners had no formal training in early childhood development. Of the three, two had a basic level one training. One had only completed her level five early childhood development training in 2018 post the Ikamva Labantu training. Overall, practitioners were unskilled, and only during training at Ikamva Labantu did role clarification emerge. Internalization of key characteristics of their role as a practitioner began to manifest as they gained understanding of the impact they had on the children.

Exploration in the psychosocial training contributed to the practitioner's awareness raising of how they lived their lives affected by past traumas. They began to understand their behaviour and the affect it had on others, especially how they engaged with children. They were able to articulate how their negative and positive child interactions affected learning potential. Self-regulation emerged after the psychosocial training and the motivation to maintain the new way of engagement was the change in the children's responses to them. The quality of learning opportunities for the children improved as the practitioners changed their child handling practices to create safe and caring environments. One practitioner mentioned responding to the children from a place of love.

The pertinent enabler was receiving support and giving support to colleagues, leading to feelings of appreciation. The pertinent barriers were poor income linked to unregistered educares and poor parental involvement.

The findings clearly indicated the training increased knowledge and self-awareness. This emerged in various ways, ultimately changing the learning environment through practitioners displaying nurturing qualities. A ripple effect created an improved learning and stimulating experience at educares in township environments.

5 Chapter Five: Discussion

5.1 Chapter introduction

The aim of this study was to describe the experiences of ECD practitioner's occupation of nurturing within educare in the low socio-economic environment of Khayelitsha. The objectives focused on understanding the ECD practitioner's experiences of participating in the four-day psychosocial training workshop. These experiences were unpacked to understand how their self-awareness related to their behavior, thus influencing the children's learning environment. In addition, the enablers and barriers to providing a nurturing environment were explored.

Three focus areas emerged from the findings that informed the discussion:

1. Emotional wellbeing of early childhood development practitioners which informed their occupation of nurturing.
2. The early childhood development practitioner's attributes in implementing their occupation of nurturing and cultivating positive learning environments.
3. Intrinsic and extrinsic factors in the early childhood development environment which influenced the occupation of nurturing.

These focus areas were framed using the Person Environment Occupation Model of Occupational Performance (PEO). The constructs of this model examined the interconnectedness of the person, environment and occupation, with the outcome on the level of occupational performance. In this study, the person related to the practitioner, and the occupation explored was nurturing, and the environment being the educare as the place of learning for the children. The occupational performance explored through attitudinal and behavioural shifts related to the practitioner's interaction with the children in their classrooms, and for some it extended to their daily interactions with others.

5.2 Emotional wellbeing of early childhood development practitioners which informed their occupation of nurturing.

In analysing the experiences as described by the participants in their role as practitioners post the psychosocial training, they expressed initial feelings of apprehension in sharing personal information in a group setting. Although amongst peers, the discussions were not of a natural nature, which would have felt safer and easier to share. They embarked on a bonding journey in a limited period developing trust within the group. Uncertainties prevailed in how to share their life journeys, but through guided facilitation by the trainer, the group interaction became easier. For the practitioners this was a new experience of sharing personal information with the additional pressure of performance in a group setting. In a comparison study on group work versus individual sessions, group work provided socialisation, which is no surprise. However, the socialisation was not necessarily conversations only; but also being present in the same space observing each other was supportive (De Weerd et al., 2001, p. 16).

As daunting as the group setting presented, they found the experience cathartic in having a platform to have others listen to them and in the experience of listening to others sharing their stories. Patients participating in group therapy asked to participate in a survey indicated the longer the group intervention lasted, the more prominent the cathartic experience was (Restek-Petrović et al., 2014a). It was noted the practitioners were able to reach the cathartic stage relatively quickly.

There was a sense of empowerment through sharing personal challenges to a captive audience. What once caused feelings of entrapment was no longer. Feelings of freedom lead to self-acceptance. As Law et al. (1996) mentioned, the person is immune to change and is ever evolving in relation to their context. Others shared shedding being "shy" as they developed self-confidence to speak about themselves within a non-judgmental setting. A provocative statement made was "I shared my secret"; the sharing lightened the emotional burden. These life enriching experiences occurred by creating an exploratory environment

for self-expression, this led to the start of their emotional wellbeing. Patients participating in-group interventions versus individual sessions experienced a greater increase in psychological well-being and showed improvement in their behaviour. Behavioural changes noted fear decreased based on information they received and consequently they displayed self-confidence. Attitudinal shifts noted from the first group session to the final sessions were a greater interest in others other than at the onset they displayed higher levels of self-absorption (Gauthier, Dalziel, & Gauthier, 1987). Further, in the group study the Occupational Therapist together with group members, confirmed observed positive changes in appearance of other group members. The group approach provided support and promoted peer engagement and feedback (Gauthier et al., 1987).

In addition to wellbeing, the group interaction promoted emotional healing amongst the practitioners. In particular, a practitioner shared feelings evoked when adults and children inquired about her congenital malformation. Healing came about when others listened to how she felt about her condition and she received feedback from the group. She was able to move from feeling embarrassed to becoming comfortable post the training, when sharing about her condition. A study with psychotic patients showed that they expressed the value of hope derived by participating in-group psychotherapy. The feelings of improvement expressed by patients as they observed positive changes in their group members fuelled feelings of hope (Restek-Petrović et al., 2014b). "Positive emotions—through their effects on broadened thinking—predict future increases in positive emotions." (Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002, p. 174).

Some practitioners were not aware of how their experiences were causing themselves hurt in their daily existence. They were unaware of how they replicated the cycle of pain on their family members and children at the educares. Having the opportunity for introspection to share life experiences and emotions created the awareness the practitioners needed to start their healing journeys. Prior to this opportunity, practitioners perpetuated the cycle of victim-perpetrator of feeling emotionally hurt and causing emotional hurt. This cycle began

to dissolve through active participation in the guided psychosocial process. In a study with survivors of childhood sexual trauma, the group engagement provided support resulting in the participants being able to identify with others creating a feeling of oneness. This aided in them releasing feelings of responsibility in the cause of the traumatic experience. They began viewing their future in a positive way as they felt empowered and developed feelings of hope (Gorey, Richter, Snider, & Neglect, 2001).

Creating opportunity for caring for the carer - in this scenario the practitioners - was vital, as they were the vehicle in delivering a caring and stimulating learning environment for the children. An ailing emotional state cannot promote the attributes to support the occupation of nurturing. The practitioners engaged with the process once they felt safe and respected by sharing in a non-judgmental environment. The value of sharing traumatic experiences in an environment with a skilled facilitator amidst peers who could relate to life experiences added great value. A sense of hope generated for the future through the sharing of a common problem in a group setting. This was life changing, as for some suicidal thoughts existed together with feelings of guilt (Gorey *et al.*, 2001). Behavioural shifts were more achievable in a group setting than on a one-on-one basis. The group consisting of peers provided support and promoted communication (Gauthier *et al.*, 1987).

The essence of this group process centred on reflection on trauma through exploration of life stories and the effects resonating in their present lives and the relation to their classroom interaction. The awareness raising developed insights into what life experiences caused their current behaviour to inform their child engagement practice. After the group interaction created support as all participants experienced a common trauma, the researchers were able to determine the shifts in attitude were not only during the therapeutic process. They noted the internalisation of the hope and positive life outlook lasted beyond six months (Gorey *et al.*, 2001).

The practitioners, through the training process, experienced emotional discomfort through sharing life experiences and feelings to peers who for the most part were strangers. The

space created became a therapeutic platform with guided facilitation, which led to self-awareness of the root of their behavioural responses to those they engaged with daily. Healing and emotional freedom became evident which led to a deeper awareness and understanding of themselves within their work environment engaging with children to implement their occupation of nurturing. To perform occupationally the individual must possess skills. Some skills are learnt and others are from within. The better the fit the higher the quality of the performance. (Law et al., 1996).

Practitioners showed a marked shift in insight with their behaviour as they developed a deeper awareness of the effect it had on the children. The negative child handling techniques were no longer the default approach to discipline. They reported maintaining the positive child engagement approach. As the “person” is ever-evolving, this exposure unearthed understanding of self, awareness of experiences and the effect these had on their behaviour in relationships with others. A test group of early childhood development teachers separated into a control group and a participating group. The participating group broadly exposed to beliefs, knowledge, and skill identification within the early childhood development setting; they gained knowledge about the teacher–child interaction and were able to identify the value and implement intentional and active engagement (Bridget K. Hamre et al., 2012).

Prior to the training, these negative methods were a desperate plea for control in the absence of skills to engage the children with kindness. A link between negative disciplinary techniques noted creating an oppressive environment and having long-lasting negative effects on children. Some of the negative techniques used were shouting, name-calling and hitting in most instances. The intentional shift towards positive methods of engagement led to changed interactions between practitioners and children within the classroom environment. The classroom environment was the space within which the occupation of nurturing needed implementation. The awareness raising ignited the behavioural changes, which informed the occupation of nurturing which in turn was the missing link to supporting learning through creating caring classes for children.

Practitioner's behaviour improved communication and positive child handling skills, they observed changes in how the children responded to them. A cause and effect situation created the occupational performance of nurturing. The cause being practitioners changing behaviour led to nurturing in return, and the effect was the positive responses of the children in behaviour and learning. "All environmental settings have forces which support or work against an individual's participation"(Law, 1991, p. 176). The classroom environment became places of caring and learning with the practitioner's understanding how their behaviour influenced the learning environment and initiated nurturing and stimulating relationship building with the children. The environment was ever changing and the person acting in the specific environment was influenced by the current trends as well as influencing the space (Law *et al.*, 1996).

The open manner in which the participants shared the negative techniques was admirable, as they could have opted for non-disclosure pretending to be implementing positive techniques. This emphasised the internalisation in self-awareness to implement positive child engagement methods to promote feelings of security and learning. The training was not only imparting knowledge, but also much needed skills to implement and improve on the practitioner-child interaction. This process led to role clarification informing the foundation for practitioners to guide their work. They viewed their classroom environment as no longer only for safety and nutrition, but places of growth and development for young minds.

As the person being the practitioner reconfigured her behaviour the environment the children's experienced changed. They were actively engaging with the practitioners and their classroom activities. Their positive responses fuelled the practitioner's positive engagement, thus creating the active application of the occupational performance of nurturing. The role of practitioners was further defined by the emotion of love, as practitioners played a vital part in maintaining children's happiness in the classrooms. To improve children's experience in pre-kindergarten years, it was believed teacher emphasis on engagement should precede all else. How the child experienced and related to the teacher was invaluable. The two avenues recommended to achieve this was in teacher

professional development training and providing feedback through classroom monitoring (Mashburn *et al.*, 2008).

As the skill levels in managing the children in their classrooms developed, so did the practitioner's confidence to try new approaches according to the needs of specific children. Together with new level of self-reflection, the practitioners developed their internal locus of control as they actively chose positive child engagement techniques. Generally, communication through age appropriate explanations to a child as to what aspects of their behaviour needed to change. Teachers who received training in positive behavioural techniques received follow-up assessments, pleasingly continued implementation, this was attributed to refresher training opportunities. The training galvanised the new interaction techniques between teacher and children stimulating long-term integration (Lyon *et al.*, 2009). In a comparative study, pertinent areas of development were the teacher's improved emotional connectivity with the children as well as their teaching methods (Bridget K. Hamre *et al.*, 2012).

5.3 The early childhood development practitioner's attributes in implementing their occupation of nurturing cultivating positive learning environments.

Practitioners described their negative behaviour and the effect it had on the children prior to the training. There were no doubts their negative behavioural techniques were decreasing the learning opportunities of the children. This clearly indicated the absence of the occupation of nurturing. A contributing factor was their level of formal early childhood development training. This limited their knowledge and skills in providing a stimulating learning environment and more so how to apply positive child handling techniques. Further to this their understanding of the effects their behaviour imposed on others became clearer. A valuable learning experience by the practitioners was the observations made of children's responses to their attitudes. The ability to observe and analyse what they saw was a turning point in how they engaged with the children. The fear and disconnect they

observed limited the children's active classroom engagement. They began to understand the how their relationship with the children broke down before they had even began to create emotional connections.

In differentiating between what activities were in relation to occupations, occupations were described as the experience and meaning attached to the particular event (Pierce, 2001). As the practitioners reflected on their observations of the children's changed reactions to their changed handling skills, the meaning of the occupation of nurturing developed. The practitioners were able to adapt their skills to accommodate their work environment, in order to meet the desired outcome of children feeling safe and cared for while learning. A clear depiction of the transaction between the person and the environment translated into the occupational performance of nurturing. Law et al. (1996) indicated that the greater the congruence of the three components: the Person, Environment and Occupation, the greater the outcome of the level of occupational performance. Teachers' levels of emotional regulation and coping skills determined whether they were able to play a supportive or non-supportive role when children displayed negative behavioural patterns. Further evidence elucidated teachers as negatively influenced by a disorganised environment, which inhibited their ability to default to a reappraisal emotional regulation, which in turn supported a problem solving approach (Jeon *et al.*, 2016).

Practitioners articulated various negative behavioural examples they implemented such as shouting. In addition, they explained how the children could have interpreted their actions thereby impeding their learning opportunities. In the practitioner-child relationship, a power dynamic existed with the adult dictating the rules and regulations. The children had no recourse other than comply. Practitioners in their unskilled state over-utilised this power dynamic by drawing upon negative methods to gain control. When knowledge and skills are lacking as well as when expectations are not explicit, the role cannot be successfully implemented (Law et al., 1997).

The limited practitioner training was a pivotal influence limiting their skill in handling children supportively. To the extent of altering the learning programme to reduce interaction. The practitioners control to the extent of changing the daily learning plan was unwarranted and impinged on the rights of the children to accessing planned and meaningful stimulation. These scenarios depicted the negative effects of unskilled practitioners who utilised bullying to gain control. Teachers were unable to elaborate on various child-handling techniques and provided close-ended responses. This indicated the need for additional training on the subject to broaden the teacher's knowledge and skill base (Dutton Tillery, Varjas, Meyers, & Collins, 2010).

Practitioners held the power in the relationship with the children; their attitude set the tone for the classroom. Thus, the children were constantly at the mercy of the practitioners in how they experienced their learning environment. Personal challenges experienced by the teachers affected teacher child engagement (Lyon *et al.*, 2009). As teachers were in a position of power, variables such as but not limited to, personal value systems, knowledge, skill and empathy were strong influences in their interactions with children. Depending on the teacher's life experiences, views and training if not healthy and adequate, their engagement with children led to abusive tendencies'. They were empowered with insight and skills to better engage with children. Although children experienced changes in their preschool teachers (different teachers); the quality of their relationships with each teacher was positive, thus producing emotional security. In addition, the sense of security attained was due to synergy between the preschool and home environments offering connected relationships (Howes & Hamilton, 1992).

Underpinning the change of practitioner's responses to the children as well as understanding the positive influence they had on children's learning, guided the practitioners healing journeys. Without caring for the practitioner's emotional wellbeing and awareness raising of behaviour, self-efficacy would have remained absent. Awakening their nurturing spirit would not have been possible through theoretical training only. Their occupation of nurturing had to stem from a deeper emotive origin other than cognitively

driven to sustain long-term integration. A recommendation made for early childhood development teacher training to include content on their invaluable role in supporting children's emotional development. To enable this aspect of the teacher role understanding and implementation a range of strategies to draw from when dealing with negative behaviours was critical (Denham *et al.*, 2012). All children need to feel special and have their autonomy respected as this creates a confident learner. Practitioners need to provide an emotionally supportive environment to grow children's emotional and cognitive intelligence. Teachers play a critical role together with parents in developing children's emotional competence, which influences the learning potential of children. The need for research in early childhood development to explore teacher's emotional competence and the relation to the learning outcomes of the children is highlighted (Denham *et al.*, 2012). The quality of the teacher child interaction is found to affect the learning potential of the child (Mashburn *et al.*, 2008).

Environments children thrived in as mentioned by practitioners had to offer a range of positive reinforcements to include but not limited to, providing listening, opportunities for vocalisation and consistency in responses. To provide such an environment the practitioner needed to possess characteristics such as the ability to listen, and build a trusting relationship between the practitioner and the child. The emotion of feeling love when fulfilling their role as well as promoting inclusion of all children and being teachable they further deemed as necessary attributes. This type of environment encouraged children's self-confidence, passion to learn and persevere towards mastery of skill development. Practitioners repeatedly linked their positive engagement to children feeling happy. Interestingly to note in relation to the nurturing approach, in this instance it was mutually beneficial to both practitioners and the children.

Furthermore, children's social competence – how they related to those around them, family, peers and teachers were viewed from both the family and classroom settings. The result indicated the child with challenged social competencies from their home surroundings had the potential to respond positively in the classroom. The influences were

the level of peer social competence as well as the interaction of the teacher with her class. The teacher offered an environment of emotional connectedness as well as age appropriate demands while encouraging communication and leadership (Brophy-Herb, Lee, Nievar, & Stollak, 2007). The practitioner's ability to internalise their learning translated into insight and into skills they needed to best support the children.

The interaction within the PEO Model indicated a high level of occupational performance of nurturing. Noting the model acknowledges it is easier to change the environment than it is for the individual. In this instance, the practitioners surpassed expectations by becoming more pliable than their environments, with the common purpose to best support the children by activating their occupation of nurturing. The key intrinsic enabler of change in the practitioner was the development of self-awareness of their past life experiences and its current influence in day-to-day relationships. Once they identified the influence their child handling methods had on the learning potential of the children, a general desire expressed to maintain positive handling skills arose. The influence of the person changing as their competency improved had a direct impact on the children's learning environment. The occupational performance strengthened through skills development identifying the occupation of nurturing and the classroom environment implementation thereof. The PEO Model highlighted the more connected the Person, Environment and Occupation was at a particular point in time, the greater the level of the occupational performance would be (Law *et al.*, 1996).

The importance of gaining knowledge within one's sphere of work cannot be understated. The ability of the practitioners to shift from negative to positive child handling had mixed origins. The psychosocial training brought awareness and understanding to them about their emotions and responses. The learning programme training provided information and skill mastery on child development and stimulation together with classroom management.

The culmination of the knowledge and skills brought order to the class. Practitioners understood their role and more importantly to activate it through the various tasks, such as

planning a lesson according to the children's level of development. There was a sense of enthusiasm to support each child as they refined their observation skills and were able to communicate any concerns to their principals and the children's parents. The positive way in which some practitioners implemented their daily lessons evoked a feeling of love attributed to understanding what the task entailed as well as why it was relevant for the children. Professional development that used personalised feedback to teachers improved their interaction and socialisation with the children. The observation of a mentor focused on the interaction of the teacher-child relationship which provided immediate feedback together with the utilization of a standard method provided teachers with the best guidance for improved interaction (Pianta, Mashburn, Downer, Hamre, & Justice, 2008).

The behavioural feedback practitioners received were from the children served as a reinforce to maintain their positive child handling methods. Practitioners presented enjoying the children's enthusiasm of asking questions during facilitation of the learning programme. The practitioners derived satisfaction from learning new information, understanding expectations and engaging with the children with understanding. The occupation of nurturing developed as their knowledge, skill, and positive reinforcement received from the children's responses to the changes. The interconnectedness between the practitioners, and their changed engagement with the children began formulating what the occupation of nurturing was for them. The continued implementation of nurturing in the classroom environment was galvanised in the level of occupational performance.

In gaining the knowledge and skill in early childhood development and self-awareness, practitioners developed positive child handling strategies. The consistent implementation, of the positive child handling techniques were attributed to practitioner's development of self-regulation. Entailing the conscious decision and practice of not going back to the negative child handling. The practitioners clearly did not intend to cause harm with their past practices. Their choice was to create and maintain a happy learning environment. Implementation of consistent self-regulation took a considerable level of discipline to maintain. Commendation to the practitioner's determination to recreate their classroom environments to be places of learning populated with happier children.

The sustained implementation required monitoring of consistent implementation for both the handling of children and the practitioner's ability to maintain self-regulation. In exploring reappraisal and suppression, two of many strategies in emotional regulation it was found reappraisal being the most beneficial approach. This approach showed links to the individual's wellbeing as the adaptation of their emotion to the situation had meaning and led to internalization. It also showed longer-term influences and emphasized the positive effects on the individual's wellbeing (Gross & John, 2003). Practitioners experienced a multitude of challenges within their educare and home environments. The introduction of the psychosocial training had ignited an improvement in their overall relationships. There is worth in further exploration of practitioner's emotional development, especially as a practitioner was courageous to ask for additional counselling. There is insufficient research on emotional regulation of teachers together with how they cope in challenging preschool environments. Noting the critical role they play in child development - this area does needs exploration (Jeon *et al.*, 2016).

5.4 Intrinsic and Extrinsic factors in the early childhood development environment which influenced the occupation of nurturing.

Intrinsic and extrinsic factors existed in all environments, which enabled or blocked progress, freedom or access. The educare environment is no different having various factors influencing its operations ranging from but not limited to, governmental regulations, the community within which it functions, the principal as the leader whom in most instances are the owners, parents, staff and the children. The environment is the foundation from which the person will play out their various occupations linked to their roles in daily life. Contextualising the environment as having four segregations: physical, cultural, societal and social. Each of these four have components that influenced how the person engaged in their range of occupations (Law *et al.*, 1997).

In exploring extrinsic factors that enabled the practitioner's occupation of nurturing, the development of technical skills beyond the stimulation and management of the children were vital. These included basic administrative skills to plan and implement lessons which formed part of the teaching process. In addition, maintenance of registers and a medical book which recorded the children's attendance, general health and any other points of concern. Part of the extrinsic factors included the value placed on teamwork creating feelings of support; leadership being the principals actively engaged with daily tasks and ensured the necessary resources were available. Together with the feeling of empowerment when they were in a position to share learnings and offer support to peers. This point reflects the interconnectedness of the practitioner interacting in their environments; giving and receiving enhance their feelings of job satisfaction, which indirectly grew their occupation of nurturing.

"The model assumes that the person is a dynamic, motivated and an ever-developing being constantly interacting with the environment" (Law *et al.*, 1996, p. 17). Practitioners needed to work in a caring environment which enabled their development in offering care to the children. They too viewed themselves as active agents of change in the children's lives creating safe and caring environments. Many of the children's home relationships were void of the care and emotional connectedness. Practitioners placed great value on the support they received from the active engagement of their principals. This interaction made them feel valued and this in turn encouraged them to support their colleagues by sharing knowledge and skills they acquired through the training. The social support encouraged team cohesion especially where the leadership style was engaging. This encouraged practitioners to maintain their new approach to child engagement, which was from a point of love, as some practitioners shared. These aspects of the work environment encouraged them to implement the occupational performance of nurturing. "An intervention that improves the enabling aspects of the environment for an individual allows a compatible fit to be maintained or created, thereby preserving or increasing occupational therapy performance" (Law *et al.*, 1996, p. 17).

Practitioner's motivation was the critical intrinsic factor to implement the learning programme while maintaining their occupation of nurturing was the apex to the children's engagement in fruitful learning environments. Both components required dedication for consistent implementation. "... an intervention that improves the abilities of the person when occupation cannot change also enables occupational performance to be preserved or improved" (Law *et al.*, 1996, p. 17). This continued post the training without the support and supervision of field staff from the training organisation. Internalization by practitioners of the value nurturing played in their role maintaining the changed approach to child handling. Occupational engagement is beyond the confines of self-care, work and leisure. The meaning, value and the purpose individuals experience through occupational engagement is of greater importance. They experienced a sense of achievement when the desired results were viewed as achieved, and further their engagement was congruent with their values. This informed the quality of life they experienced (Hammell, 2004).

Extrinsic factors that created blockers for practitioners to create a nurturing environment were firstly, the inability to access basic resources, which limited adequate implementation of the learning programme. The second being inadequate compensation for the work done. The work environment was not favourable for most practitioners, which placed strain on their role and their occupation of nurturing. Both hurdles were attributed to their places of employment not meeting the governmental norms and standards; which was not being registered or subsidised educare. Monthly financial survival of the educare were solely reliant on the collection of children's fees although these were minuscule and irregular. These challenges were detrimental to the practitioners and children's work and learning environments. It had a direct relation to the ongoing attrition rate of practitioners and children exposed to overcrowding and poor nutrition. These to negatively affected the children's development.

Studies have shown when caregivers and or the environments changed especially with under three year olds, negative results were observed especially in how the children

developed. Interruption of the relationship between carer and child influenced feelings of security and daily nuances of familiarity (Sosinsky *et al.*, 2016). In the physical environment of the educare, practitioners experienced the lack of resources, overcrowding and poor remuneration as barriers to their fulfilment of their occupation of nurturing. Environments created risks which prevented the fulfilment of a particular occupation which was relevant to the individual. No matter how much the person changed the environment created the barrier, thus adequate exploration of the environment must be sought after to seek adjustments that enable occupational performance (Law, 1991). The governmental norms and standards to meet their operational requirements are unjust to the context of the communities of these educare. The poverty levels make the achievement of their standards unattainable leaving the children at a greater disadvantage by not receiving subsidisation.

Parental apathy affected the daily learning environment either through lack of active participation in being part of their child's learning by providing resources to not adhering to educare policies. Parental active involvement in a child's life has a positive effect on their progress. Children's opportunity for learning at the educare is but a small percentage of the day. Therefore, good parent-teacher communication will address children's strengths and areas needing attention. The support from parents was invaluable in preparing children for their scholastic years. Practitioners become demotivated when they actively seek parental involvement and are then faced with indifference. The long service of carers especially for the under three year olds assists in better understanding of the children's development and areas of concern. This improves communication with parents contributing positively to the children's wellbeing (Sosinsky *et al.*, 2016).

Teachers when not supported, resort to the emotionally suppressive approaches which hampered their ability to problem-solve leading to unsupportive handling of the children (Jeon *et al.*, 2016). Parental apathy tended to be the norm within the communities reached in this study where they abdicated responsibility for their children's stimulation and development. Many parents believed they are paying and it is the practitioner's responsibility alone to adequately prepare their children for school. There were instances

where the health needs of the children were left unattended with the expectation the practitioners would be the parental proxy. In this instance, the environment focused on the lack of parental involvement which influenced the practitioner's occupational performance of nurturing negatively. This made supporting the children holistically a challenge as it created feelings of despondency. "Occupations are considered to meet the person's intrinsic needs for self-maintenance, expression and fulfilment within the context of his/her personal roles and environment" (Law, 1991, p. 17).

Role extension, although not widely mentioned by the practitioners, was challenging. As for most classes, they are over populated affecting the practitioner child engagement. Together with long hours and poor financial compensation and adding on additional roles such as merged classes or asked to prepare meals led to practitioner exhaustion and frustration. When environments lacked order it contributed to teacher exhaustion and in this state, it became challenging to control negative emotions. These negative emotions are lashed out at the children (Jeon *et al.*, 2016).

5.5 Conclusion

The findings were discussed within three focus areas. The first was the emotional wellbeing of early childhood development, practitioners which informed their occupation of nurturing. Caring for the carer was extremely important as it ignited a healing journey while creating self-awareness. The self-awareness of their behaviour, where it stemmed from and how they affected those they interacted with daily, including the children, was profound. Practitioners showed earnestly that they wanted to influence the learning environment by changing their child handling techniques. It further highlighted skills development, which enabled the implementation of the occupation of nurturing. Developing skills enabled practitioners to immerse themselves into the classroom and allow the children to lead making the learning child centred.

The second area of focus was the early childhood development practitioner's attributes in implementing their occupation of nurturing cultivating positive learning environments. Practitioners shared the various negative methods used prior to the training and the need to maintain control resulting from a lack of awareness and skills. They further shared the importance of creating positive environments promoting thriving young minds. These were greatly influenced by the change in their child handling methods.

Intrinsic and Extrinsic factors being the third focus area in the early childhood development environment which influenced the occupation of nurturing. It elucidated practitioner's quality of their occupation of nurturing was relatable to their exposure to opportunities of self-exploration and healing. The emotionally wounded could not provide nurturing to children, as they had no idea of how their experiences were determining their current practice. The value of support from colleagues and well as offering support to colleagues created empowering workspaces. The inhibitors related to societal factors which influenced their occupation of nurturing, linked to the lack of resources within the educare as per governmental standards and parental apathy.

The practitioners showed an earnest commitment to maintaining the positive child handling practices as they observed the critical role they played in creating a positive classroom atmosphere for learning. They shared key attributes and skills they believed contributed to children's learning opportunities. Together shared key enablers and barriers, which all contributed to fulfilling their occupation of nurturing.

6 Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to describe the experiences of ECD practitioner's occupation of nurturing within educares in the low socio-economic environment of Khayelitsha.

The objectives focused on

- To describe the ECD practitioners experience of participating in the four-day psychosocial training workshop.
- To explore how the ECD practitioner's self-awareness informed their understanding of their occupation of nurturing in providing a nurturing learning environment.
- To describe what the enablers and barriers were as experienced by ECD practitioners in fulfilling their occupation as nurturer.
- To describe practitioner's understanding of how their behaviour influenced the learning environment in how children learn.

The findings elucidated that practitioners became aware of the attributes and skills needed to provide children with a positive, caring and stimulating foundation within an educare. The practitioners made this possible only through self-exploration during the psychosocial training. Once they became aware of the effects of their behaviour on those around them, inclusive of their home environments, a general response was to change their approach in how they engaged with others.

Practitioners had to undergo a process of healing achieved through guided facilitation in a group setting within the psychosocial training workshop. All participants shared they had never experienced such a process before. Some were unaware of how their life experiences had hurt them and in turn, they became hurters of others. The psychosocial training was

short-lived but made a lasting impact not only on the emotional wellbeing of the practitioners but also on the children in their care.

The positive child interaction was not only through the psychosocial training but also inclusive of the Ikamva Labantu Persona Doll learning programme training. The latter provided invaluable information and practical support on child stimulation, behavior management techniques as well as auxiliary skills such as role clarification and administrative systems.

The holistic approach to the practitioner training created the awareness and motivation for them to explore their occupation of nurturing. They articulated the critical enablers and barriers to their role as practitioner in fulfilling their occupation of nurturing to produce emotionally and developmentally school ready children.

6.2 Assumptions answered after the research

A list of assumptions compiled during the research design phase and the researcher's thoughts on completion of the investigation:

- The lack of insight from the practitioners in how their behaviour hindered the creation of a nurturing environment.
 - Practitioners shared prior to the psychosocial training that they were unaware of their negative behaviour and the effect it had on others. Practitioners shared a range of negative behavioural methods they used prior to the training, which they admitted to influencing the children's self-esteem and learning potential.
- ECD Practitioners are not aware of how their behavior influences the children's learning opportunities.
 - This was true as mentioned above.

- ECD Practitioners are not aware of how their behavior influences the children’s learning opportunities.
 - True as the practitioners articulated this during the data gathering process and the researcher gleaned this point while reviewing the literature on the role of nurturing in the classroom.
- Lack of adequate training in early childhood development reduces practitioner’s awareness of how they support children’s emotions.
 - True, practitioners generally shared through the training, which was inclusive of the learning programme training they were better equipped to support children as they utilized positive child handling techniques.
- Social ills traumatized practitioners, which created the need for psychological interventions.
 - True; practitioners shared relief, others felt healed while one mentioned her secret was out and she felt free. Practitioners were initially apprehensive to engage in the psychosocial groups but articulated post the training the positive change it made to their lives as well as in how they engaged with others.
- Practitioners choose employment in educare, as other options are limited. This resulted in uncommitted practitioners negatively influencing young children’s development.
 - Some practitioners had work experience other than at an educare. From the findings, the challenge of not stimulating the children based on the lack of formal training and not due to lack of interest. There was a shift to improve the daily programmes after they received training on early childhood development.
- Practitioners Have not received adequate training in child handling from various training service providers.

- The researcher had not reviewed the other training service providers training material to substantiate this assumption. It was solely based on the observation of practitioner's child handling which was observed over the years. They had received training from various training service providers. It would be useful to explore this assumption in separate research.
- Psychosocial and the learning programme-training participants possess insight into how their interaction with the children influenced their learning experience and development.
 - This was true, based on the findings, practitioners made conscious decisions to interact with the children using positive child handling techniques. The exposure to training increased their knowledge and skill provided a base, which guided intelligent and appropriate decisions.

6.3 Limitations

- The study only engaged practitioners from one area of Cape Town being Khayelitsha. The original research proposal included Mitchells Plain. Unfortunately, the recruitment was delayed this resulted in research participants being approached the year after they graduated. There were no willing practitioners from Mitchells Plain area to participate in this research project. Bearing in mind the number of candidates were four practitioners.
- A translator was present in all data gathering sessions who provided translation when needed. The researcher was of the understanding the participants were able to speak English fairly well. During the interviews, the bulk of the conversations needed translation, which limited deeper investigation of points raised by the participants.
- The process notes recorded by the Community Based Workers were not consistently monitoring the practitioner-child interaction. When recorded there were general positive remarks across the seven participants. Only one practitioner showed

regression during a site support session as the rating shifted from fair to poor for the child interaction and subsequently improved and maintained the standard. This does raise a concern that practitioners might have been on their best behaviour while being observed.

- The researcher collected data through interviewing the participants and did not visit the respective educare and observe the children's general behaviour inclusive of how the practitioners interacted with them.
- During the literature search there was no information found on the occupation of nurturing within the educare setting. Literature addressed nurturing within the classroom and held more so within the field of psychology but not as an occupation of practitioners.

6.4 Strengths

- This research has not only contributed to Occupational Therapy in exploring the occupation of nurturing as described by practitioners, but it has provided gravitas to a training programme implemented by a non-government organization Ikamva Labantu. It supports the relevance of the psychosocial training, which was integrated with their learning programme training.

6.5 Recommendations

- A review of current ECD training programmes within the Western Cape to determine the level of focus on developing practitioner's skills in positive child management and developing their interactional relationship with children. In particular, within the Cape Flats and Township areas.
- The psychosocial training programme to be evaluated and refined where needed. Documentation of the impact will substantiate the value add leading to this programme being recommended for provincial role out.

- Occupational Therapists to be more involved in the structuring of training programmes for ECD practitioners as children below five years are not being educated but developmentally stimulated. Viewing the practitioners through the lens of occupations and their interaction with the environment will bring a new dimension.
- Sharing the research findings with the participants of the research, Ikamva Labantu and the Department of Social Development. To add to the body of knowledge of the Occupation of nurturing the findings to be published in a peer – reviewed scientific journal. Inclusive of non-Occupational Therapy Journals e.g. education, psychology etc.

7 Appendices

7.1 Appendix A - Letter for expedited review

54 Montana Road

Colorado Park

7785

13th July 2017

To The Departmental Review committee

UCT

FHS

To Whom It May Concern

Re: Expedited review

I am requesting an expedited review of my research proposal as the research poses minimal risk. The anticipated minimal risk would be managed in an advantageous manner for participants if the need arises. Referral to free counselling services to address any trauma they may have experienced prior to this research process.

I appreciate the consideration by the committee regarding my request.

Yours faithfully

Barbara Stemmert

STMBAR001

7.2 Appendix B - IL Permission letter



Hills Building, Buchanan Square, 160 Sir Lowry Road, Cape Town, 7925 | PO Box 165, Cape Town, 8000, South Africa
☎: +27 21 461 8338 | 🌐 www.ikamva.org | @ info@ikamva.co.za

10th July 2017

To Whom It May Concern

Re: Permission granted for research study

This is to confirm Ikamva Labantu grants Barbara Stemmer permission to access participants on our Practitioners Training Programme for her research study, to be conducted between August 2017 and August 2018.

We welcome the opportunity to have a section of our work in the early childhood development department researched and recorded.

We kindly request to be mentioned in the write up and have access to the research findings.

Yours Faithfully

signature removed to avoid exposure online

.....
Evansa Roos
Acting Director

NPO registration: 082-581-NPO | PBO no: 93 0034 425 | VAT no: 463 025 7725 | IT no: 1261/2010

Board of Trustees: Richard van Rensburg (Chairperson), Helen Lieberman, Neetesh Ramjee, Ilana Shone, Natalie Barnett, Avin Lieberman
Board of Protectors: Gaynor Rupert (Chairperson), Philip Krawitz, Maria Ramos

7.3 Appendix C- Data collection and Analyses timelines

- End of June – End of July 2017– Proposal for departmental review and return of rebuttal
- November 2017 – Submit proposal for ethics review
- December 2017- Inform the principals and practitioners of the pending research and need for
- Practitioner volunteers. Leave copies of the information sheet with them.
- Finalize the time allocated inform my employer
- February 2018 - Finalized the translator and compensation
- Researcher to maintain notes from this point.
- April and May 2018 – Recruitment of participants
- June 2018 –Started interviewing the 7 participants writing up findings and thesis
 - July 2018 – Transcribed the data
 - August 2018 – Data analyses underway
- October 2018 –
 - Member checking or Focus Group
 - Hand in draft of findings
- November – First draft of discussion
- December – submit first draft of full thesis
- January –submit final thesis

7.4 Appendix D- Budget

Item	no.	Unit cost in Rands	Total	Why	How it was calculated
Transport (1)	14	30	420	To arrive at the Ikamva Labantu Centre	R30 per round trip as per current transport costs attending training
Refreshments (1)	7	10	70	Tea and biscuits individual interviews	R10 per /person x 7 individual sessions
Transcription	7 interviews	200 p/h	1400	transferring of audio data to written data	12 hours x R200 p/h
Translation	7	100	700	Participants require clarification and able to express themselves in their mother tongue	R100 x 7 sessions
Editing	1	2020	2020		Quotation based on a 100 page document
Printing	500	1	500	For transcribed information and mini dissertation	R1 p/page
Total			R5110		

7.5 Appendix E - Participant Consent form

Consent Form

Title of the study

Early childhood development practitioners experience of the occupation of nurturing with children from birth to five years: a descriptive qualitative study.

Ethics number:

Purpose

I am interested to understand what you think nurturing is and how you provide a nurturing classroom environment.

The information sheet will provide you with additional information on the research study.

Risks and Benefits in participating in this research:

There are no risks to you participating in this research unless this interaction causes you to feel distress from past or current trauma. In this event, *you will be referred to either the Ikamva Labantu Family Centre or Nonceba at no cost.*

Benefits to you directly are none but understanding your knowledge and experience of nurturing within and educare will inform the training and awareness raising on the occupation of nurturing for ECD Practitioner trainers.

Please note you agree to maintain confidentiality when participating in the group interview and agree to not share any information outside of the group.

I will serve you light refreshments and cover your transport costs.

Your interview session and one group session will take place at the Centre.

I, agree to voluntary participate in this research project. I acknowledge I have read the information sheet and understand the purpose of this research project.

If you needed the information sheet translated, you agree it was verbally done. Any questions you asked were satisfactorily answered by myself and translated when needed.

I understand that at any point I am free to withdraw from this research project.

Participant's Name

Signature

Date

Interpreter Name (If needed)

Signature

Date

Witness Name

Signature

Date

Researcher's Name

Signature

Date

HREC REF: 826/2017

7.6 Appendix F- Participant information sheet for informed consent

Information sheet for Informed Consent

Title of the research

Early childhood development practitioners experience of the occupation of nurturing with children from birth to five years: a descriptive qualitative study.

Purpose

I am interested to understand what you think nurturing is and how you provide a nurturing classroom environment. The information gathered from this research will assist training organizations to develop a training programme with relevant information gathered from local communities that includes information on nurturing children in educare.

Researcher: Barbara Stemmert, an Occupational Therapist completing her Master's Degree in Occupational Therapy. Employed at Ikamva Labantu for 14 years of which nine years focused on early childhood development.

This is how the research project will be conducted:

I am looking for seven participants who attended at least three of the four psychosocial training days. They should have received at least three months' onsite support from the Community Based Workers.

Each of the seven participants will be interviewed individually for one session each. These interviews would last around two hours each and take place at the Centre. If you require translation to assist you to better express yourself one will be available. The interviews will be recorded and I will be taking notes during the session.

You might be asked for a second interview to clarify information you have shared if I am not able to fully understand all your information.

The progress notes written up by your Community Based Worker on how you are implementing your learning will be reviewed.

Once all the data has been collected I will request one focus group session for all of the seven participants to attend. This session should last between two to two and half hours.

Confidentiality

All information you share will be treated confidentially by not sharing the recorded information with the broader community. Please be aware a third person together with the translator will transcribe the information. They will sign a confidentiality agreement to not share the information

gathered during your interview When writing up the findings and referencing quotations pseudonyms in the form of numbering participants and not your name will be used to prevent information from being traced back to you. A risk does exist when the focus group with the seven participants are facilitated. Although the request will be made to maintain confidentiality as it takes much courage for anyone to share their personal experiences and feelings. When you sign your consent form please note the confidentiality agreement to not share any information outside of the group.

Risks could be:

You could share information which makes you relive or share traumatic experiences and cause you to become distressed.

Benefits would be:

If you need to meet with a counselor to assist you to deal with trauma we will ensure you are referred to a service. This would either be the Ikamva Labantu Family Centre or Nonceba.

Voluntary participation

Your participation in this research project is totally voluntary. You could withdraw at any time from this project. If you withdraw from this project your support and participation in the Ikamva Labantu Persona Doll learning programme will continue.

Compensation

When you attend the individual interview and a once off focus group at the centre your round trip transport costs per visit of R30 will be paid directly to you on the day. Light refreshments will be served.

Research Data Collected

All data collected will be kept safely while the research is underway. Once the researcher has successfully completed the research project all the data will be destroyed.

Research findings

Once the final report has been approved I commit to inviting all practitioners and principals on the Ikamva Labantu training programmes to a presentation of the research findings.

“The UCT FHS Human Research Ethics Committee can be contacted on 021 406 6338 in case participants have any questions regarding their rights and welfare as research subjects on the study”

Researchers contact details: Barbara Stemmert 021 4618330 or e-mail barbara@ikamva.co.za

Participants initials

HREC REF: 826/2017

7.7 Appendix G Interview questions

1. What training have you had in early childhood development?
2. What has your work experience been over the past 2 years working with children in Khayelitsha or Mitchell's Plain area?
3. Describe what about the psychosocial training you enjoyed the most?
4. Describe what about the psychosocial training you enjoyed the least?
5. Could you describe what parts of the training was most helpful in your work with children?
6. Could you describe what parts of the training were not helpful in your work with children?
7. Consider this statement: "Having good or bad days' affects how we interact with other people".
 - a. Describe how the children react when you have a good day?
 - b. Describe how the children react when you have a bad day?
8. How does your behaviour to listen and being supportive in your classroom affect the children's ability to learn?
9. How does shouting, ignoring and using negative ways to punish the children in your classroom affect their ability to learn?
10. Describe how the children's participation in the classroom have changed since you have been on the training, if any".
11. This is a statement: "Making children feel relaxed, safe and supported is not as important as teaching them." Please describe your thoughts about this statement?
12. Describe your understanding of your role as a practitioner.
13. Describe what assists you to fulfil your role as a practitioner?
14. Describe what challenges you when trying to fulfill your role as a practitioner?

7.8 Appendix H - Transcribers confidentiality form

Confidentiality Agreement form for Transcriber

Research Study Title:

Early childhood development practitioners experience of the occupation of nurturing with children from birth to five years: a descriptive qualitative study.

I, _____ transcriptionist, agree to the following:

I will:

1. maintain full confidentiality of all research data received from the researcher
2. not reveal the identity of any of the individuals in the audio recordings.
3. not keep any records of the transcribed information once handed to the researcher and or share with a third party.
4. store the *transcribed* information in a safe environment away from any third party access.

Transcriber's name _____

Transcriber's signature _____

Date _____

HREC

Version - 1 July 2017

7.9 Appendix I - Translators confidentiality form

Confidentiality Agreement form for Translator

Research Study Title:

Early childhood development practitioners experience of the occupation of nurturing with children from birth to five years: a descriptive qualitative study.

I, _____ translator, agree to the following:

I will:

1. maintain full confidentiality of all research participants.
2. not share any information heard or read during the interview sessions with a third party.
3. not keep any records of the information shared by the research participants.

Translator's name _____

Translator's signature _____

Date _____

HREC

Version - 1 July 2017

7.10 Appendix J - Objectives and categories

Objectives and categories

Objective	Categories	No. of times categories are identified
Objective 1: To describe the ECD Practitioners' experience of participating in the four - day psychosocial training workshop	To be listened too	2
	Opportunity to share life experiences with others	7
	Enjoyed the activities	1
	Opportunity to deal with emotional challenges	6
	Learnt how to share experiences	4
	Recognizing the value for others	1
	Wanting more exposure	1
	Awareness raising in how to work with children	2
	Challenging to share in a group	2
	Experience was enjoyable/ helpful	6
	Initially didn't see the need	1
	Realization of own emotional challenges	1
	Enjoyed the practitioners training as well	1
	Participants were not sharing honestly	1
	Assisted with planning	1
	Created awareness of how the children were engaged with	6

	Created awareness of own behavioral responses	6
	Ability to identify children's needs	2
	Changed disciplinary style	6
	Continued to implement learning programme training	1
	Increased knowledge of how to stimulate children	2
	Everything was useful	6
	Learning Programme skilled practitioner in how to engage with children	1
	Psycho Social Training brought healing	1
Objective 2: To explore how the ECD Practitioners' self-awareness informs their understanding of their role in providing a nurturing environment.	Children react according to your mood	10
	Some children push boundaries (behavior challenges) when practitioner is in a good mood	1
	Practitioners negative mood evokes fear	8
	Practitioner must actively choose a positive attitude in the classroom	2
	Children engage with learning activities with enthusiasm when the environment is happy	1
	Changes teaching style on the day to hide her mood	2
	Disengages with the children	2

	Children's attention seeking causes irritation	2
	Bad mood hinders learning	2
	Children choose to not engage	1
	Practitioners child management approach becomes negative	2
	Understands a bad mood affects children negatively	2
	Understanding the child's problem	2
	Engaging the child at their level	6
	Opportunity for the child to express himself	5
	Understanding is increased when the child is encouraged to ask questions	3
	Creates a happy learning environment	4
	Provides a foundation for learning	4
	Child is humiliated	2
	Reduces participation	3
	Child will not seek clarity, limits understanding	2
	Reduces children's spontaneous interaction with practitioner	2
	Increases child absenteeism	1
	Chooses positive handling when interacting to assist children	2
	Negative methods do not change children's behaviour	1

Objective 3: To describe what are the enablers and the barriers experienced by ECD practitioners in fulfilling their occupation as nurturer.	Be able to listen	2
	Be approachable	2
	Able to Problem-solve	3
	Supportive role to colleagues	1
	Sharing Knowledge and skill with colleagues	1
	Be Inclusive	1
	Be passionate about the work	3
	To teach children	6
	To be knowledgeable in teaching and child management	1
	To plan your work	3
	Provide a safe environment	3
	Caring environment	3
	Maintain administrative systems	2
	Engage with parents	2
	Access to Resources	4
	Desire to learn	4
	Parental cooperation	5
	Value your role as a practitioner	2
	Passionate about the job	1
	Supportive Principal	2
	Overcrowding	1
	Literacy levels	1
	Taking on more roles	1
	Unregistered	2

	No subsidy	2
	Inadequate remuneration	2
	Structural Needs	1
	Nothing	1
	Children Hungry	1
Objective 4: To describe practitioners' understanding of how their behaviour influences the learning environment in how children learn.	Improved child handling	5
	Actively engaging with children	3
	Emotionally vested	2
	Upskilling created clarity on expectations of a practitioner	4
	Practitioner feeling healed	1
	Feeling relaxed and safe builds trust	4
	Improving the ability of the child to listen	3
	Improves learning	4
	Improves interaction	3
	Encourages children to be self-driven to learn	1

8 References

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